

TRAIL USE TASK FORCE MEETING

June 9, 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	Kathleen Davey, Equestrian/Park Patroller
Kim Frederick, OS Staff	Colleen Gadd, OS Staff	Joe Hendrickson, Biker	
John Litz, OSAC & Plan Jeffco	Paul Murphey, Biker	Tookie Scherder, Hiker	
Amy Ito, OS Staff	Dave Cohen, Biker	Nancy Hathaway, Equestrian	
Don Klima, OS Staff	Peter Morales, Biker	Adam Feerst, Hiker	
Doug Torza, Equestrian	Idalyn Foley, Equestrian	Ann Smith, Equestrian	
Alene 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.

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.

User Group Updates/ Feedback:

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

Dan Shier noted the changes to the equestrian representatives and alternates. Doug Torza offered for discussion the confusion when equestrians come into a park and equestrian spaces are taken, what the policy is? Could equestrians park in other spaces or on the street if all spaces for equestrians were taken? Stanton LaBreche said they would be allowed on the street if there were no signs prohibiting parking. It would be determined by the turning radius of the spots somewhat and if there would be a safety issue. Amy Ito submitted that it would also depend on the road (County, etc.) and its regulations and if it is an entry road. Amy indicated OSAC will be reviewing some equestrian parking information soon regarding specific parks and that there are many times when "one size does not fit all" because of turning and circulation allowances. OSAC committee members will continue to work with the equestrians and address this park by park.

Kathleen Davey described an incident at Matthews/Winters when she was on Park patrol in which a biker sped past her horse in a confined trail area and slapped her horse as he rode by. She also cited another incident concerning a visually impaired group that day. She and others were in uniform and on volunteer patrol and were ignored. She stressed concern for safety issues and wherever possible focusing time instructing people and educating them. Peter Morales suggested they meet later to discuss how this information can be dispersed to others through their bike magazine and meeting.

Kevin Burke indicated that these are isolated incidents but nevertheless serious. Colleen offered that she has the report of this incident and her task is to have communication between groups and funnel information to Open Space. Dan distributed 2 pictures of equestrian trail issues at White Ranch.

Hiker Representatives: Tookie Scherder, Adam Feerst, Nancy Woodson:

Nancy Woodson indicated the Apex feedback favored directional trails. This also includes White Ranch and Chimney Gulch. Nancy Woodson said that hikers like separate days for users. Tookie Scherder polled a number of running groups and got similar thoughts.

Bikers Representatives: Dave Cohen, Peter Morales, Joe Hendrickson:

Dave mentioned a new alternate, Henry Woodward (who will replace Dawn Peterson), and his background as well as the Chimney Gulch Mini-Crew Day. Dave mentioned that comments are coming in regarding Apex and he will save his plan for the Apex discussion and wanted everyone to know that one of their principles is to have an equal amount of trails for all users. Peter indicated in the surveys for Apex and Crown Hill there is "reckless behavior" noted at both parks. Dave sees entirely too many electronic devices being used which alter the response time of a user. Education and awareness of surroundings is needed and he wants to see what feedback there is for directional use and how it could affect these circumstances. The audience agreed that there was a need for a policy or regulation on this and then some signage. Kevin indicated that these are evolving issues. There was a request that this topic be put on a future agenda.

General Comments:

Ann Smith commented on equestrian parking as a big issue and indicated that turning radius is important so trailers are not damaged. Amy suggested the brochure, "Little Known Jewels" (which was placed at the entrance table this evening) to look for parks which are not as busy. For larger groups, Amy asked that they check in for a special activity permit. Don Klima stated we don't get too many large hiker groups, but we do have running events. Typically 50 or more people is required and for equestrians, a smaller group would have similar impact. Ann Smith asked what the equestrians should do when there were no parking spaces available at a park. She stressed the safety aspect and concerns she has heard about damage to the trailers.

2008 Visitor Survey Results CNT Alternating Schedule:

A discussion was held on the alternating days schedule at Centennial Cone. Attachments were sent by e-mail with the agenda in advance of the meeting with information on the survey and visitor count information. We will make a decision this

year on this management technique. Amy went over the results of the survey. Dave indicated that Centennial Cone is a destination park while Apex and White Ranch are in a suburban area.

There was some support to consider adding directions to the trails, and also acknowledgement that directional trails don't work in all cases (when there isn't a loop available, when a user is tired and needs to turn around, etc.). The equestrians said they support going in the opposite direction so that the horse can be approached from the front and not the rear.

Patrick Leach stated there are areas that alternate different directions for hikers and bikers successfully and we should look into Boulder's system at Betasso Preserve. Peter indicated the management at Centennial Cone had been "rolled out" successfully and just some fine tuning is needed. Additional signs were requested by Adam and others to help explain the alternating schedule. Kyle Henry indicated that the alternating schedule is more feasible since Centennial Cone is a destination park. Tookie mentioned this is a good example of how you can train the public to a new system, given the high survey response support.

The audience agreed through comments that many times users don't know what day it is, and after taking the time and effort to get to a park, go ahead and use it despite signage. Kevin indicated that in most cases this is an enforcement issue.

Opportunities to Improve Visitor Experience at Apex:

Dave gave a media presentation for some options at Apex Park showing various plans and rotating direction on a portion of the Apex Trail and trouble spots. Dave noted that traffic slows at the junction of Pick n' Sledge, it is a little rocky and everything is upward from that point. In some of the areas where it is very narrow, steep and next to a creek there is no option for parallel trails. The area on Apex where Enchanted Forest runs back into Apex and before Sluicibox comes down and cuts off going down to Heritage Square is one area with a lot of use and a lot of speed differential and the majority of speed conflicts are here. There was a suggestion that you go to the top where Lookout Mountain Road is, and close it off; and we did look at that but thought it would be impractical because basically it is unenforceable and decided not to do that. We also thought about putting Enchanted Forest in the management directional but decided against it based on equal mileage principals that every user group should bear some cost. This is the reason why we are concentrating on the main part of Apex Trail between Sluicibox and Pick n' Sledge.

Dave indicated that there is a lot of cross country biking on Apex and there are also people who just go to the top of the hill and ride down. He offered some options. At Apex East, if you get to the point of the junction with Pick n' Sledge and there was a directional type of use dictated on the trail it will determine the traffic, density and the speed differential. If you are a hiker it is likely you are going to encounter a biker riding at a high rate of speed down Apex during the designated month so you would go on

Pick n' Sledge. Other months as a biker when you get to the junction known as the Apex Funnel, you would be required to ride up Sluicebox and that would eliminate the heavy downhill bike.

Don Klima inquired, how would you incorporate the alternate direction for hikers and bikers?

It was suggested by Dave that he would like to hear from the equestrians and hikers to get their opinions on which direction they prefer bikers coming up from the rear or from the front.

The following is the excerpts from the opinions expressed from this query:

1. (Hiker) I suggest directional because bikers can go longer distances than hikers most times.
2. (Equestrian) I think we should get a feedback from our users. I know what my preference is but Kathy feels differently with her horse.
3. Anne: Historically the Buffalo Bill Cattle Club travels up the trail four times a year to go to Lookout Mountain for events they hold in order to entertain people about old west horseback riding. We have stopped that because of the bikers and because the trail was deteriorated. There are a lot of loose rocks that crumble as you ride down the trail and it is too dangerous. (Amy asked if those dates were specific and could travel direction be customized). Anne replied they were date specific. It was suggested that perhaps a special event permit could be looked into for this type of occasion.
4. An audience member indicated that he loved this park and he himself is very conscious of safety. He stated that the problem is the vegetation is so thick in some areas that the visual clearance is not there to see ahead. The trail is very tight and in some areas dips down and sharply turns. He wondered if signage would be the answer. He also inquired as to the communication policy regarding yielding and thought it should be clarified more, especially on the website.
5. Another audience member inquired if the proposal was to flip direction for everyone or would the direction and yielding be construed differently between bikers and the other user groups.
6. Adam indicated that we should consider "slow zones". He pointed out that runners usually start as a group but then spread out.
7. Another audience member inquired about the wear and tear of the trail.
8. Doug asked if the biker direction will be applied to all user groups.

Amy noted that there were comment cards out on the table for people to feel free to fill out and mentioned how pleased she was at the participation of everyone tonight with their ideas and comments.

Staff Updates: Kim Frederick, Amy Ito

Don Klima commented on the yield proposed amendments to the regulations. Don stated that we were holding a comment period and a 3-page packet was sent out with a letter updating the draft for the current yielding language. We are requesting comments by July 6th on how the language would affect you whether hiker, biker, equestrian, or as

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an individual or as an organization. The comments will be presented at the OSAC meeting in August. He made himself and Colleen Gadd available for questions after the meeting tonight and noted that hard copies were on the table for anyone to take. Colleen Gadd clarified that the current regulations are in effect and that we are trying to apply a clarification and that the spirit remains the same.

Amy introduced Kim Frederick to report on Trails Maintenance. He indicated we are working with the Youth Work Program and they have a strong presence at Centennial Cone, Mt. Galbraith, Lookout Mountain Nature Center, Alderfer/Three Sisters, Elk Meadow, and Chimney Gulch. That Trail staff is out in the parks with additional trail construction at North Table Mountain, Reynolds, Welchester and South Table Mountain. He directed everyone to visit the website for information and made himself available for questions after the meeting.

Amy indicated that we have 3 new parking lots under construction. Hildebrand Ranch Park allows public access via automotive and provides separate equestrian parking. North Table Mountain Park off Highway 93 will also have separate equestrian parking. Mayhem Gulch at Highway 6 will provide a trail to Clear Creek under the highway as well as to Centennial Cone trails.

Determination of Next Meeting:

Amy thanked everyone for a very productive meeting and set the next scheduled meeting for October 20, 2009. Kevin Burke thanked everyone for their very thoughtful comments which led to a very productive session.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 p.m

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