# Trails & Open Space Subcommittee
March 28, 2019 • Meeting Minutes

| Association Members | | | TD Staff |
|---|---|---|---|
| VJ Bonnard | Guy Joaquin | ~~Marina Phillips~~ | ~~Robb Etnyre~~ |
| Richard Bothwell | Benjamin Levine (Co-Chair) | Lynette Powell | ~~Forrest Huisman~~ |
| ~~Dave Cohen~~ | ~~Paco Lindsay~~ | Livia Quan | Annie Rosenfeld (Co-Chair) |
| Gayle Dana | Carole Mahoney | Charlene Simmons | Christina Thayer |
| ~~Kathy Englar~~ | Nan Meek (GPC) | ~~Michael Sullivan (GPC)~~ | Brian Yohn |
| ~~Brenda Gilbert~~ | ~~Steve Miller (GPC)~~ | Susan Terrell | |
| ~~Jayne Hahin~~ | Scot Nicol | Julie Thornton | |
| ~~Jennifer Jennings~~ | ~~Bill Phelps~~ | ~~Janet Zipkin~~ | |

*Guests:* John Maciejewski, Jim Roth, Jeff Shellito

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At this meeting the Trails & Open Space Subcommittee (TOS) took the following actions:

**1.** The TOS approved the 02/28/19 meeting minutes without amendment or objection.

**2.** The TOS was notified that the GPC would be reviewing the Bermgarten Rustic Trailhead proposal in April.

**3.** In anticipation of taking the proposal to the GPC and Board in April, the TOS heard staff's presentation on their proposal to repair the Nature Trail. Staff considers the project a top 5-Year Implementation Plan (5YIP) priority. The TOS has previously affirmed this project's priority. Having reviewed additional project details, including costs, the TOS unanimously reaffirmed the project's top priority.

**4.** Main Discussion: Multi-Use Trails and Sustainability.

*Background*

The 2013 TMP tended to consider multi-use trails in terms of trail user conflict, with member meetings often focusing on the question of whether all trail user groups can get along on shared trails. Ultimately, all trails were designated multi-use, with new trails designed and designated as either hiker/biker or equestrian preferred. However, trail use was not restricted to trail design, as there was a reluctance to restrict historical member trail usage. This conclusion did, however, recognize that different trail design characteristics are required for different user groups.

Since 2013, TDA wrote and passed the Land Management Plan, which specifies standards for sustainable land management. With the 2013 TMP's improved trail design and construction standards, members now appear to expect much higher standards, and there also appears to be more concern with the maintenance and sustainability of our trails. Additionally, some TDA

members (particularly from the mountain biking community) are vocally concerned about damage done to hiker/biker trails by equestrians.

*New Question: Design and Usage Sustainability*

The TOS is considering multi-use trails in terms of sustainability. Can all trail user groups use every trail in a sustainable way? Or, put differently, can the trails withstand the physical abuse that we deliver upon them? The GPC has a responsibility to consider the maintenance of TDA's physical assets. Trails are a TDA physical asset. As such, user damage to the trails is a concern from an asset protection perspective. Historically, we have been hesitant to address this issue. In planning our trail system, we should consider both sustainable design and sustainable usage.

*Existing Preferred Use Policy*

The preferred use policy adopted in 2013 appears to be widely misunderstood by members, with few members realizing that trails are being built to specific standards for specific user groups. Instead, there is a perception that preferred use is about separating trail user groups to reduce user group interaction and thereby reduce on-trail user conflict. In other words, members incorrectly understand preferred use in terms of user conflict, not in terms of sustainable trail design and sustainable trail usage.

*Equestrian Group Rides*

Group trail rides are restricted to equestrian preferred and double track trails. However, the quantity of use on certain equestrian trails may not be sustainable due to the resulting trail tread damage. To address these sustainability issues, it may be prudent to construct more one-hour loops in addition to the existing one and two hour loops. This would spread usage over more trails, reducing wear and tear.

*Equestrian Non-Group Riders*

The tradition of equestrian usage is long established on TDA's trails system, and a unique feature of our trails system. If we were to move toward a more restrictive multi-use trail policy (restricting usage to design, more single-use trails, etc.), a primary concern would be maintaining an attractive variety of equestrian trails. Building more equestrian designed trails would help alleviate this concern.

*New Equestrian Trails*

There appears to be some demand for new equestrian trails. For instance, though the Sundance Cutoff was not built for equestrians, it was quickly adopted by equestrians, and then effectively given over to them. If equestrians are adopting trails designed for non-equestrian use, and we are then giving those trails over to equestrian preferred use, that may indicate an unmet user demand. To avoid giving trails over in this way, we could consider building new equestrian trails. Building new equestrian trails to address this demand might also help minimize maintenance

problems elsewhere in the system. In that way, it may be prudent to build new equestrian trails for the sake of sustainability across the trail system as a whole.

*Mountain Bike Specific Trails*

There now appears to be member demand for mountain bike specific trails, designed with banked turns and other technical features. Though some mountain bikers either perceive or assume that our trails are built specifically to mountain bike standards, we do not build such trails under the 2013 TMP. Building mountain bike specific trails would be a change in policy.

*Specific Areas of Concern*

Sustainability concerns tend to be clustered in the "Spaghetti Bowl" behind the ACAC. Within this area, there are also particular concerns about equestrian overuse in the Aspen Grove. The ACAC is a major trail hub for every user group, placing a heavy load on the surrounding trails. The ACAC is also popular because it serves as a gateway to many attractive trails, including the Euer Valley, and the family friendly green trails that surround the ACAC. There have been a number of comments about equestrian damage on True Grit and Mustang Sally. Though actually an equestrian preferred trail, mountain bikers frequently complain about Whoop It Up. Finally, some group equestrian trail ride trails used to be popular with mountain bikers. Because those trails are now degraded through heavy equestrian use, some mountain bikers have complained about them as well.

*Proposals and Questions For Further Consideration*

• Provide order through better trail planning to the ACAC Spaghetti Bowl. Options could include moving towards a coherent system to move more users, and especially more advanced users, more efficiently away from the first mile of the ACAC's cluster of trails. This approach could include eliminating some Spaghetti Bowl trails, creating a less braided and complicated network. Many trails in this area are old, bulldozed logging roads with suspect sustainability.

• Better trail planning in general, possibly moving toward a concentric ring trail system wherever feasible. Our trail "system" is in many respects not a true "system" because its basis was never designed as a rational whole.

• Study Corner Canyon in Utah for ideas and lessons. In that multi-use system, everyone starts out together at the same trailhead, but they immediately head off on directional and segregated user trails.

• Develop McGlashan/Bucknam for hiker/biker usage, with the aim of moving more users, including green trail users, there. This would give hiker/bikers a new and attractive area that is distant from the ACAC and therefore less frequented by equestrians.

• Consider directional trails in the Spaghetti Bowl and perhaps elsewhere.

• Consider single-use trails as an option. Even in a multi-use trail *system* we can still ask whether every trail should be open to every user group.

• Eliminate and restore the roads that serve no purpose on TDA's road classification map. This would reduce costs and user confusion.

• Restrict trail use to trail design. Would this cut down on trail damage, complaints, and maintenance costs? Restricting trail use to trail design would be a more forceful version of existing preferred use designations: Equestrian Designed, Hiker/Biker Designed, Bike Designed. Building more single use trails would be a departure from the 2013 TMP policy.

• Distinguish between "Individual Rider Equestrian Trails" and "Commercial Use Group Ride Equestrian Trails". The latter may need design, building, and maintenance standards far more robust than the former.

• Could we address some of multi-use and over-use concerns by moving people around the trail system? This is the theory behind the Bermgarten Trailhead proposal: by opening Bermgarten, we may be able to draw some users away from the crowded Glacier Trailhead. Hence, how can we move people away from the ACAC and redistribute them to other less heavily used portions of the trails system? Should we add more trailheads? If so, what kind of trailheads with what service levels? Can we strategically develop new trails or new types of trails to draw users to new areas or to distribute users across a larger portion of TDA's open space?

• Could we increase sustainability overall by catering specifically to equestrian users or mountain bikers on their own trails in certain areas or by strategically constructing parallel trails for different user groups?

• The 2013 TMP was written for a largely self-contained trail system with a limited number of trails. In that atmosphere of scarcity every user group put a premium on unrestricted access to all trails. That scarcity may no longer exist. If so, might trail users feel differently today about separating different uses on different trails?

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**Upcoming TOS Meetings**

*TOS Regular Meeting*: April 25, 2019, 3:00 – 4:45 PM at The Northwoods Clubhouse.
*TOS Regular Meeting*: May 23, 2019, 3:00 – 4:45 PM at The Northwoods Clubhouse.