

October 6, 2014

ATTN: Cuyamaca Rancho State Park General Plan Team
California State Parks
Southern Service Center
2797 Truxtun Road, Barracks 26
San Diego, CA 92106

The General Plan update for Cuyamaca Rancho State Park states at page 4-90 under the heading 4.5.1 ROADS and TRAILS MANAGEMENT Plan, that “[a] comprehensive Roads and Trails Management Plan should be completed to address a wide-range of trails issues at the Park,” but no time line for the completion of this task has been outlined. Due to the non-allowed use of trails by bicyclists within the wilderness area and the lengthy consideration within the Plan given to the preservation of natural, cultural and historic resources, it would appear that the completion of the Roads and Trails Management Plan would need to be expedited. Specifically, the proposal by “CDPR” to convert trails to multiuse is problematic on a number of levels, including the following reasons:

(1) In the May 22, 2014 notes entitled, Mountain Bike Stakeholder Meeting #2, Item no. 2, the San Diego Mountain Biking Association stated the following:

“Cherry stem Deer Park Trail to create a Backcountry corridor through the Wilderness zone. This has been done before in Federal Wilderness Areas.”

In fact, roads have been “cherry stemmed” between two separate wilderness areas in federal wilderness, but trails have never been “cherry stemmed” through a contiguous wilderness area. If Deer Park Trail is “cherry stemmed” through this wilderness area, it will (1) be precedent setting, and (2) defeat the intent of a wilderness area with regard to the exclusion of wheeled conveyances within a wilderness area.

(2) Equestrian use allows elderly population to access the park. The slower pace of horseback riding is often not compatible with the speed of bicyclists, especially on single track trails where blind curves could cause a bicyclist to collide with a horseback rider. Trails need to be designed and designated for safety. The use of bells on bikes is pointless when a cyclist going a high rate of speed cannot stop and hits a horseback rider (this has happened to me).

Furthermore, the ramps, boardwalks, and other constructions on or around trails created, legally or extra-legally, by bicyclists are not compatible with equestrian use.

The national trend is to separate trail users according to their speed of travel, or to eliminate bicyclists from single track trails that lack a clear line of sight around curves and lack places along trails where trail users may pass each other.

In light of the proposed conversion of hiking and riding trails to multiuse, a public record of trail user conflicts needs to be maintained. Often conflicts on trails are not memorialized, are overlooked, or are anecdotal. Statistics on issues need to be collected in order to obtain a clear picture of the potential issues. The designation of multiuse on existing riding and hiking trails, if approved at a future date, should be on a trial basis for a period of time in order to access the

success of the expansion and correct, or re-designate trails back to riding and hiking only, as needed.

Finally, in other California state parks, equestrian camps are reserved for the exclusive use of those park users with horses. The current policy of allowing non-equestrian park users to camp in equestrian areas after 5:00 pm is problematic in that Cuyamaca is a prime destination for equestrians from not only southern California, but central California, and probably beyond as well. The drive to Cuyamaca takes six hours from my area, yet I have made this drive on a number of occasions, as have many of my fellow equestrians. Arriving before 5 pm may not be possible when traveling with horses, even with careful planning, and arriving from that distance to find there is nowhere to camp with one's horses would be distressing and disastrous. Equestrians cannot just spend the night at a motel and wait for a campsite to open up the next day.

The closure of Los Caballos Horse Camp combined with the opening of equestrian facilities to non-equestrians, ultimately results in the discrimination against a primarily elderly and/or disabled population that relies on horseback travel to access trails. The park needs to be accessible to everyone, including the elderly and disabled who may only be able to enjoy the trails from horseback.

Sincerely,

Marcy Watton
P.O. Box 816
Leona Valley, CA 93551

Vice President, Public Lands
Antelope Valley Unit
Backcountry Horsemen of California

Vice President
Corral 138
Equestrian Trails Inc.