



## East Bay Regional Park District

### Trail User Working Group

### Hiker's Perspective Memorandum

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December 31, 2020

**Overview:** The Trail User Working Group held a meeting on November 13th, 2020 to focus on the hiker's perspective of trail use within the Park District. Following updates to the Working Group formation, consensus building on the mission and objective of the Working Group, and a Park District presentation on sustainable trails, attendees participated in a larger group discussion on trail use from a hiker's perspective, followed by breakout small group discussions and a report back to the larger group.

**Summary of Hiker's Perspective:** Working Group members – specifically representatives of hiking groups such as Outdoor Afro, the Orinda Hiking Club, the East Bay Area Trails Council, and the larger hiking community, expressed the following sentiments regarding Park District trails from a hiker's perspective:

- *Safety* – hikers are concerned for hiker safety when sharing narrow trails with bicyclists going above the speed limit. Some hikers observe that sharing trails has gotten better in recent years because youth biking teams have been trained on trail etiquette.
- *Trail etiquette* – campaigns and educational materials should be used to educate trail users on trail etiquette. Education is preferable since enforcement is challenging.
- *Capacity* – hikers are expecting an increase in trail users – trails and facilities should accommodate or anticipate this increase.
- *Maintenance* – it is a challenge to hikers when facilities are not well-maintained.
- *Maps and signage* – maps and signage along trails, at trailheads, and on the Park District website, could be improved to indicate nearby trails, trail distance, where users are welcomed, etc.
- *Inclusion and accessibility* – hikers want trails to work for as many users as possible, and for better access for all trail user abilities. Hikers are on the trails for many reasons, including solitude, enjoying nature, exercise, and social aspects, and trails should accommodate all of these goals.
- *Dogs* – dogs off leash and out of the owner's command are not so much an issue for hikers as they are for equestrians. Trail etiquette should also be practiced among dog owners, and the District should encourage it.

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**Breakout Groups:** The breakout groups focused on answering the following questions:

1. What are some of the goals that hikers have in using trails?
2. What are some of the issues that hikers experience and/or create on trails?
3. What do you think would improve trail user experience?

Responses to each of the questions were varied but similar among each of the breakout groups:

1. *Goals of hikers:* Hikers want to feel safe and welcomed, enjoy nature in solitude, socialize, enjoy views, benefit their mental and physical health, relieve stress, and everyone who wants to enjoy outdoors should be able to do so.
2. *Issues that hikers experience:* trail capacity, insufficient maintenance of facilities, eroded trails, lack of awareness of resource protection reasons for trail restrictions, trail etiquette (including horse and dog waste), safety from speeding bicyclists, informal or social trails.
3. *Improvements to trail user experience:* create a culture of civility, improve trail signage and maps, improve accessibility information, stagger or alternate days for use, reserve trails for specific use for a day or time frame, designate different loops for bikers and hikers, add trails to disperse users, educate users on wider variety of trails, develop code of ethics for each user group or encourage positive behavior, create permitting process for e-bikes, use technology to provide more real-time information such as wayfinding to trail users.