

From: [Nathan Cohen](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: 3-18-2021 Watershed Committee Comments
Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 11:45:41 AM

Hello,

I'd like to submit a public comment on the following agenda items for the Watershed Meeting scheduled for March 18, 2021. My comments are relevant to agenda Items #3 and 4.

As a resident and active user of MMWD trails, I urge you to think critically addressing the increased recreational usage and complaints by simply hiring another ranger. Scientific, evidence-based problem solving techniques must be used to address the root of the problem. Jumping to solutions may not solve the problem and the wrong solutions may even make the problem worse.

Whether or not there is truly an increase in trail conflicts, I suspect the root of the problem has more to do with an imbalance of recreational opportunities for different user groups. If my assumption is correct, hiring an additional ranger would likely not solve the root of the problem.

If the goal of this process is to reduce the number of user conflicts, I recommend investigating opportunities to open more singletrack to bicycles. Bicycle access is currently severely limited within the MMWD land. Bikes are concentrated on fire roads, adding to congestion in busy areas. Allowing bikes on more singletrack will disperse traffic over larger areas, increase the safety of all users, and decrease conflicts between groups. It is easy to intentionally or unintentionally travel at high-speed downhill on a fireroad on a bike. Bikes must travel much slower on singletrack trails. Please be very cautious of vocal interest groups that allege bicycles on singletrack are more dangerous or damaging to the environment due to erosion. These claims are simply not supported by any factual evidence. In fact, the users who push to keep bicycles off of singletrack are becoming more and more an extreme minority. Mountain bikers are a legitimate, safe, and large user group that should have fair access to the trails. Modernizing the operations and regulations of the water district to improve equity will benefit all trail user groups.

Thank you,
Nathan

From: [Eli Bingham](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Comment on MMWD Recreation Management Plan
Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 11:05:06 AM

Re: MMWD Recreation Management Plan

To the MMWD board and other interested parties,

I am a Mill Valley resident since 2016 and a native-born Northern Californian, originally from the Mendocino Coast. My family and I visit Mt. Tamalpais and other watershed land every week. The mountain is an important spiritual and physical marker in our daily lives. We hike, we ride our mountain bikes, we drive, and at least once every day, we admire the mountain from afar. We enjoy observing the landscape and all the flora and fauna that the mountain has to offer. We also depend on MMWD's reservoirs for our life, quite literally - and so we feel that we are stakeholders of the process and have a strong interest in the future of recreation on the mountain.

Updating the RMP represents a critical opportunity to address that future, and the interests and equity of all parties to that future. The recent surge in visitation means that we can no longer rely on a plan which does not address the needs and interests of all parties. I am incredibly grateful that the board is seizing this opportunity now, and I want to thank everyone involved in the process no matter their role or viewpoint on the situation.

First - for the RMP to be viable in 2021 and beyond, it must create a policy approach that addresses the needs of all users and allows sharing of the resource in a way that mitigates the perception of conflict between different kinds of users. There are a variety of tools that could be in the toolbox to accomplish this, including time-sharing of trails, directional trails, and user-specific trails. This can be a part of the plan, and then it can be implemented over time as specific opportunities are identified.

Second - we can mitigate conflict by spreading use and providing what is not provided now, but is so strongly and obviously desired by mountain bikers today. For example, consider the areas near Fairfax, Ross and the easternmost reservoirs. New policies can take mountain bikers off crowded multi-use fire roads and into the hills that they want to ride in anyway. Bike-priority, directional trails could take you up and around these crowded areas and bring you back down on another directional trail. This would provide a need that mountain bikers - also rate-payers - have, while eliminating conflict created by forcing users together onto popular trails.

Marin County Parks successfully ran a RTMP process between 2010 and 2014, which can be a model for what MMWD is doing now. Mountain bikers do not want the district to pay for our opportunities, and the sweat equity model of the Tamarancho Boy Scout Camp

shows that mountain bikers can do this for MMWD, with the right supervision and support.

Respectfully,

Eli Bingham

From: [David Carbonell](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Comments for Board Meeting on Thursday at 1:30pm regarding Recreation Management Plan
Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 10:35:19 AM

To the MMWD Board:

Thank you for taking up the relevant and important need for a revised Recreation Management plan. Your work on developing an inclusive and equitable management plan will benefit so many of Marin's citizens and ratepayers who recreate on Tam and its surrounding watershed.

It is critical to address the Road Management Plan before addressing needs for additional expenses like a ranger. Quite frankly, expanding conventional and electric mountain bike access to both fireroad and narrow trails on Tam will eliminate the need for the expense of an additional ranger.

The current approach of asking a significant user group, by estimates 40-50% of the recreational activity on Tam, to share less than 5% of the trails is illogical and counterproductive to the recreational needs of the community. Expand access, distribute use throughout the watershed, encourage courteous behavior, and the conflicts, tensions, and complaints will fall.

Please consider ideas such as directional trails, day-use, and bike-priority trail designations as these have been proven in other California watersheds and adopted into the RTMP of Marin County Open Space.

Please also consider that the community of citizens who use their bikes on Tam would contribute valuable volunteer hours to help with stewardship and maintenance of the watershed. However, if the policies continue to exclude them from the watershed, then the watershed will lose the support of these users.

In short . . . legalize, don't criminalize! Cyclists who belong to the Tam community and pay MMWD are responsible citizens who are engage in an environmentally friendly and mutually inclusive activity that is as legitimate a form of recreation on Tam as riding a horse or walking on a trail.

I look forward to your new, more inclusive and equitable Recreation Management Plan and appreciate your labor to diversify the recreational use.

Dave Carbonell, MD

From: [Albert Flynn DeSilver](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Comments on Bicycle use in MMWD lands
Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 7:22:07 PM

- Dear MMWD Board, Thank you so much for your good work keeping our drinking water systems safe and clean and, open access to our MMWD lands during the pandemic. As a rate payer I am concerned by the use of rate-payer monies going for increased enforcement of mountain biking instead of accepting the realities of a growing user group and increasing access. There are some very simple solutions to this issue which I and thousands of other mountain bikers beg you to consider including *1 way directional trails, *volunteer bike bell stations at busy trailheads, *alternate day trail use for bikes. These and other solutions HAVE PROVEN TO WORK IN DOZENS OF OTHER MUNICIPALITIES AROUND THE COUNTRY!! YES, they can work here.
-
- Can you please present the data to back up the need for another ranger? Please show us documentation of actual conflict between user groups. The rate payers need to see this to support this expense.
- Why are you proposing hiring more employees before the RMP review process? The RMP review process can explore ways to address the watershed issues and the solutions may not be another ranger.
- An alternative to more law enforcement expense is access to trails for mountain bikers. Instead of working against us, why not work with us and accommodate the changing demographic of the watershed? This is an equity issue in and of itself. Until changes are made YOUR policy decisions will result in continued "Poaching," user conflicts, and continued bad will against Rangers. I want to LOVE Rangers and am grateful for their service, but when their job description becomes geared more and more toward "hunting" for mountain bikers, rather than serving the equitable needs and safety of ALL users, you create an environment of distrust, anger, and defiance that serves nobody! Thank you for listening and your continued good work serving the needs of ALL users! Sincerely, Albert DeSilver, Woodacre

Albert Flynn DeSilver

Writer * Speaker * Workshop Leader

*NOTE NEW EMAIL for BW-Related communications: albert@albertflynndesilver.com

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"A MUST READ!" —BUSTLE Magazine

From: [Jim Johnstone](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Comments Regarding Watershed Recreation Management Plan
Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 12:55:33 PM

To the MMWD Board:

Thank you for taking up the relevant and important need for a revised Recreation Management plan. Your work on developing an inclusive and equitable management plan will benefit so many of Marin's citizens and ratepayers who recreate on Tam and its surrounding watershed.

It is critical to address the Road Management Plan before addressing needs for additional expenses like a ranger. Quite frankly, expanding conventional and electric mountain bike access to both fireroad and narrow trails on Tam will eliminate the need for the expense of an additional ranger.

The current approach of asking a significant user group, by estimates 40-50% of the recreational activity on Tam, to share less than 5% of the trails is illogical and counterproductive to the recreational needs of the community. Expand access, distribute use throughout the watershed, encourage courteous behavior, and the conflicts, tensions, and complaints will fall.

Please consider ideas such as directional trails, day-use, and bike-priority trail designations as these have been proven in other California watersheds and adopted into the RTMP of Marin County Open Space.

Please also consider that the community of citizens who use their bikes on Tam would contribute valuable volunteer hours to help with stewardship and maintenance of the watershed. However, if the policies continue to exclude them from the watershed, then the watershed will lose the support of these users.

In short . . . legalize, don't criminalize! Cyclists who belong to the Tam community and pay MMWD are responsible citizens who are engage in an environmentally friendly and mutually inclusive activity that is as legitimate a form of recreation on Tam as riding a horse or walking on a trail.

I look forward to your new, more inclusive and equitable Recreation Management Plan and appreciate your labor to diversify the recreational use.

Jim Johnstone
18 Golden Hind Passage
Corte Madera, CA 94925
415-302-1567

From: [Zachary Redlin](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Essay for board meeting
Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 9:32:27 PM
Attachments: [Zachary R Mountain Bike Opinion Google Docs.pdf](#)

I'm an 8th grader at Kent Middle School in Kentfield. I really appreciate that the board is discussing a new recreation management plan. The following essay that I wrote for my English class would be relevant for Thursday's board meeting.

Thanks so much.

I love to ride bikes. By far, my favorite place to ride is on narrow trails, or as mountain bikers call it, singletrack. I feel connected with the trail and the mountains around me. Compared to riding loose, gravelly and boring fire roads, riding on singletrack is pure heaven. I dream about getting into the mountains, going over rocks and roots, zipping around smooth corners and crossing streams on little bridges. However, across the country, many singletrack trails are closed to bikes.

Mountain biking really helps me relax. No matter how upset or frustrated I am, once I pick up my bike and hit some of the few trails that I can ride, I immediately feel better. I always come home with stories to tell. Sometimes, it's "I saw a coyote today!" or "I went to a spot with the best view!" And it's not just me! In a New York Times article, studies have shown that outside activities raise enthusiasm, pleasure and self-esteem while lowering blood pressure, tension and depression. By far, my favorite way to exercise outside is to ride singletrack.

Two of the main reasons that bikes aren't allowed on singletrack currently are concerns about erosion and hiker safety. However, mountain biking contributes less to erosion and habitat loss than hiking does. One study done by the U.S. Geological Survey found that there was severe erosion on only 0.6% of biking trails, but 1.4% of hiking trails. Bike trails also lost the least amount of soil, were the least muddy, and were the narrowest (so they affect less plant life) out of all types of trail usage. Clearly, mountain bikes when compared to other trail users have less environmental impacts on the trails.

Conflicts between bikers and hikers are relatively rare. A California Parks survey found that 2% of trail users reported having a conflict on the day of the survey and 1/3 reported ever having a conflict. Some disputes can get pretty heated though. One of the main things that hikers complain about is mountain bikers' speed, but with obstacles like roots and rocks that are both fun for bikes and slow them down, some of the conflict could be minimized. Disagreements could be prevented altogether if land managers enacted simple trail sharing practices like alternating days and adding bike-specific or one-way trails.

Mountain biking is a wonderful sport that millions of people enjoy. Riding singletrack is simply the best way to experience it. With sustainable trail building to accommodate all users and strategies to mitigate conflicts, singletrack can be a haven for all outdoor lovers. There's no reason that I shouldn't be allowed to do what I love.

Anderson, Randy. "Trail Use Conflict Study: California State Parks: Road and Trail Change In-Use Evaluation Process." California State Parks, June 2012. www.parks.ca.gov

Marion, J. L., and N. Olive. *Assessing and Understanding Trail Degradation: Results from Big South Fork National River and Recreational Area*. USGS Unnumbered Series, U.S. Geological Survey, 2006. pubs.er.usgs.gov, <http://pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/5200309>.

Marion, Jeff and Wimpey, Jeremy. "Environmental Impacts of Mountain Biking: Science Review and Best Practices." *Managing Mountain Biking: IMBA's Guide to Providing Great Riding*, 2007 www.usgs.gov

Reynolds, Gretchen. "The Benefits of Exercising Outdoors." *Well*, 21 Feb. 2013, <https://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/02/21/the-benefits-of-exercising-outdoors/>.

From: [Ryan Milhous](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Fairfax resident and Mountain Biker emailing in support of MMWD's process to revisit Recreation Management Plan
Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 10:25:52 AM

Hello, I'm writing as I'll be unable to attend the live meeting this Thursday at 1:30 PM where MMWD will be discussing the process to revisit the Recreation Management Plan. I love Fairfax, Marin County, and the incredible access we have to hike, bike, and explore this incredible land. I'm also hopeful that we can get creative and thoughtful about how to continue to expand access and be more thoughtful and inclusive of those who want to hike, bike or ride horses in different areas. Throughout the Pandemic, my wife and I consistently commented how lucky we were to have all of the beautiful outdoors to explore by foot and mountain bike, and are hoping we can continue to consider opening more trails up to biking in a safe and thoughtful way.

Some specific comments below:

- Thank you, for spending the time to re-think the Recreation Management Plan! The pandemic has further underscored the need to be inclusive about access to public lands and allowing people to get out and enjoy nature. I appreciate this group spending time here!
- There is an opportunity to get creative about trail access moving forward rather than simply thinking about whether hikers, bikers, or horses are allowed for each individual trail: this includes options like time sharing of trails, directional trails, and user specific trails.
- Conflict can potentially be addressed by spreading out the use and providing what isn't being provided now. Take areas like Phoenix Lake, Lagunitas Lake, and Deer Park: With new policies we can create trails that get mountain bikers off of these busy multi use fire roads and into the hills where they want to be. A directional trail could be bike priority and take you up and around these areas with another directional trail bringing you back. This would provide a need that the users (rate payers) need and would pull mountain bikes off of popular hiking trails.
- Marin County Parks successfully accomplished this process between 2010 and 2014. There is an opportunity to use that as a model of how to proceed. Additionally Santa Cruz County has been incredibly successful in being thoughtful and creative in how we can open up additional trails to Mountain Bikers. That is another blueprint to consider as we build out a new way of thinking about trails here.
- Mountain bikers are willing to pay to play through sweat equity. We aren't asking the district to pay for our opportunities. We built trails like Tamarancho Boy Scout Camp entirely with volunteers. We can do this for MMWD with the proper support and supervision.

Thank you again for spending the time here! I wish I could make the call live, but will try to do so for future calls.

-Ryan Milhous

From: [Astra Teller](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: For your consideration regarding the Recreation Management Plan
Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 9:46:50 PM

To the MMWD Board:

Thank you for your consideration for a revised Recreation Management plan and taking the time to hear the public's input on this topic. It goes without saying that due to the state of the world and communities, the increase in park use throughout the region is no longer something which can be ignored but rather a call for community leaders to take action on. Call it the 'New reality' or the 'change in times' but perhaps we can all agree that updates need to be made to the current process and design of use given that they are no longer serving the needs of the community, old and new.

I think that it would be safe to say that everyone has the watershed's best interest in mind and coming to a mutual agreement on how to best utilize the watershed and park's amenities while keeping the land and the users safe is everyone's goal. With that said, I would like to ask the Board to take a moment to consider how the watershed and its current trail use came to where it is today. Sometime ago, there was an increased need in trail use and I'm sure that then too there was hesitation within the community for expansion and upgrades to the original trails. This was the result of the changing times then, and the same pain points we are facing today. There was growth in the community and unmet needs among the recreational users, as seen today, and there were steps taken to provide both sides with amicable results, as we are hoping will also be the case now.

Although I understand the concerns of those who strive to protect their communities, I feel that it would be irresponsible for the watershed to ignore the progression and growth in current-day trail use. To aggressively contain the inevitable by throwing more authoritative power at this issue does not signify that the watershed is looking to work with the community to find a common goal. The new hikers, riders, mountain bikers, and runners ARE the community which are now utilizing these resources and instead of updating the processes to align with current needs, I find it disheartening that there would be more consideration in punishing the community rather than finding ways to acclimate to the changing needs. These changes can be as simple as incorporating more directional trails, bike-only trails, or expanding trails to multi-use. These are all very realistic and attainable implementations which could provide this ever growing community with the space it needs.

I don't believe that providing the community with more space equates to more problems as this is only the case when the problem is pre-defined as being increased use. It is clear that this problem is already present and is here to stay. I feel that it is now the responsibility of community leaders such as yourselves to help everyone find an amicable solution without ignoring the inevitable.

I am greatly looking forward to see what steps will be taken to assure the best case use for this recreational space for this growing community.

All the best,
Astra Teller

From: [Mike Ghaffary](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Increased Mountain Biking Trails
Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 12:11:25 PM

I've learned that you're doing a study to increase mountain biking trail access. I've seen plenty of people write very thoughtful notes and detailed thoughts. I just wanted to write a shorter note to express my support for increased access for biking by opening up new trails, which will lessen load on existing trails.

[@newmike](#)

Sent via [Superhuman](#)

From: [Stephen McDaniel](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: MMWD Recreation Management Plan
Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 9:28:38 PM

Dear MMWD board of directors,

Thank you for your interest in a revised Recreation Management Plan and for taking into consideration the public's input on this important matter. As residents of Marin and nature enthusiasts, my family and I enjoy and depend on MMWD's lands on a daily basis. We relish hiking, running, walking our dog, and riding our bikes on the beautiful MMWD lands, and depend on the clean, fresh water it provides.

It has become abundantly clear during the past year that we are certainly not alone in this. With more runners, hikers, and bikers than ever, our MMWD lands are well trafficked, and even congested. Piling onto that the stress that we all feel these days, seeing an uptick in the number of conflicts should be expected.

But a well managed trail system the size of MMWD should be able to avoid this. The easy solution is to hire a ranger to add additional enforcement, like buying a garden hose to put out a wildfire. But the wildfire isn't the problem, it's the symptom. The problem is we have failed to respond to our changing environment-- despite obvious warnings and ample time-- and are now trying to fix it with the wrong tool!

Thank you again for your interest and engagement in this work. I hope that with a new RMP we can bring the trail management policies into the 21st century with proven trail management techniques like alternating days of use, directional trails, and separation of trail users.

Most sincerely,

Stephen McDaniel

From: [Mike Nettleton](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: MMWD Recreation Management Plan
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 7:48:46 AM

Dear MMWD Board of Directors,

Thank you for your service in overseeing all aspects of the watershed. From the essential task of delivering clean water to the management of one of Marin's largest public land holdings, your role is of great import to all Marin residents and rate payers.

This past year has highlighted how precious the water district is for recreation. Yet, even before the incredible uptick in visitation, the watershed lands served as a much needed space for connecting with nature, exploration, exercise, socialization and inspiration.

In my nearly 10 years of living in Fairfax, I have travelled on almost every trail or fire road either hiking, trail running, mountain biking, solo, with friends or family, with my dog, with my children in backpacks, in strollers or finally on their own bikes. I visit the watershed at least once a week, often up to four times a week. I have also volunteered pulling broom in the district and attended numerous outreach efforts, participated in previous comment periods and attended board meetings. In short, I am fully invested in the district's recreation management plan being as inclusive and effective as possible.

This plan is a much needed review of how recreation is addressed in the district. The recent spike in visitation aside, much has changed since the last plan in 2005. Mountain bike use has steadily grown, yet mountain bike access has not. The Azalea Hill Project is a great start at addressing the growing need for narrow trail access for mountain bikes in the district, but the RMP can go much farther to address both the dearth of mountain bike access to narrow trails as well as overall user conflict (perceived or real) crowding and safety.

With trail management tools such as use-specific trails, directional trails, bike priority trails, alternate day use patterns and more, the district's recreation management plan can better reflect the current user demographics and needs of rate payers. This is not simply a give away to mountain bikers. Implementing these tools will disperse use and the attendant use-related wear and conflict that comes with highly trafficked areas — concerns of all visitors. These are tried and true trail management tools used to great effect around the country.

Just as hikers seek a variety of trail experiences — think of a family with toddlers leisurely strolling around Phoenix Lake versus a pair of 20 year old cross country runners out to sprint along Yolanda Trail — mountain bikers similarly include riders along a spectrum of skill and fitness seeking a multitude of experiences within the district. A well managed trail system should be able to cater to a broad range of users seeking diverse experiences. Please consider that narrow trail access to mountain bikers, when managed thoughtfully, can ease user conflict, disperse use and address the current, untenable status of zero bike legal narrow trails in the district.

Thank you again for engaging in the important work of revisiting the Recreation Management Plan. With careful thought, this new plan can be durable for many years to come.

Regards,

Mike Nettleton

From: [Trevor Burke](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Re today's meeting and the RMP
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 8:55:25 AM

Dear MMWD Board,

I'm writing to you as a Corte Madera resident and active user of water district lands. It's very discouraging to hear that the Board is seeking to hire another ranger; where is the data backing up why this is necessary? Why not invest funds into improving access to all trail users?

Mountain bikers are very eager to put in the work to build single track trails for bikes. It will reduce congestion on fire roads and get mountain bikers onto trails they want to ride. I will personally volunteer to build these trails and I know so many others would too.

Mountain biking has been surging in popularity during the pandemic and no doubt will continue to do so. Instead of policing people for wanting to recreate why not extend an olive branch by building new mountain bike dedicated trails? Or opening some trails to bikes on certain days? Or designating trails as one directional?

I implore you to consider the possibilities of giving an inch to mountain bikers will feel like a mile.

Thank you,
Trevor Burke

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Trevor Burke
415-794-4111
trevorpburke@gmail.com
trevorpburke.github.io

From: [Gabe Brown](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Recreation Management Plan
Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 10:25:32 AM

Dear MMWD board members,

It has come to my attention that the board is reevaluating the Recreation Management Plan. This is great news as, particularly with Covid, I've observed a huge uptick in recreational use. I think that's great that people are getting outside and using the Water Shed for recreation!

As a Mill Valley native and a lifelong Mountain Biker I'm also excited at the possibility of the MMWD board considering ways to accommodate the huge growth in the rate paying mountain bike user group.

While I understand that change is difficult, I think the time has come that the shift towards creating new trails for mountain bikers is upon us. Mountain bikers have historically suffered from a baseless bias in Marin County and on the Water shed. There are really know studies to show that mountain bikers do more harm to the water shed than hikers, equestrians or any other user group. There are however some very loud voices in the other user groups that have successfully kept any meaningful and positive change from happening over the past 4 decades.

I think the only real way to handle this is to create new mountain bike specific (or preferred) trails. One way to do this would be to build one way trails (up/down, North/South, etc...) as you get deeper into the water shed, this becomes easier to provide mountain bike only (or preferred) trails as it is more difficult for hikers to reach these trails.

As a mountain biker with kids who also mountain bike. I would be happy to help pay for these trails (with sweat equity) by helping on trail building days, poison oak and broom pulling (I've helped with this since I was about 12 years old).

I'm also in support of making sure that everyone knows the correct etiquette for sharing trails. I think licensing and training for all users of the water shed is something that could be considered. There are organizations already working in Marin that could work with MMWD to facilitate this training and licensing. Acknowledging the existing and inevitable future growth of user groups on the water shed, I think it's important that everyone knows how to coexist on the mountain.

In addition to simply wanting an equitable share for Mountain bikers, I think it's important to note the fire dangers on the water shed and compare to other areas. One good example is Annadel park. It has burned in each of the previous years fires and due to its extensive trail network for both mountain bikers and hikers navigating the defense lines was much easier. It's also likely that with those networks were natural fire breaks that helped prevent fire spread. It's very likely that this trail network helped saves many homes in the last 2 fires. This is actually my greatest concern for Mt Tam. It is such a dense forest with so much dry timber, it's a catastrophe waiting to happen.

Gabe Brown Web Designer, Developer, Marketer & Story Teller
web: freestylewebsolutions.com email: gabe@freestylewebsolutions.com

From: [Jackson Ratcliffe](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Recreation Management Plan
Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 10:27:49 AM

Dear MMWD Board,

I cannot attend the meeting but would like to give my two cents.

1) Horses are permitted on many non-fire road trails in MMWD land. Horses weigh 2,000 pounds, have steel horseshoes, tear up the trails and defecate. None of these impacts are necessarily good for our water supply, yet the rules allow horseback riding as recreation is part of the purpose of MMWD's land charter.

2) Bikes are smaller and lighter, have rubber and air tires, and the science has shown bikes create less soil disturbance and resultant erosion than horses. Another feature of bike rides is that they tend to not defecate on the trail. Yet in spite of these scientific facts, MMWD trail rules continue to ban bikes on all trails yet permit horses on some trails.

The science behind the permitting of horses and banning of bikes does not make sense and discriminates against a large group of local residents who often have bad knees and cannot hike 5 miles without pain and cannot afford a horse.

Times have changed and in the old days people rode horses. Today people ride bikes.

Can you please start allowing bikes on some (NOT ALL !!) of the singletrack trails? There are many remote areas like Pine Mountain, Northside, Kent trail, that see very little visitor traffic and could easily accommodate bike riding.

Just as there are trails that are hiker only, and some allow horses, couldn't we do the same with bikes?

Jackson Ratcliffe
Corte Madera

From: [Philip Chenette](#)
To: [Cynthia Koehler](#)
Cc: [Terrie Gillen](#)
Subject: Recreation Management Plan
Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 11:41:58 AM

To the MMWD Board:

I am a resident in Mill Valley and an enthusiastically hike and bike these wonderful natural resources of MMWD near my home.

The Recreation Management plan has been an important guide to utilization of Marin public resources. Thanks for your work to develop an inclusive and welcoming policy. I support revisions to the plan to open access to Marin natural resources.

It is time to expand conventional and electric mountain bike access to both fireroad and narrow trails on Tam. The public wants biking access to these trails. The thoughtful and progressive approach is to develop access, rather than restricting access to specific interest groups.

Biking constitutes more than half of the recreational activity in my area. Allowing cycling access to less than 5% of the trails is illogical and counterproductive to the recreational needs of the community. Expand access, distribute use throughout the watershed, encourage courteous behavior, and the conflicts, tensions, and complaints will fall.

Directional trails, day-use, and bike-priority trail designations have been proven in other California watersheds and adopted into the RTMP of Marin County Open Space.

The biking community has been a strong supporter of our natural resources. Their willingness to contribute to trail maintenance and natural resource protection should be encouraged.

In short . . . legalize, don't criminalize! Cyclists in the Tam community pay MMWD fees. They are legitimate users of Tam trails. Cyclists are responsible citizens who are engage in an environmentally friendly and mutually inclusive activity. Cycling is as legitimate a form of recreation on Tam as riding a horse or walking on a trail. When I hike, I appreciate sharing the trails with bikers. When I bike, I appreciate sharing the trails with hikers.

I look forward to your new, more inclusive and equitable Recreation Management Plan and appreciate your efforts to diversify recreational access.

Philip Chenette, MD

From: [Bill Keene](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Cc: [Shaun Horne](#)
Subject: Watershed Committee Mtg - March 18, 2021
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 9:00:02 AM

Good morning,

My name is Bill Keene and I'm a resident at 170 Forrest Avenue in Fairfax, California. I want to express my gratitude to the Board for embarking on a process to update MMWD's planning for recreation and trails. I recently retired from Sonoma County service where I served as General Manager of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, where I led an organization that in addition to protecting more than 50,000 acres during my tenure, also doubled park acreage in Sonoma County including the construction of multiple trail systems aimed at getting all users on the land. I want to offer my services to your agency as you embark on this work as I can provide a perspective on how this process can truly work for all users. If there is an opportunity to serve on an advisory committee for this process, please consider this email as my formal request.

Anecdotally, as a longtime resident of Marin, I have long seen the conflict between user groups persist from as early as the 1980s. There's a great opportunity to develop solutions that can address conflict, safety, separation of users, and protection of the environment. I will be there on the zoom today if you would like to engage with me on these issues. I also want to express that I've spoken with Shaun Horne in your office and offered my assistance as well. Let me know if you have any questions on what I've presented today. Again, thanks for your work in this most important area.

Kind regards,

Bill Keene

From: [Liz Hill](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Watershed Meeting 3/18/21, Agenda Item #4 Comment
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 12:18:37 AM

Watershed Meeting 3/18/21, Item #4: Watershed Recreation Plan Update

Dear Watershed Committee/Board of Directors:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important topic and I applaud the District for prioritizing the update to the Watershed Recreation Management Plan (RMP Update). Implementing the RMP Update will be critical to address current and future recreation-related interests and issues within the Watershed.

I respectfully urge the District to incorporate measures and policies in the RMP Update that address the needs of all users in the most equitable and realistic manner. People who ride bikes have been integral to the culture of the community who has recreated on District lands for several decades. But people who ride bikes on District lands also hike, run, and walk our dogs on the trails too! In many cases, a biker is not just a biker – we are community members seeking the same physical and emotional fulfillment the Watershed offers, as it does for the hiker. The bike community that regularly recreates in the Watershed is a keystone user group the District can harness in its goal of stewardship. It is a reasonable request to align the policies of the RMP Update to reflect the recreational interests of those most at stake. We welcome the opportunity to provide fair, realistic, and economical solutions to the issues at hand without undermining the District's goals, stakeholders, or being exclusive to other user groups.

As such, I recommend to allow the RMP Update policies to be accepting of the flux (quantity and type) of user groups mid-week vs. weekend, and adaptable to the recreation demands of the future based on current data and forecasts driven by visitation trends. Specifically, and in cooperation with the primary recreation user groups, please consider the following concepts when drafting/updating the policies:

- **Include time-sharing of trails (i.e., alternate day use patterns)**
- **Directional trails**
- **User-specific trails (e.g., bike priority trails)**
- **Narrow trail access for mountain bikers**

With thoughtful incorporation of these trail management concepts, the RMP Update can better address the current user demographics, the overwhelming majority of which are ratepayers. Further, these concepts can disperse use, reduce off-trail use, and reduce conflict occurring in highly trafficked areas. Lastly, these concepts can be implemented in concert with the District's objectives of maintaining water quality, safeguarding ecological integrity, and protecting against wildfires.

Given the recent increase in visitation, I offer kudos to the District for its desire to hone the framework for how recreation within the Watershed is to be managed. The Marin and regional bike community will support you along the way to ensure the RMP Update is a model recreation-related land management plan for other entities in the State and beyond. Regardless of your favored form of recreation, thanks in advance for your thoughtfulness, cooperation, and creativity in drafting the District's recreation management blueprint for the benefit of the community and land managers for years to come.

Regards,

Liz (weekly recreationalist on District lands)

From: [Grant Lacey](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Watershed Recreation Plan
Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 11:45:05 AM

To the MMWD board and other interested parties,

I have been a San Anselmo resident since 1995 and have been a mountain biker (Since 2nd grade!) and outdoor recreator here for just as long. I have enjoyed exploring the woods with my friends and being able to appreciate the outdoors just a few minutes from my home. My family and I visit Mt. Tamalpais & watershed land multiple times a week on a regular basis. I feel that we are stakeholders of the process and have a strong interest in the future of recreation on the mountain for *all* users of this land.

Updating the RMP represents a critical opportunity to address that future, and the interests and equity of all parties to that future. The recent surge in visitation means that we can no longer rely on a plan which does not address the needs and interests of all parties. I am incredibly grateful that the board is seizing this opportunity now in order to set everyone up for success for generations to come.

For the RMP to be viable in 2021 and beyond, it must create a policy approach that addresses the needs of all users and allows sharing of the resource in a way that mitigates the perception of conflict between different kinds of users. Some examples include time-sharing of trails, directional trails, and user-specific trails. These initiatives could be a part of the bedrock of the plan, and then it can be implemented over time as specific opportunities are identified.

We can mitigate conflict by spreading use and providing what is not provided now, but is strongly desired by mountain bikers. New policies can take mountain bikers off crowded multi-use fire roads and onto bike-priority, directional trails, thus reducing or even eliminating user group conflicts. This would provide a need that mountain bikers - also rate-payers - have, while eliminating conflict created by forcing users together onto popular trails.

Marin County Parks successfully ran a RTMP process between 2010 and 2014, which can be a model for what MMWD is doing now. Mountain bikers do not want the district to pay for our opportunities, and the sweat equity model of the Tamarancho Boy Scout Camp shows that mountain bikers can do this for MMWD, with the right supervision and support. There is an army of mountain bikers in Marin ready to lend a hand with volunteering opportunities and trail building/creating if they are given the chance, myself included.

Thank you,

Grant Lacey

From: [Joshua Petersen](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Board Meeting Comments
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 10:59:21 AM

Dear Board Members,

Thank you for your time and your commitment to our water resource and the beautiful landscape/area that surrounds it/us.

I am an avid hiker, runner, and biker and regularly recreate in the watershed.

My comments relate to the following topics on Today's Board Meeting Agenda :

Item #3 Water Regulation & Enforcement

The Watershed Recreation Plan should be updated before committing to the long term costs related to hiring and managing a new Ranger.

If the main reason for hiring an additional ranger is to police/respond to mountain bikes on hiking-only trails, we should first conclude whether or not the use of mountain bikes should be expanded to more single-track trails.

Most of the hiker vs. biker conflict I have read about or witnessed has more to do with expectation and following the rules, rather than safety or being in danger. As a hiker on a non-biking trail, I don't expect to see a bike and therefore can be surprised or bothered when I see someone breaking the rules. I don't feel in danger, I just think people should generally follow the rules.

If biking was permitted on some of those trails, I (like most hikers/runners) would expect to see more bikers and therefore wouldn't have "conflict."

Item #4 Watershed Recreation Plan Update

Mountain Biking

Mountain biking is a growing sport that is not going away. The sport is growing and developing towards trail/single track type riding, not fire road riding. Most people who mountain bike, also hike and understand the importance of safety, respect, and following general yielding rules. The Watershed's recreation plan should primarily protect the water resource and secondly be representative of the type of enthusiasts that use it.

Being that there are so many mountain bikers (especially young/growing kids) that use the watershed, we should have more mountain bike accessible trails. These trails can be existing trails with time/day of use restrictions and/or new trails built by volunteers.

Horses

Horses are beautiful animals. When I have the opportunity to ride horseback, I always take it and thoroughly enjoy it.

As a hiker on a trail in the watershed, I am far more concerned and cautious when I encounter someone on horseback, than when I encounter someone running or on a mountain bike. Horses are large and can be skittish or nervous around people (walkers & runners) and bicycles. As a sport and hobby, horseback riding is becoming less popular.

I am not suggesting that we limit the use of horses in the watershed, only that we use the same criteria and objectivity when considering the future use of mountain bikes. The watershed is a shared resource and its use should be representative to those who (want/can) most frequently use it.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,

Josh

Joshua Petersen

M: (415) 728-3620

@: josh@CompartoSF.com

From: [Vernon Huffman](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: comments for item 4 on today's agenda
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 10:52:42 AM

Dear Watershed Committee Directors,

My name is Vernon Huffman and I am President of Access4Bikes in Marin County. I represent the interests of approximately 2600 ratepayers and watershed users.

I am very appreciative that you will be reviewing the Recreational Management Plan for the watershed. I hear from my members regularly that they don't feel they are treated equitably or that they have fair and reasonable access to the watershed. My hope is that through a fair assessment of the plan and an update of some policies, my members might enjoy a more rewarding experience.

We care about this resource immensely and want to ensure it is protected for generations to come. Given the increase in use during the pandemic we believe we need to look to our neighboring land agencies nearby for success stories. Recently Marin County Parks undertook a review of the Roads and Trails Management Plan. In order to fairly address the needs of its users they started by conducting user survey's at trail heads at various times and days of the week. They got some very important data and that information helped them to focus on what policies needed to be updated while prioritizing resource protection at the same time. I encourage the same approach to your process. Our members would like assurances that the users have a voice and not special interest groups that rarely set foot on the watershed.

An interesting development that MCP initiated was a comprehensive toolkit of trail sharing methods/policies. The agency added the ability to change the use of a trail and add another user group. They added a policy to allow directional trails, time sharing of trails, and user specific trails. They created a method to bring social trails into the official trail network as they saw a need for more miles of trails to spread out the use in the district. All of this was the result of the initial survey and the staff's ability to address the changing needs of its users.

Another example of your neighboring land agencies and change: Mount Tamalpais State Park is going through the process right now to add bikes to the Easy Grade Trail, formerly a hiking trail only. We are very appreciative that State Parks is listening to the connectivity needs of mountain bikers and changing its trail use policies.

We encourage MMWD to learn from its neighboring land managers. The demographics of your users have changed tremendously over time. Mountain bikers are now your second largest user group. We bring solutions, volunteerism, and funding to the table.

We believe that by updating your RMP to address the needs of your users, you can address some of the common complaints of those users. Places like Phoenix Lake and Deer Park are too crowded as all users are channelled into one access point. We can address that by building new trails or changing the use of nearby trails to allow mountain bikes an alternate way in and out of the watershed. By separating the users onto separate trails you provide the safety that some are asking for while addressing the need for more trail experiences for mountain bikers too.

We are here to help and look forward to engaging with you in this process.

With Gratitude,
Vernon Huffman, President, Access4Bikes Foundation

From: [Meghan Harwood](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Public Comment: Marin Watershed Committee
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 10:46:46 AM

To Watershed Committee/Board of Directors,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in advance of today's meeting. This email/comment is in regard to Item No. 3, entitled "Watershed Regulations and Enforcement", and Item No. 4, entitled "Watershed Recreation Plan Update". Mainly, I am concerned about the decision to hire additional rangers to patrol the Watershed without knowing if that is the best solution and most prudent expenditure to address trail user conflicts. It makes the most sense to make decisions based on a comprehensive assessment of resource need and expected trail usage trends, of specific trail issue areas, and after considering other potential sustainable and innovative trail management approaches. I would like to request that the following questions get answered during the Meeting:

Understanding Conflict Areas and Sustainable, Long-Term Solutions to Trail Management

1.

Which trails are most complained of regarding hiker/biker trail conflicts? If there are only one or two (or a handful) or trails with sustained issues, has the MMWD considered alternative, innovative, and self-sustaining trail management alternatives for those specific trails - such as making those few trails directional, user-specific, or time-dependent? These methods have been used on trails across the country, and have significant safety, trail condition, and user benefits. Hiring a ranger before discussing the merit and opportunity for these approaches through the RMP Process seems like a missed opportunity to implement innovative, impactful, and financially prudent alternatives to hiring a new ranger. Adding these options into RMP process could enable MMWD to be more flexible over time: investing in trail user education and awareness about new trail designations (again, whether directional, user-specific, or time-dependent) gives MMWD flexibility down the line to use these designations as tools down the line as the Watershed and users evolve.

2.

Has the MMWD considered community engagement and education alternatives to hiring an additional ranger? Mediation and community engagement meetings, or investing in improved trail etiquette education, could have longer-term and resonant benefits for MMWD trail usage well beyond mediating conflicts between user groups. It is not clear that simply adding additional rangers will equate to reduced trail conflicts (such as adding additional Police is proven to not result in a reduction in crime) - and could exacerbate user group conflicts, in fact, if not paired with the above alternatives. There should be an outreach effort between MMWD, hikers and bikers to resolve their trail etiquette and find a mutual resolution to trail conflicts.

Understanding the Changing Usage of the Watershed

1.

Has MMWD taken into account long-term assessments of trail usage and patterns for making a decision about hiring a new Ranger? It is apparent that as a result of the pandemic, more people are going outdoors. There is a chance that, by the end of this year, the pandemic will mostly be over and community members will return to work. If that is the case, then user traffic may drop significantly again, and the cost of hiring a new ranger may be deemed unnecessary.

2.

Has MMWD considered what benefits would come from investing in the mountainbike community - and therefore considering alternative trail stewardship and management investments instead of/before hiring a new Ranger? Significant research has been done showing the economic benefits of a flourishing mountain bike community. While not Marin County specific, there are certainly questions posed about the opportunities presented by investing in the preservation and support for the trail biking user group that should be of interest to MMWD, in particular given the complete scarcity of singletrack trails open to bikers now. As we have seen with Camp Tamarancho, the mountainbike community does an upstanding job of recruiting and supporting new trail building and trail stewarding volunteers to work - helping steward local bike shops, bike events, and bringing volunteer labor to assist with smart trail maintenance. Given the changing demographics of user groups in MMWD land and Marin County, it's important that *all* new investments into the MMWD land management - whether a new Ranger, or whatever else is identified through the RMP process - takes into account changing user groups in the Watershed. Simply hiring another ranger without a more comprehensive assessment of who the main growing user groups are in the County is not ideal or responsible. As mentioned earlier, opening up more existing trails to bikers, whether hiker + biker shared trails or biker-specific singletrack, could naturally reduce conflict. Bikers would have increased access, anger levels would be reduced, and conflict could be better mediated through education of trail etiquette and safety in a controlled and planned manner.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment!

Sincerely,

Meghan Harwood

From: [Andrew J. Goldman](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Re: Item No. 3 MMWD March 18, 2021 Meeting
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 9:46:01 AM

To Watershed Committee/Board of Directors,

This email/comment is in regard to the Item No. 3 entitled "Watershed Regulations and Enforcement." I am concerned over the necessity of expending additional funds to hire additional rangers to patrol MMWD watershed land. I do not believe Item No. 3 provides a sufficient basis warranting the hiring of additional rangers at this time. Simply because "watershed rangers have seen an increase in calls for service" does not warrant sufficient justification for hiring additional rangers. **There is nothing within the Notice that indicates that existing Rangers cannot handle the alleged "increase in calls for service."** Before the Board votes on this matter, the Board should have sufficient information that demonstrates hiring of another ranger is reasonable, justified, and that is not a more reasonable means to resolve "watershed user issues." To this end, I would request the following questions be answered and/or discussed:

1. Can existing Rangers handle the alleged "increase in calls for service" regarding hiker/biker incidents? If not, why not?
2. Has there been an increase in biker-tickets in the past few years? If so, by how much? If there has not been a dramatic increase, this would indicate that either (1) there has not been an increase in hiker/biker conflicts; OR (2) the existing Rangers are not using their time as efficiently and effectively to ticket illegal mountain bikers.
3. What are the alternatives to hiring an additional Ranger? Has MMWD ever considered mediation or meetings between hikers and bikers to resolve their differences? Simply adding additional Rangers (similar to adding additional Police), does not equate to a reduction in trail conflicts (or in the context of Police, a reduction in crime). Has MMWD ever consider identifying or opening existing hiking trails to bikers and hikers (to reduce the impact on other trails in which there are high hiker/biker conflicts).
4. Which trails are most complained of regarding hiker/biker trail conflicts? If there are only one or two trails, then why can't MMWD's existing rangers not increase patrol of these trails? Or could alternative trail management approaches - such as directional usage, user-specific designations, or some time restrictions - be considered for those certain trails or a subset?
5. As for the existing MMWD rangers, what is their time allocation specific to trail supervision? How many hours a day? What times of the day? It should be determined that existing MMWD rangers are incapable of reasonably providing trail supervision before the Board should consider addition of another Ranger.
6. It is apparent that as a result of the pandemic, more people are going out doors. We can safely presume that by the end of this year, the pandemic will be mostly at an end with a mass vaccination and we can presume that people will return work. This would mean less people outdoors, including both hikers and bikers. Has this been considered by the Board in relation to the cost of hiring a new ranger?
7. MMWD's greatest resource is its visitors. Since the pandemic hit, what outreach has MMWD done to notify its visitors of the rules/regulations of the watershed land? Has MMWD taken any action to inform hikers what they should do in a situation where they see a biker on an illegal trail?

On a final note, it is evident that the reason Item No. 3 is being brought to the Boards attention is to reduce trail conflicts between hikers and bikers. I do not believe hiring an additional ranger will achieve this result. There must be an outreach effort between MMWD, hikers and bikers to resolve their trail etiquette and find a mutual resolution to these trail conflicts. Simply hiring an additional, most likely unnecessary Ranger, will only result in a greater feud between hikers/MMWD and bicycles.

Additionally, I would like to specifically note that there is not one single track open for mountain biking use. I strongly believe that opening at least one single track trail to multi-use (allowing bikers and hikers) or creating a new single track trail for mountain bikers would significantly reduce the impact of hiker/biker conflicts on other trails. Has this option ever been considered by the Board? If not, now is the time.

I look forward to todays discussion.

Sincerely,

Andy Goldman

From: [Chris Hobbs](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: RMP comments
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 10:13:01 AM

Dear MMWD Board Members:

I am not able to attend today's meeting, but I wanted to write in to support the recreation planning process and hope that you can find a way to update the RMP for our current needs. The watershed has been an invaluable recreational resource, this past year more so than ever, and I appreciate MMWD's work in keeping it open in this stressful time.

With vastly increased use of the watershed for recreation, moving forwards it seems that a plan for inclusion, rather than exclusion, is called for.

I have hiked and mountain biked in many areas in the West, and nowhere else have I seen the level of user conflict that occurs in Marin County. I think that an element of this conflict is the very limited opportunities for bikes to access trails. The demographics of trail use have changed, and the opportunities have not changed to keep up. Bikes are a large percentage of watershed users, but only allowed access to a small fraction of the trails.

Other areas use a broad toolkit of trail sharing and conflict resolution to keep issues to a minimum. They use education rather than enforcement to improve trail use at a much lower cost. They create trail networks that spread out users from crowded trailheads and roads. As a ratepayer, I want to see my fees focused on water quality and supply, and fire mitigation, not a police force.

The current process seems to be clouded by legacy stakeholders and policies. Much of the current conflict seems based in perception, rather than fact. The new recreation plan is an opportunity for a fresh look, with outside experts, on how to manage recreation on Tam in the future in an inclusive and sustainable manner.

Thank you,

Chris

From: [Don Johnson](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Trail Management Plan
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 10:53:14 AM

Dear Directors thank you for taking up this important issue. With the increase in use due to the pandemic I think we can find solutions for all users going forward. I have been using the watershed for over 55 years on a regular basis and truly believe there is very little conflict that can be easily resolved. I have been very impressed with the way Marin Parks handled this process a few years ago. My main means of recreation is mountain biking followed closely by hiking and I was a volunteer in the 1987 1988 information outposts put on by the Bicycle Trails Council of Marin so much has been learned over the years on how to handle these issues that I eagerly await the process that follows

Thank You
Donald Johnson
24 Mariele dr
Fairfax CA 94930
415 806 5385

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Dennis Budd](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Watershed Meeting 3/18/21, Agenda Item #4 Comment
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 10:56:14 AM

Dear MMWD Watershed Committee/Board of Director:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Watershed Recreation Management Plan Update process. Implementing the RMP Update will be critical to address current and future recreation-related interests and issues within the Watershed. I encourage the District to incorporate measures and policies in the RMP Update that fairly acknowledges the widespread use of the Watershed by the mountain biking community.

Specifically, and in cooperation with the primary recreational user groups of the Watershed, please consider the following concepts when drafting/updating the policies:

- Provide narrow trail access for mountain bikers
- Include time-sharing of trails (e.g., alternate day use patterns)
- Directional trails
- User-specific trails (e.g., bike priority trails)

With thoughtful incorporation of these trail management concepts, and seeking input from the mountain biking community, the RMP Update can better address the current user demographics. Further, these concepts can disperse use, reduce off-trail use, and reduce conflict occurring on high use trails.

Thanks in advance for your consideration.

Regards,

Dennis Budd

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i say, if your knees aren't green by the end of the day, you ought to seriously re-examine your life. -calvin (to hobbes)

From: [Vernon Huffman](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: comments for item 4 on today's agenda
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 10:52:42 AM

Dear Watershed Committee Directors,

My name is Vernon Huffman and I am President of Access4Bikes in Marin County. I represent the interests of approximately 2600 ratepayers and watershed users.

I am very appreciative that you will be reviewing the Recreational Management Plan for the watershed. I hear from my members regularly that they don't feel they are treated equitably or that they have fair and reasonable access to the watershed. My hope is that through a fair assessment of the plan and an update of some policies, my members might enjoy a more rewarding experience.

We care about this resource immensely and want to ensure it is protected for generations to come. Given the increase in use during the pandemic we believe we need to look to our neighboring land agencies nearby for success stories. Recently Marin County Parks undertook a review of the Roads and Trails Management Plan. In order to fairly address the needs of its users they started by conducting user survey's at trail heads at various times and days of the week. They got some very important data and that information helped them to focus on what policies needed to be updated while prioritizing resource protection at the same time. I encourage the same approach to your process. Our members would like assurances that the users have a voice and not special interest groups that rarely set foot on the watershed.

An interesting development that MCP initiated was a comprehensive toolkit of trail sharing methods/policies. The agency added the ability to change the use of a trail and add another user group. They added a policy to allow directional trails, time sharing of trails, and user specific trails. They created a method to bring social trails into the official trail network as they saw a need for more miles of trails to spread out the use in the district. All of this was the result of the initial survey and the staff's ability to address the changing needs of its users.

Another example of your neighboring land agencies and change: Mount Tamalpais State Park is going through the process right now to add bikes to the Easy Grade Trail, formerly a hiking trail only. We are very appreciative that State Parks is listening to the connectivity needs of mountain bikers and changing its trail use policies.

We encourage MMWD to learn from its neighboring land managers. The demographics of your users have changed tremendously over time. Mountain bikers are now your second largest user group. We bring solutions, volunteerism, and funding to the table.

We believe that by updating your RMP to address the needs of your users, you can address some of the common complaints of those users. Places like Phoenix Lake and Deer Park are too crowded as all users are channelled into one access point. We can address that by building new trails or changing the use of nearby trails to allow mountain bikes an alternate way in and out of the watershed. By separating the users onto separate trails you provide the safety that some are asking for while addressing the need for more trail experiences for mountain bikers too.

We are here to help and look forward to engaging with you in this process.

With Gratitude,
Vernon Huffman, President, Access4Bikes Foundation

From: [Nikki Bullock](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Citizen Input
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 11:05:01 AM

To Whom It May Concern,

I understand that your department will be reviewing its Recreation Management Plan and I'd like to offer my input as a tax-paying citizen. I am an avid hiker, equestrian and mountain biker (as well as e-Mtn biker). I've lived in many counties throughout the Bay Area and I was shocked at the discrimination and even sometimes condemnation faced by mountain bikers in our community. I would love for your agency to assess the opportunity for improvement that our county has to improve the interactions between all of the aforementioned user groups as well as access for mountain biking. Thank you for your consideration of this information.

Warm Regards,

Nikki Bullock L.C.S.W.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Ro'ee](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: comments for item 4 on today's agenda
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 12:44:28 PM

Dear Board,

I am a rate payer and routinely use the MMWD land to cycle and hike with my two sons. They are such a great respite during this challenging time. I welcome a new RMP that would take into account all users and ratepayers in the water shed. I think the main thing we need is more trails! This will allow us to better separate hikers and bikers. As a hiker and as a cyclist I have only had pleasant experiences in the watershed.

I am also very concerned about fires. Fires will likely come and burn through MMWD land in the next few years. As an example, Annadel state park in Santa Rosa has a much denser trail network than MMWD, burned twice, and it's extensive trail network is what helped save a lot of homes in Santa Rosa. I think we need more trails to help protect the watershed from fire and provide access to crews when the time comes. Many in the cycling community are willing to work to help and maintain trails and clear brush. We can be a force for good keeping our community safe.

https://link.edgepilot.com/s/936a1f2f/EqrfiOUCj0e_N6XJ5vAijQ?u=https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/fire-crews-using-control-burns-to-combat-glass-fire-in-trione-annadel-state/

Thank you,

Ro'ee Gilron

From: [Pete Giese](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Comments to Board Agendas Items 3 and 4 for 3/18/21 meeting
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 12:54:02 PM

Dear Board Members,

Thanks for your continued engagement in both the ongoing management of the watershed that we all love so much and, more importantly, for your willingness to review existing management practices to explore ways to make the watershed experience even better for all. It is a big task and we appreciate it.

As an avid cyclist (mountain, gravel and road), a trail runner and an adventuring father of 3 young boys who will grow up with the watershed as their backyard, I am keenly interested in its preservation, survival and accessibility for all the uses that this unique gem can provide. I want safe trails for my boys and I also want them to grow up with a respect for the nature out their door coupled with an adventuring spirit that helps them experience not just this one special natural place, but to carry forward that spirit to places like it spread out all over California and the world.

I would like to share a few comments specifically on your agenda items 3 and 4 for today's meeting.

Item #3 Water Regulation & Enforcement

I feel that the Watershed Recreation Plan should be updated prior to making a commitment to long-term costs associated with finding, hiring, training, and managing a new Ranger. There is no doubt that there is increased usage in the watershed as a result largely of COVID and I also don't doubt that having an extra body available in the watershed would provide some amount of additional resource. That being said, without clarity on current use patterns and where those use patterns may and should evolve, it is hard to say with any confidence that any reasonable majority of watershed users would have a markedly different experience on a day to day basis simply by adding one ranger.

If a piece of the issue at hand is policing conflict that arises between hikers, equestrians, school groups, bikes, e-bikes, runners, dog walker and any myriad of other users, then I think it is important for us all to recognize that without a holistic review of those uses, conflicts and potential solutions, adding a ranger may not be a current effective use of limited resources.

Ultimately in a public master planning process like this there is a data gathering and analysis stage that looks at both current AND proposed future use to make sure that the allocation of capital to human resources and physical infrastructure is appropriately placed. Hiring a ranger now seems out of step with procedural standards for this type of process. A holistic review may reveal that 3 new rangers is the right action or that with thoughtful reorganization of uses, that observing those outcomes without any new rangers may be preferable. It is simply out of order in this process to lead with hiring.

Item #4 Watershed Recreation Plan Update

There is no doubt that this topic has generations long history of discussion and conflict. There is also no doubt that the last decade has seen a fairly dramatic shift in the use of the

watershed. Mountain and gravel biking are becoming more popular. e-Bikes are a new and rising use that create broad access to a wide range of community members. Hiking and running remain as popular as ever while equestrian remains a passionate, if relatively small and elite, group of users.

Mountain bikers take the brunt of the abuse for conflict in the watershed because of the speed at which bikes can travel and the fact that it is quite simply a relatively new use so in the wide array of folks in the watershed, not all have grown up around and on bikes. Of course that is changing and a decade from now, the majority of users in the watershed will have grown up riding bikes both here and elsewhere.

The reality of the situation is that bikers are being artificially constrained into areas that actually lead to increased conflict. The density of traffic in and around places like Phoenix Lake, Lake Lag and Bon Tempe are driven by the fact that bikers are forced onto an exceedingly small number of arterial access roads. There is no place to spread out and so the very plan currently in place is creating an artificial density that leads to conflict.

The plan should be thought of in concentric circles emanating out from central access portals (Phoenix Lake, Sky Oaks, etc). As users move out from those points a couple of notable things occur:

- 1) Density decreases as trails move outward like spokes on a wheel and spread farther apart
- 2) This increasing remoteness leads to less constant foot and wheel traffic
- 3) The mindset of users changes. People who find themselves tackling Old Vee Fire Road have to have a different mindset, physical capability and desire than those looking for a peaceful walk around Bon Tempe. Both uses are GREAT and should be encouraged, but we need to admit these are different users.

This increase in space, decrease in density and overall change in mindset will *dramatically and immediately* reduce conflict (it already does). Even with COVID, you are still much less likely to see other hikers even just 1 mile off the main trails circling the lakes.

So in the end, I believe very strongly that there is a logical, holistic plan for use that can accomodate ALL users without conflict and without merely letting the existing, entrenched special interests hold back access for what is now the majority of ratepayers and users for the watershed.

Thank you again for engaging in this process and I am hopeful that from it can arise logical steps forward.

Regards,

Pete Giese, Esq.
(650) 575-9865
89 Magnolia Ave, San Anselmo, CA

From: [Jeff Milum](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Fwd: [marinmtb] [A4B] Notice of Opportunities in MMWD lands
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 11:21:22 AM

Dear MMWD Board Members:

Thank you for your work on revising the Recreation Management plan. Your work to develop an inclusive and equitable management plan is an opportunity to provide benefit ALL of Marin's citizens and ratepayers who recreate on Tam and its surrounding watershed.

It is critical to address the Road Management Plan before addressing needs for additional expenses like a ranger, which is going to provide very little day to day value for trail users. With the advent of cell phones, expanded coverage, and more trail users, the need for an additional ranger to cover emergency situations has been greatly negated. Developing a quicker and effective response protocol using existing resources would be much more efficient. Additionally, expanding conventional and electric mountain bike access to both fire road and narrow trails on Tam would drastically increase "coverage" to alert emergency crews and help to eliminate the need for the expense of an additional ranger.

The current approach of asking a significant user group, by estimates 40-50% of the recreational activity on Tam, to share less than 5% of the trails is illogical and counterproductive to the recreational needs of the community. Expand access, distribute use throughout the watershed, encourage courteous behavior, and the conflicts, tensions, and complaints will fall. The current policies are discriminatory and not based on current usage patterns or environmental science.

Please consider ideas such as directional trails, day-use, and bike-priority trail designations as these have been proven in other California watersheds and adopted into the RTMP of Marin County Open Space.

Please also consider that the community of bicyclists are well known to be the most active and dedicated trail stewards who consistently dedicate volunteer hours to maintaining trails and the lands that they share.

In short stop the discrimination against cyclists . . . legalize, don't criminalize! Cyclists who belong to the Tam community and pay MMWD are responsible citizens who are engaged in an environmentally friendly and mutually inclusive activity that is as legitimate a form of recreation on Tam as riding a horse or walking on a trail.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jeff Milum
415.812.9463

From: [rich cerick](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 12:46:39 PM

Dear Watershed Committee Directors,

My name is Rich Cerick. I live in Marin County and am an MMWD customer, ratepayer and avid hiker and mountain biker. My interests are closely aligned with approximately 2600 ratepayers and watershed users who ride their mountain bikes in the watershed.

I appreciate that you are reviewing the Recreational Management Plan for the watershed. I hear from many mountain biking friends and acquaintances regularly that they don't feel they are treated equitably or that they have fair and reasonable access to the watershed. My hope is that through a fair assessment of the plan and an update of some policies, I and my friends and acquaintances might enjoy a more rewarding experience on MMWD's / the public's lands.

We care about this resource immensely and want to ensure it is protected for generations to come. Given the increase in use during the pandemic, we believe that we need to look to our neighboring land agencies nearby for success stories. Recently Marin County Parks undertook a review of the Roads and Trails Management Plan. In order to fairly address the needs of its users they started by conducting user surveys at trailheads at various times and days of the week. They received very important data on who uses MMWD's and other public trails and that information helped them to focus on what policies needed to be updated while prioritizing resource protection at the same time. I encourage the same approach to your process. We mountain bikers would like assurances from you that all users have a voice and that MMWD is not influenced or persuaded by special interest groups that rarely set foot on the watershed.

An interesting development that MCP initiated was a comprehensive tool kit of trail sharing methods / policies. The agency added the ability to change the use of a trail and add another user group. They added a policy to allow directional trails, time sharing of trails, and user specific trails. They created a method to bring social trails into the official trail network as they saw a need for more miles of trails to spread out the use in the district. All of this was the result of the initial survey and the staff's ability to address the changing needs of its users.

Another example of your neighboring land agencies and change: Mount Tamalpais State Park is going through the process right now of adding bikes to the Easy Grade Trail, formerly a hiking trail only. We are very appreciative that State Parks is listening to the connectivity needs of mountain bikers and changing its trail use policies to reflect actual trail use.

We encourage MMWD to learn from its neighboring land managers. The demographics of your users have changed tremendously over time, yet MMWD's approach has remained unchanged. Mountain bikers are now your second largest user group after hikers. We bring solutions, volunteerism and funding to the table and invite MMWD to avail itself of these most important resources.

We believe that by updating MMWD'S RMP to address the real, rather than the perceived, needs of your users, you can address some of the common complaints of those users. Places like Phoenix Lake and Deer Park are too crowded as all users are channelled into one access point. We can address that by building new trails or changing the use of nearby trails to allow mountain bikes an alternate way in and out of the watershed. By separating the users onto separate trails you provide the safety that some are asking for while addressing the need for more trail experiences for mountain bikers too.

We mountain bikers are here to assist MMWD. Unlike many other trail users, we're walking the walk, not just talking the talk on trail use - and look forward to engaging with you in this process.

Sincerely,
Rich Cerick

From: [rich cerick](#)
To: access4bikes-discussion-group@googlegroups.com
Cc: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Re: [A4B] comments for item 4 on today's agenda
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 12:30:21 PM

Brilliant, Vernon. I'm gonna reiterate all that you've said in my communication, as I think that you've said all that needs to be said and nothing more.

Rich

On Thu, Mar 18, 2021 at 10:52 AM Vernon Huffman <marinmtbr@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Watershed Committee Directors,

My name is Vernon Huffman and I am President of Access4Bikes in Marin County. I represent the interests of approximately 2600 ratepayers and watershed users.

I am very appreciative that you will be reviewing the Recreational Management Plan for the watershed. I hear from my members regularly that they don't feel they are treated equitably or that they have fair and reasonable access to the watershed. My hope is that through a fair assessment of the plan and an update of some policies, my members might enjoy a more rewarding experience.

We care about this resource immensely and want to ensure it is protected for generations to come. Given the increase in use during the pandemic we believe we need to look to our neighboring land agencies nearby for success stories. Recently Marin County Parks undertook a review of the Roads and Trails Management Plan. In order to fairly address the needs of its users they started by conducting user survey's at trail heads at various times and days of the week. They got some very important data and that information helped them to focus on what policies needed to be updated while prioritizing resource protection at the same time. I encourage the same approach to your process. Our members would like assurances that the users have a voice and not special interest groups that rarely set foot on the watershed.

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We encourage MMWD to learn from its neighboring land managers. The demographics of your users have changed tremendously over time. Mountain bikers are now your second largest user group. We bring solutions, volunteerism, and funding to the table.

We believe that by updating your RMP to address the needs of your users, you can address

some of the common complaints of those users. Places like Phoenix Lake and Deer Park are too crowded as all users are channelled into one access point. We can address that by building new trails or changing the use of nearby trails to allow mountain bikes an alternate way in and out of the watershed. By separating the users onto separate trails you provide the safety that some are asking for while addressing the need for more trail experiences for mountain bikers too.

We are here to help and look forward to engaging with you in this process.

With Gratitude,
Vernon Huffman, President, Access4Bikes Foundation

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From: [Nikko Lubinski](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Re: MMWD Recreation Management Plan
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 11:30:14 AM

Dear MMWD Board of Directors,

Unfortunately I cannot make the zoom meeting today and wanted to share some comments via email. I look forward to more meetings in the future.

Thank you for your service in overseeing all aspects of the watershed. From the essential task of delivering clean water to the management of one of Marin's largest public land holdings, your role is of great import to all Marin residents and rate payers. I appreciate the wonderful resources available to Marin locals and understand the intricate tradeoffs between providing a service to rate payers and managing a watershed with a very popular recreation use.

In the past year I've seen a lot more usage compared to what I had been familiar with in the past few years, and it is understandable. The watershed provides a valuable outlet for people to connect with nature, explore, destress, and get a physical outlet. Living in Fairfax, I make a point to explore as many new trails as I can, and the list is long. As more users have started recreating, I've seen conflict rise with my own eyes, and see a future with more opportunity for all users to coexist. I'm a mountain biker, a trail runner, a hiker, a bird watcher, and I see a place where improvements can be made with directional trails, time sharing of trails, or expanding trails to multi-use. I'm a 36 year old who got into hiking and mountain biking in elementary school, and the growth I've seen and increase in popularity among my peers has been incredible, but it seems that cyclists are generally excluded from anything other than busy fireroads. Conflict can potentially be addressed by spreading out the use and providing what isn't being provided now.

I support a balanced plan with the types of users recreating in the watershed. I look to other norcal districts (Santa Cruz, Marin County parks, Auburn recreation) and the creative ways that they balance multiple users and ensure access is equitable across multiple users. The limit of access to certain trails by certain users such as mountain bikes has always surprised me regarding how many cyclists make up the user group for this amazing resource. I look for any opportunity to give back and help improve infrastructure, and spend weekend hours of sweat equity helping improve trails and open up new areas to a growing user base of young cyclists. It would be amazing to be able to give back and do similar volunteer efforts on trails in the watershed versus the private land or other managed lands around Marin.

I look forward to participating and following along in the revisiting of the Recreation Management Plan. I look forward to the Watershed adapting to the current usage and future growth of users.

Thanks!

Nikko Lubinski

From: [John Boeschen](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Revising the RMP
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 11:01:49 AM

Hello Board Members

I'm very excited about the the upcoming MMWD revisit of the RMP.

All user groups have increased in numbers since the last RMP.

Your efforts to make access to Mt. Tam equitable for all groups is important.

I'm particularly exited about the opportunity we have as a mountain biking community to consider changes to policies.

Thanks for your efforts,
John Boeschen
San Rafael

From: [balmain2000](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Strong opposition to hiring more rangers!
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 2:35:05 PM

Dear board members

After multiple rejected attempts to join today's MMWD discussion on enforcement via Zoom, I am writing to express my strong opposition to increasing the enforcement staff with two additional rangers.

1. Please make an effort to increase the capacity on your Zoom account so everyone can participate. It is important for all sides to have dialog and understanding of each other's perspectives ...I was signed on 15 minutes early and then was bounced out three more times.
2. Taking a decision today to add more enforcement and another \$300K in budget is short-sighted. So much of the current conflict is due to an increased usage of the park by people impacted by the pandemic...many of which reside outside of Marin County and will be returning to their office jobs this summer. If there is still a major issue this fall, then address it then, not now.
3. Revise the RMP and spend the money that you would have used on rangers on education and awareness. Many of the mountain bikers (pandemic spike) I encounter are "newbies" to the sport who demonstrate poor trail etiquette and end up on trails that they poach out of ignorance, not malice.

Final thought, I am in the MMWD 6 days per week. 95% of that time is as a hiker, runner, and dog walker. 5% of the time, I am mountain biking. It has been my experience that mountain bikers are courteous and respectful as I hike with my dog. What they need is access to more trails and a greater awareness campaign for those new to the sport and new to Marin MMWD.

Final Final thought. I know you have a difficult job and I appreciate your service on the Board. Too many people in Marin have inflexible opinions as well as too much free time on their hands. That makes compromise very difficult and your jobs challenging. Please don't cave to the loudest person in the room because as we know from the NEXTDOOR App, some of them are batshit crazy.

With respect,

Matthew Twitty

From: [steve granville](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Watershed Committee - Comments on Agenda Items #3 & #4
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 1:37:26 PM

Greetings!

I want to have my comments entered into the record and for them to be considered as well.

- Thank you for your stewardship of the Mt. Tam watershed and for keeping it open to the public during the pandemic.
- The Watershed Recreation Plan (WRP) process should be overseen by esteemed academics and recreation professionals who are open minded and do not hold a prejudice against any of the allowed recreational activities.
- The WRP should promote inclusion and diversity
- Consider pilot projects aligned with the objectives of the WRP during the timeframe of the plan to inform the outcome.
- Make sure the plan includes a vast toolkit of conflict resolution and trail sharing tactics, such as time allocation (even/odd day use), directional trails, separation of user types, road to trail conversions, new trail construction, education programs,
- Promote a sense of ownership and duty - People take care of public lands if they feel they have a stake in them
- Create new loops and improve connectivity. Example, a bike route between Phoenix Lake and Crown Road.
- Conflict can be addressed by promoting more remote areas for bikes, as they tend to travel the furthest distance and they stay on the trails.
- Look at the Marin County Parks [Road and Trail Management Plan](#) (RTMP) and California State Parks [Trail Use Conflict Study](#) for guidance.

- For the RMP to come into the modern age, it must create policies, or a toolkit if you will, of options that allow the sharing of the resource. This includes options like time sharing of trails, directional trails, and user specific trails. This needs to get into the toolkit and then can be implemented over time.
- Conflict can be addressed by spreading out the use and providing what isn't being provided now. Take areas like Phoenix Lake, Lagunitas Lake, and Deer Park for example: With new policies we can create trails that get mountain bikers off of these busy multi use fire roads and into the hills where they want to be. A directional trail could be bike priority and take you up and around these areas with another directional trail bringing you back. This would provide a need that the users (rate payers) need and would pull mtb's off of popular hiking trails.
- Show gratitude for this process before and after your comment
- Marin County Parks successfully accomplished this process between 2010 and 2014. Use that as a model of how to proceed.
- You must not let special interest groups like MCL hijack this process. You should involve actual users of the watershed, not just those that complain from the comfort of their couch.
- Mountain bikers are willing to pay to play through sweat equity. We aren't asking the district to pay for our opportunities. We built trails like Tamarancho Boy Scout Camp entirely with volunteers. We can do this for MMWD with the proper support and supervision.

Warmest,

Steve

415-302-7363

Leadership. Culture. Strategy.

From: [Daniel Thompson](#)
To: [Board Comment](#)
Subject: Watershed Committee Meeting - Comments
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021 11:03:14 AM

Hello,

I will be attending the Watershed Committee Meeting at 1:30p today. I'd like to make some comments prior to the meeting.

As a mountain biker raised in Marin County, I am disappointed in the lack of singletrack trails available to us. When I relocated to Truckee, California, I was so relieved to see that Marin is an anomaly in its acceptance of the mountain bike community. The rest of the country is evolving to support this growing sport while Marin County sits in the dust. MMWD does such an incredible job maintaining our sacred lands of Marin but are slow to evolve and accept other singletrack trail users. There are a million ways we can coexist on the trails, I'm sure MMWD can come up with some solutions that allow more access for mountain bikes.

Thank you and I look forward to the meeting at 1:30p.

Daniel Thompson
Truckee, CA
415-342-6944