

**East Bay Regional Park District
Trails User Working Group
Meeting Notes April 22, 2021, 10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (via Zoom)**

Meeting Attendees:

East Bay Regional Park District: Brian Holt, Devan Reiff, Sean Dougan, Amanda Sanders, Suzanne Wilson, Kim Thai, Captain Lance Brede, Sean Connelly

Moderators: Lou Hexter, Maria Mayer (MIG, Inc.)

Working Group Members: Rick Rickard, Joseph Mouzon, Luana Espana, Gary Fitts, Jess Brown, Norman La Force, Scott Bartlebaugh, Simone Nageon de Lestang, Austin McInerny, Bonnie Lewkowicz, Jim Hanson, Helen Burke, Morris Older, Mary Barnsdale, John Aaron Graves, Emily Scholz, Linus Eukel, Mimi Wilson, Jess Brown, Amelia Marshall, Kathy Roth, Michael Gregory, Sean Burke, Pam Young, Elizabeth Hudson, Marie Grisham, Antoine Chambers, Ian Baird, Adele Ho

A meeting of the Trail User Working Group (TUWG) was held April 22, 2021, via Zoom. Lou Hexter acted as the moderator for the meeting. The following is a summary of the items discussed. The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m.

Welcome:

Lou Hexter welcomed everyone to the meeting. Lou reminded everyone that if they have comments to send them by email to Devan Reiff, dreiff@ebparks.org. The agenda was reviewed with the group and the TUWG members were reminded of the general group rule to be respectful while commenting. Brian Holt thanked everyone for taking a part in the TUWG. The Park District really values the group and the input received from this group. The current events nationally has influenced how the Park District is focusing on how it can provide inclusive, equitable access to parks for all of the communities the Park District serves. The Park District is transitioning to a new General Manager, Sabrina Landreth, from the City of Oakland. There continues to be a 30-50% increase in use of trails and parks across the board, which comes with additional conflicts. Staff has begun to look at management opportunities within parks, for example Briones, and different education campaigns that can be implemented to reduce trail user conflicts. Lou reminded the group of the webpage for the TUWG where there is a variety of reports and date for viewing: <https://www.ebparks.org/about/planning/tuwg/default.htm>

Reflections on the Previous Meeting:

Lou mentioned the last TUWG meeting where the focus was regarding the bicyclist's perspective. Strategies and ideas that are brought up during each meeting will be circled back to at a later meeting to synthesize ideas into recommendations on strategies to move forward.

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Issues in Trail Conflict Since the Previous Meeting:

Devan Reiff stated that in the past two months there have been more communicated trail conflicts. Devan invited the group to use this time to speak about the issues. Jim Hanson asked for some details of the issues. Devan replied that there have been reported conflicts especially at Briones, as well as more emails and letters sent to the Park District to the about conflicts. Captain Lance Brede said that trail conflicts can be attributed to a lot of new users, as well as existing users that aren't following "call out" rules while using shared trails. Briones park is very popular and there have been complaints of mountain bike use on single track trail. The District Police Department has put up signage on trails an example of education to teach the established rules, as well as issuing citations in places where mountain bike usage is posted as not an allowed use of trails. Morris Older said given the increase of usage in the pandemic there are brand new user groups that represented in the TUWG attendees, for example there have been several examples of 4x4's breaking through gates and driving on single track trails. Jim Hanson asked Captain Brede what the cost of a citation is. Captain Brede replied that the bulk of reported conflicts are from the equestrian community. The fine of the citation is set per Ordinance 38 to approximately \$50, but there are additional fees depending on which court jurisdiction the citation was issued in, so the fee could be \$300 to \$500 total. Adele Ho said that the Volunteer Trail Safety group has been activated. Norman LaForce asked how many citations are dismissed for various reasons and what the conviction rate is. Captain Brede replied that it is important to work with Operations to make sure illegal trails are signed, to ensure that the citations are enforceable.

Simone Nageon de Lestang mentioned in chat: I think that with a citation that large without advertising and education programs in place has serious issues with equity, particularly for new trail users that we should be WELCOMING to our parks.

Mary Barnsdale typed into chat: Is this rise in complaints due to an increase in actual conflicts on the trails or was there a call by equestrians to have people make complaints to the park district? (As we know, Sierra Club and California Native Plant Society both put out a call to their members after the last TUWG to email the EBRPD with concerns about narrow trail use.)

Sean Dougan responded in chat: There has been an increase in complaints during the pandemic, but the complaints have spiked since the TUWG was convened. Not only complaints but calls for more trails and more access.

Scott Bartlebaugh mentioned in chat: MTB community is working with the district on implementing a bike bell station program as a component to educate and reduce conflict.

Equestrians' Perspectives

Sean Dougan provided an introduction to the Equestrian perspective. Horseback riding is allowed on 57% of unpaved trails. Visit www.ebparks.org/activities/equestrian to see the many different activities (trails, parking lots, campgrounds, barns, etc.) supported for equestrians within the Park District. Horseback riding requires a certain type of trail design. Horses weight 900 - 2,000 pounds and are prey animals with wide/large eyes so their depth perception is somewhat poor. They have a great sense of hearing and smell. Interacting with horses on trails requires a higher level of trail etiquette. There were comments in chat that the triangular yellow yield sign is confusing to understand at a glance. There was a question as to if any of the horse facilities were accessible to people with disabilities.

Presentations given by four members of the equestrian community; Marie Grisham of Tri-Cities Horsemen's Association, Elizabeth Hudson of EBRPD Volunteer Mounted Patrol, Amelia Marshall of EBRPD Volunteer Trail Safety Patrol, and Gary Fitts of Tilden-Wildcat Horsemen's Association. Please see PowerPoint slideshow on

the TUWG website. There were a variety of comments typed into the chat function during the slideshow presentation.

Simone Nageon de Lestang said in chat: Given the current climate with law enforcement, I think it is important to consider POC opinions on increased law enforcement and whether it is a solution that is desirable or would push people to feel unsafe in parks.

Morris Older mentioned in chat: Marie Grisham organizes this kind of training several times a year, in Martinez, sometimes on Mt. Diablo and elsewhere. Obstacle course, sensitizing horse to these and other things. Trial trials are a competition where riders demonstrate how well their horses have adapted to all kinds of stimuli.

Marie Grisham responded in chat: Tri-Cities Horsemen's Bomb Proofing Playday is on May 22nd at the Radke Martinez Shoreline Arena. Spectators are welcome to attend!

Morris Older said in chat: Unfortunately, Amelia's survey is extremely unscientific, unrepresentative at best, that was conducted on her FB Page Horse Policy East Bay, which excluded at least one member, maybe more, who dared to express a differing viewpoint.

Bonnie Lewkowicz mentioned in chat: At the start of the meeting we saw a breakdown of the percentage of trails that were open to horses but are there any statistics that shows of all trail users what percentage use horses? Reply from Sean Dougan: Bonnie, we do not have that data that I am aware of. Most of the data is observational or word of mouth from the community on where folks like to go. Reply from Bonnie: Thanks Sean. For me this seems like a very useful thing to know because for equity purposes it might help determine how many trails should be designated as only for horses.

Austin McInerny said in chat: The Piedmont High School situation was addressed promptly and the coach apologized for promoting this event. This was not a sanctioned event by the NorCal High School Cycling League and was an isolated event.

Antoine Chambers said in chat: Today was full great topics, I like how everybody got to share their focus but we need more. Austin hit it on the nail last time we spoke there only been five or fewer parks have been built?

Simone Nageon de Lestang responded in chat: I agree Antione! I think we should all rally around how we can open these new parks! I also agree with Jim in wanting a bit more info on the landbanked properties!

The TUWG participants were split into five breakout groups. They were asked to answer the question: What do you think would improve trail user experience for equestrians and those sharing the trails?

Report Back from Breakout Groups:

Group 5 – Simone Nageon de Lestang reporter, Austin McInerny, Emily Scholz, Linus Eukel, Luana Espana, Marie Grisham, Mimi Wilson, Suzanne Wilson: **Solutions** – Trail user dispersion and better trail design could help. Opening different trails to allow for more usage. Creative trail management issues. Right of way issues and lack of education, including the triangle yield sign, and how people should act around horses. Increases sight lines, less than 10% grade, building more trails, working collaboratively to allow the Park District to build more trails.

Group 4 – John Aaron Graves reporter, Adele Ho, Bonnie Lewkowicz, Maria Mayer, Sean Connelly: **Solutions** – When designing new trails and park to think about them holistically, can they be built while thinking about all the different trail user groups needs and wants. Design trails specifically for horses, trails for bikes, spaced out from the other trails. Bonnie Lewkowicz added in the interim having a “Best Of” list on the Park District website, for people who are new to getting outdoors for different user groups.

Group 3 – Sean Dougan reporter, Amelia Marshall, Antoine Chambers, Elizabeth Hudson, Ian Baird, Kathy Rother: **Solutions** – Equestrians want a safe, stress-free experience. Maybe a horse loop trail brochure should be made. Education for all groups. Bike use is increasing. Improving signage include saying if horses are on trail and what to do. Better locks on gates to keep people where they should be. More trails, separate trails for bikes. Designate sections of land within parks where certain activities are allowed. Mitigation fees or permit fees for certain usage within parks. Can some parks be entirely bike free?

Group 2 – Helen Burke reporter, Jim Hanson, Morris Older, Pam Young, Rick Rickard, Devan Reiff: **Solutions** – Disagreement on the types of measures you can take, bulb outs, controlling flow. Separate bike trails suggested. Disagreement on if we should just deal with new parks/trails or existing trails. Before planning for landbanked areas we need to discuss how to handle current trail conflict.

Group 1 – Scott Bartlebaugh reporter, Gary Fitts, Mary Barnsdale, Michael Gregory, Norman LaForce, Sean Burke, Kim Thai: **Solutions** – Design items, speed slowing, pinch points. Management system of calendar days of alternating use of trails. Flow patterns for users and designing the trail for that. Have active design instead of just using roads on land. Bell program. For existing issues, the LUPA process should be used. Mary Barnsdale mentioned that they did talk about separate trails.

Kathy Roth brought up that she was hoping that the TUWG is going to focus on new landbanked acquisitions. Would like information on what the restrictions and deed issues are for those properties that need to be followed when planning new trails.

Lou mentioned that this TUWG is really focused on providing guidance for future trails. That doesn't mean that some solutions can't be used in current trails, but just the focus.

Morris Older posted in chat: On newly built shared trails, both narrow and wide, for a safe and enjoyable ride, hikers and equestrians want: Clear sight lines to see other users from afar. Pinch points, rolling dips, grade reversals to make excessive speed difficult. Grades never exceeding 10%, usually much less, to minimize gravity-fed acceleration. Education to sensitize users to the needs of other user groups. Clear signage as to what uses are allowed, and enough nearby options for bicyclists that they are not tempted to ignore that signage. On narrow trails, occasional places to pull off to allow other users, including other equestrians (!), to pass when going in opposite directions, or in the same direction at differing speeds. Enforcement of rules where needed. Morris mentioned that from 2002 – 2019 he organized a six-day trail ride in the East Bay Hills and included a five-day hike as well. In all those years there was only one accident. If most people are going out on the trails and having a good time that matters.

Next Steps

Devan stated that the TUWG has had robust trail user meetings. We would like to hear presentations from the environmental, youth perspective, the disabled community, the cultural perspectives, the dog walkers.

Norman LaForce said that the environmental groups and conservationists need a full session for that community. Helen Burke agreed with Norman and said that there would need to be a decision made soon.

Suggested Future Meetings (Subject to change): June 10 (Environmental groups, Cultural affinity and youth), July 15 (new meeting) (Dog owners, Disabled Community) August 5, and September 19

Member Announcements:

CA Horseman's Association will be meeting in June. They would be happy to share information discussed with the TUWG.

Meeting Close

The meeting came to a close at 12:05 p.m.

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