

TRAIL USE TASK FORCE MEETING

October 20, 2009– 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Trail Use Task Force Mission Statement:

The purpose of the Trail Use Task Force is to identify trail conflicts; communicate with and among user groups; and make recommendations for improvement of the trail use experience to the Open Space Advisory Committee, the Open Space staff and the BCC that will not deprive any user of a safe, quality experience when using the parks and trails while considering protection of the natural resource.

In attendance:

Kevin Burke, OSAC	Stanton La Breche, OS Staff	Nancy Woodson, Hiker	Marc Peot, Biker
Kim Frederick, OS Staff	Colleen Gadd, OS Staff	Joe Hendrickson, Biker	Kyle Henley, Biker
John Litz, OSAC & Plan Jeffco	Ralph Schell, OS Staff	Tookie Scherder, Hiker	Ann Smith, Equestrian
Amy Ito, OS Staff	Dave Cohen, Biker	Nancy Hathaway, Equestrian	
Doug Torza, Equestrian	Peter Morales, Biker	Adam Feerst, Hiker	
Alene Lind, Equestrian	Idalyn Foley, Equestrian	Paul Murphy, Biker	
John Lind, Equestrian	Dan Shier, Equestrian	Jan Kray, Equestrian	

Meeting began: 7:02 p.m.

Welcome/Agenda Review:

Kevin Burke thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. Regarding Apex Park, Kevin stated that Ralph will address that later in the meeting. Kevin turned the meeting over to Amy.

Amy asked if everyone had signed in on the sign up sheets and asked everyone to please speak up when they speak. Amy stated that we will take public comments, time permitting, after the task force members have spoken on the agenda topics. She requested introductions and then asked if there was any request to change the order of the agenda. With no further response the agenda was to be addressed in the order set.

Amy Ito reviewed the agenda and indicated that due to the extensive agenda she would act as timekeeper to make sure we stay on course and get to all topics. Adam Feerst indicated that he would be interested in hearing Ralph speak on Apex first. Amy stated that we would stick with the agenda.

User Group Updates/ Feedback:

Equestrian Representatives: Doug Torza, Jan Kray, Dan Shier, John Lind (alt.), Nancy Hathaway (alt.), Idalyn Foley (alt.), Ann Smith (alt.).

Doug Torza stated that his group recently met with the biker group for dinner and were enlisting their feedback for their experiences on the trail and he stated that 99 per cent were favorable but every now and then they would receive a comment such as the one he was about to read. He feels that one letter like this trumps all of the good ones that come along. He referenced the writer as saying he had been assaulted by rude mountain bikers traveling too fast down the trail his horse was assaulted as well and his truck damaged in the Apex parking lot. The letter writer feels that the new ideas for the trail will not have any affect on these types of rude bikers. Doug Torza sited that this is clearly a minority among the bikers but advised that when we have criminal activity out there on the trail or trucks are being damaged then something clearly has to be done before someone gets hurt. He suggested some peer pressure activity but does not want to see one user group excluded from the Park over others but is also concerned about public opinion in that direction. He stressed his group's continued work with everyone towards a solution to this problem.

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Ann Smith asked if there was preferred parking for equestrians on the north side of the parking area at Meyer Ranch because the south side fills up very fast. She prefers the north side. Stanton stated it is preferred. At Meyer, there is no equestrian signage right now on the south side but on the north side it does indicate "equestrian parking on this side only". Amy further explained that on the north side we have designed the turning radius with a trailer in mind. On the south side you can get in and you can pull through but it is not as welcoming or accommodating. You can do either but the north would better suit equestrian needs.

Dan Shier mentioned he had recently attended a meeting of his horse group and they told a story about a state park and reservoir in New Mexico. They have trails there and have had conflicts with the horses and that the bikers had created counterfeit signs indicating no horses were allowed.

Hiker Representatives: Tookie Scherder, Adam Feerst, Nancy Woodson, Bob Brockwehl (alt.):

Nancy Woodson stated that she has received some suggestions and one was charging bikers an annual fee; putting a sticker on their bike, which monies would be put into a fund for trail maintenance. Another comment was to give positive feedback from an equestrian who dismounted and removed horse feces from the trail. At Apex they propose larger and better signage making clear what the yielding requirements are.

Adam Feerst acknowledged the decision on Apex having been made but expressed concern with the way the decision was made as to how this would affect future issues. He feared it would portray a bias. He stressed the goal is to have good experiences and fears the bikers may have been biased against. He stated he did not think the decision took into consideration the biker element on these trails and they will not use the trails in the manner specified. He felt there were some specifics that were not addressed and no explanation was given. He stated that the 800 emails that were generated should have some response to those specifics. He felt that some comments were made in the past that reflected that some people do not take the Task Force seriously and regard it as a nuisance. So, he wanted to stress that he was not attacking anyone and this was about issues and how effective this committee is. He had read the web site and was glad to see that there had been meetings with the bikers and he thought this was hopeful.

Kevin Burke asked Adam what it was that made him feel that the process in which Open Space arrived at their decision in his mind was biased. Adam replied that it was said that OS does not want bikers in Open Space parks. Kevin indicated that he was out of the Country at the time and in his role as an OSAC member, he was concerned. Adam said he was not at the last meeting either but felt that some of the ideas were not addressed and that you (Open Space) were going to do at Apex what you wanted and comments didn't matter and the plan was already in place.

Kevin responded by asking Ralph for his comments and Ralph indicated that this meeting was not going to redo the process of Apex. Kevin felt with Adam's comments that it was not about Apex but the perception that was given. Ralph stated that the written final report which was posted explained in detail what had been decided and how this was done. Since both Adam and

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Kevin were unavailable at those final meetings, Peter Morales and Dave Cohen both gave statements of Ralph's diligence and fairness in the Apex matter and were completely satisfied with the effort. Kevin wanted to emphasize that every meeting and comment and all the work processed over time should have an effective transmittal of information to the public. It was explained in detail by Ralph how the information was disseminated to the public.

Bikers Representatives: Dave Cohen, Peter Morales, Joe Hendrickson, Paul Murphey (alt.), Marc Peot (alt.), Henry Woodward (alt.):

Peter Morales indicated that this is a shared use Park and the dialog was very adequate and was not to push a particular agenda for a particular group. Kyle Henley wanted to make a comment regarding his appreciation from Dave and Peter reaching out to him to join TUTF, as an alternate. He is a board member of COMBA, and he stated he just loves to use the trails as a mountain biker and loves the experience. He was not aware of all the aspects but from what he can see at this meeting he believes there is much fairness and that the committee has the user's consideration in mind at all times.

Dave Cohen said he realized that he wished for a different outcome to Apex but he believes it has been a fair process and perhaps, now is the time for Jefferson County to look into mountain bike only trails and is encouraged that they have been directed to do just that.

Update On Apex Park Plan:

The order of the agenda was altered to have the Apex Plan Update occur next.

Ralph stated that the Apex decision has been made and that it got e-mailed to everybody associated with the Task Force and placed on the Web site. He talked about the overall general issues that he articulated to the Advisory Committee on October 1st. He indicated that we could spend time going through why he didn't agree with some of the other alternatives that were presented, that didn't work for him, didn't work for the park, or didn't work for the guiding position that the Advisory Committee had approved. He had listened to the feedback that came to the Advisory Committee before and during their meeting.

He asked if any of the people in attendance for this meeting were still at the meeting on October 1st, because at that time they may have seen that several members of the Advisory Committee have different perspectives on how to go forward with certain specific elements but nothing that was overriding in terms of the entire Park plan. Ralph indicated that what he did was go back to what we refer to as the "Compromise Plan" and added some extra actions to help us go forward to monitor the situation and improve what is going on at Apex. Those actions were sent out to everyone. Ralph said he would be happy to articulate them again at this meeting if anyone wants him to do that. He stated that we are going to monitor Apex for 3 years beginning in 2010 for the terms and modifications. The management practices focus on safety and risk management of the alternating day's system. At the Advisory Committee meeting, there were some comments about whether or not to shift that to even-number day. The sense was that the odd numbered days would make it a Centennial Cone or Apex Park choice. Basically Centennial Cone parking lot is going to be at capacity. So part of it is to spread the usage out to the parks. That's why Ralph kept the odd-number day schedule. At the very beginning, actually back in the 9/21 version of the plan, Ralph stated that he did not go with the COMBA alternative which,

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basically, added another trail extending the Enchanted Trail and his sense was that adding another trail would impact the Park even more. He stated we have way too much usage at Apex. Building a trail that is basically another alternative for a high-speed trail is not what we are trying to achieve at that Park. So, we did not go with that. Ralph did implement some of the elements that seemed to make sense dealing with the additional trail near the trailhead that goes up to Pick N' Sledge to give the hikers and equestrian people a way to get up to the top in a safer manner and to disperse usage out of the Apex Canyon. So any of the hikers or equestrians who would go up that trail would, in essence, have biking coming up that new trail that would be at a slower speed, a safer way for them to get up to the top of the Park. At the upper portion of the Park, the trails are no more congested than any other park and not to the point staff felt that there was any rationale to do more to the upper portions of the Park. So basically, hiking, equestrian, biking activity would mix as it normally does throughout the upper reaches of the Park and then the hiking and equestrian folks could come down Sluicebox and, although it was not in the 9/21 plan, they could get over to the Enchanted Forest Trail. People hiking and equestrian people in the neighborhood also enjoy Enchanted Forest just as the mountain bike people enjoy Enchanted Forest. So if they could get over to that trail they could have the experience and it would be a way for them to move through the Park. The segment of trail in the middle of Apex that is directional came in part from the last Trail Use Task Force meeting when concepts of directional trails were discussed. Part of the sense of that trail being directional, and initially it was every day, but the compromise was alternating days to stop the high-speed activity coming all the way down Apex Trail. Shuttling or the big heavy bikes will essentially have to go up Sluicebox so that it will stop some of that high-speed activity that's coming down the Apex Trail. Ralph indicated that he knows that we have issues that some people say the Enchanted Forest Trail is their favorite trail and we should be able to use it everyday. It's also other Park users who enjoy that trail as well and some of them have been forced out or pushed out of the Park. So basically, the 9/21 plan that was put together was a way of providing an alternative for the hiking and equestrian people to be able to come into the park, use the park and not have the high-speed activity. On the other alternating day, the Park is "as is" and we are going to continue to have challenges with the speeds that are going to happen in that Canyon, at Apex, and part of the additional actions that Ralph stated he is looking forward to working with everyone and to have everyone help communicate is the differential speed we have to get under control. He also indicated that the biggest reason, and he stressed this very strongly with the Advisory Committee and the Commissioners, is that we have got to get a better handle on the safety issues and risk management issues in the Park. He stressed that the attendees and members don't always hear when we get phone calls or when we get e-mails or letters from people asking when are we going to do something before someone gets maimed or killed in the Park. And it doesn't affect everyone, because they are not the Director of the agency that has to address when something like that happens.

It has not just been since May that we have been hearing about these issues at Apex Park. Ralph stated he has been here 11 years and has been hearing these issues for 11 years, the challenges and issues at Apex Park. He stressed the main thing that he wants is to have a shared use Park; a place that hikers, bikers, and equestrians can use. He said at the Advisory Committee meeting, and he was stating it right now, that he doesn't aspire for Apex Park to be a park that people nationwide are trying to get into. He wants it to function as a Jefferson County Open Space Park. He mentioned that he got over 800 e-mails and stated that a third or more were not from

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Jefferson County. That does not mean that there are people outside of Jefferson County that are not welcome to come use the Park. But what it does tell him is that the growth and usage of Apex Park is going to continue and it's going to get more and more until we put something in place that at least gives our hiking, equestrian and bikers an opportunity to use Apex Park in a safer manner. We want to lean on the Task Force to provide some monitoring and feedback for that Park. He asked, "Do I have the magic solution for how we are going to monitor that?"; and answered "No". He stated we are going to implement the plan next spring in terms of the directional usage that will occur there. We are going to rely on the Task Force because that is a big reason this Task Force exists, to communicate back and forth. He stated he has had several one-on-one meetings and group meetings with people around this table to give his perspective and this message does need to get out. But the thing is we have got to make Apex a better Park and it's got to be a safer place for people to go. And it's just not there. We are going to do a lot more communication, a lot more outreach, we are going to do things like ambassador-type programs. We are going to have more contact that's going to be out there. We are going to have programs with Colleen's Rangers who are going to be out there. He asked, "Now is everybody going to like that or enjoy that? Probably not", he stated. But, he stressed, we have to do something about that Park and that it is his responsibility and that's what he is going to do.

Kevin thanked Ralph for the explanation. Ralph added one other thing that he was not biased against mountain bikers and neither is OSAC. Kevin reiterated the passion that everyone has for these issues and he appreciates the work being done and the work that the Committee, and specifically Ralph, has put into this. Adam thanked Ralph for the explanation. Amy indicated information on the Apex Plan is on the website.

Doug Torza suggested that we look into having a mountain-bike-only park. Amy stated that when Centennial Park was new we had many management techniques that we implemented. She reiterated that it was much easier to make changes because it was a newer Park. She pointed out that we relied very heavily to the Trails Task Force for their input.

Discussion of Equestrian Parking:

In regard to that, Amy introduced the next item on the agenda regarding TUTF input to make changes to equestrian signage. Specifically, she relayed the three different parking scenarios and types of signage that input was requested on. The first was Open Parking where there is no signage and basically anyone can come first-come-first serve; the second, is Preferred Area Equestrian Parking that indicates preferred spaces but still first-come-first serve; and, three, Reserved Equestrian Parking where there is reserved equestrian parking.

Amy asked the user groups to provide any feedback they had received from their user groups and noted that nothing would be decided this evening. Signage wording was also discussed and the word "Reserved" was asked to be incorporated into the wording. The user groups all liked the #2 and #3 scenarios but offered a different compromise of a 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. time for reserved equestrian parking. This was an idea that will be looked into. Dan Shier also mentioned that they received 18 replies and 14 liked reserved equestrian parking. However, if new signage were installed, they'd recommend one of these Parks: Alderfer/Three Sisters; Flying J Ranch; Lair o' the Bear; Matthew Winters and Mt. Falcon. Amy asked what the average length of stay was for equestrians and the answer was 5 hours. Some of the returned comments were :

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Biking: #2) “I feel this solution would be the least confusing and most beneficial to all park users.

#3) “I feel this would be the second most effective solution to parking issues at the parks.

Biking,Equest. #2) “I think this might be the best solution to keep space available for trailer parking without excluding the space from other users.

Amy thanked the members for their input and will take this back to OSAC.

Update and Discussion of Draft Yield Regulations and Process including Trail Etiquette Components: Colleen Gadd

Colleen gave her presentation on the yielding regulations and handed out flyers on “Draft Trail Etiquette”, “JCOS Education & Outreach Efforts”, and “Process” (describing the process of approval). Colleen stated she has received many comments that were very personalized experiences and could not list them all here but they will be taken into consideration in preparing the etiquette wordage. Taylor Shull stated the importance of the correct signals to use upon approach and asked how do we put this into safety and etiquette regulations. Mr. Beckman, asked about the consideration of trail width. Colleen stated this was considered. She also talked about if a person is distracted and using cell phones or I-pods. But some of these aspects cannot be enforced and only can be pointed out as safety issues. Colleen stated we have to remember that there are elderly, hard of hearing, and animals that may not respond to bikers, hikers, or equestrians. Also, horses startle and we have to educate the public to be aware and to gain attention to safely pass on the trail. Colleen went over The Draft Trail Etiquette proposed: Courtesy goes a long way to decrease conflict and increase safety; Equestrians have the right of way in all situations and should communicate to others when it is safe to pass; Use friendly greetings to gain other users’ attention; Be aware of your surroundings; When using ear buds, keep one ear free to hear approaching users; Use of cell phones are discouraged in order to hear approaching users; Before passing, make sure the other user is aware of your presence and slow down; Voluntarily yield the trail when appropriate; Move to the side to allow passage; Stay right, pass left; Slow down when approaching other users; Expect and respect other trail users and wildlife; Follow posted signs and learn about the park before you go. Colleen then went over the review process. Comments are to be received by Colleen by Friday, October 23rd.

Staff Updates:

Amy indicated that in the hallway she displayed three new parking lot drawings. Hildebrand Ranch Park is under construction with an opening date anticipated by the end of the year; Mayhem Gulch, will be open soon but we will be closed for hunting Dec. 1 through January; North Table Mountain, the parking lot itself won’t be open until next year but the entry road is underway. Kim Frederick is here and he is working on the trail extension connecting Reynolds down south to the Colorado Trail and this will be multi-use when completed. We’ve worked with the Denver Water Board acquiring access. Ralph indicated Reynolds Trail may be pushed back a bit to allow for the trail construction at Apex. The Reynolds Trail will be approximately 9 miles.

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Determination of Next Meeting:

Amy thanked everyone for a very productive meeting and tentatively set the next scheduled meeting for Tuesday, May 11, 2010.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 p.m