

Trails & Open Space Committee • Regular Meeting Minutes

September 4, 2024 @ 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM Alder Creek Adventure Center, Board Room, & Zoom
(all agenda times are tentative and subject to change)

Committee Members

Karen Aaron VJ Bonnard Richard Bothwell	David Cahill Gayle Dana Carol Lindsay	Kevin O'Neil Livia Quan Ellen Raynor	Graham Reid Peter Sawyer Julie Thornton
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Staff, Staff Leads, & Liaisons

Denise Gauney (Board) John Groom (Staff)	Leslie Loveland (Staff) Benjamin Levine (Board)	Laura Lindgren (Liaison) Annie Rosenfeld (GM)
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In Person Guests

Bill Aaron Joe Balan (& Zoom?) Tara Christison Lorna Dobrovolny Jim Easterbrook	Adrian Fogg Jenifer Gomez John Kirsch Eric Lawrence Charles Meyer	Ryan Muething Sean Wieland Stacy Wieland Min Yi
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Guests on Zoom

Christine Brennan Kate Seedr Doyle Merle Fajans	Susan Fernyak Christine Gordon Derrek Horn	Krytal-Rae Mecham Martin (?) "Samsung"
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I. Gather for Tour of Equestrian Center and Lower Flying Squirrel (1:50 pm)

Committee and Association Members Gathered at the Alder Creek Parking Lot

II. Tour of Equestrian Center and Lower Flying Squirrel (2:00 pm sharp) *John Groom and Peter Sawyer*

John brought everyone to the end of the Flying Squirrel Trail and the beginning of the new *Silver Streak* trail, explained what Land Management's plans are for these areas and answered questions

III. Transition to Mezzanine Room of the Northwoods Clubhouse for Formal Part of Meeting (2:50 pm)

IV. Formal Meeting Opening Business (3:05 pm) *Peter Sawyer*

- **Call to Order/Quorum Call**

Chair Peter Sawyer called to order at 3:08 pm

- **Member Comments:**

Chair Peter Sawyer invited brief member comments on items that are not on the agenda.

- A member made a comment about increased public use, the use of adaptive management, and the possibility of employing a “trail patrol”
- A member made a comment about parking along Alder Creek Road and the need to utilize the Alder Creek Adventure Center more.
- A member made a comment that the increased use of Tahoe Donner trails can be traced to the closure of Truckee’s *Jackass* Trail.

- **Comments by the Committee Chair:**

Peter acknowledged the value of the equestrian center and community while stating that the Tahoe Donner Trails and Open Space Committee is charged with doing what’s best for the membership as a whole. He also acknowledged that there were lessons learned from the rollout of the *Flying Squirrel* Trail. He reminded everyone that today’s main agenda item is to look at the 2022 Trails Master Plan as it regards the concerns for the new *Flying Squirrel* Trail.

- **Report from the Liaison to Tahoe Donner’s Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC):**

Annie Rosenfeld, John Groom & John Mitchell met with the Town to discuss emergency egress, TD forestry project funding, use of TSSA 1 funds, and asked the Town about traffic calming. LRPC voted to adopt the Northwoods Campus Report which will go to the Board.

- **Report from the Tahoe Donner Board Liaison:**

Benjamin Levine (acting for Denise Gauney) stated that the Board has sent out the proposed Amenity Access Rule Change for 45-day notice and begun work on next year’s budget. He anticipates that a Trails Master Plan related item will be on the agenda for next month’s (September) meeting.

- **Approval of previous Meeting Minutes (August 7, 2024)**

The committee approved the updated August 7, 2024 Meeting Minutes by consensus.

V. Trail and Open Space Work Update (3:15 pm): *John Groom and Leslie Loveland*

Leslie Loveland informed the Committee of sign installation, trail work, stewardship days, and that she has begun looking at the alignments for new trails. She and her crew have installed 170 signs on the trails with Phase II of signage beginning next summer. The trail crew tackled projects on the Eastern Perimeter Trail, Rust Never Sleeps, Coyote Crossing, South Valley Road, Rawhide, and Fools Gold. The Trails and Forestry Departments completed 16 of 19 scheduled stewardship events this summer, including a hosted Tour of Euer Valley. She spoke of seeing more one wheelers and Class III e-mountain bikes on our trails and what Forestry and Trails are doing about this increase. She has also been working on trail usage data from trail cameras.

VI. Discussion of the 2022 Trails Master Plan In Regards to The Equestrian Center, Equestrian Concerns, and the Area Surrounding The Equestrian Center, Including the *Flying Squirrel Trail* (3:20 pm)

Peter Sawyer stated that today's meeting gives us an opportunity to hear from Staff as to how trails and zones relate to the 2022 Master Plan, address equestrian concerns, and give feedback to Staff and the Board. He asked how we can move forward so each user group feels like they are getting something out of the Plan and it is not just a popularity contest based on numbers.

Points made by Committee Members include:

- A Committee Member commented on the need to have a big discussion around the equestrian zone, and where equestrians, especially kids camps and pony rides can feel safe. Right now there is a lot of confusion as to where bikers and hikers can go. How do we make people feel safe within that zone?
- John Groom would like a meeting with the horse boarders and Krystal-Rae Mecham to make sure the Equestrian Center meets everyone's needs. He stated that **the** existing Equestrian Center feels very temporary and the importance of formalizing the footprint of the Equestrian Center, how equestrians fit into the 2022 Trails Master Plan, and future work in Euer Valley for the equestrians. John requested feedback from the equestrian community regarding the Euer Valley and **the** first mile around the Alder Creek Adventure Center.
- A Committee Member commented that it would be nice to bring in an equestrian consultant from the outside who deals with multi-use trails to see what they would recommend for education so people understand different user needs when it comes to safety.
- In response to the above comment, John Groom stated that he has already received a proposal from an equestrian specialist to look over equestrian issues.

- A Committee Member asked a question regarding user data and the possibility of slowing down the speed of mountain bikes. Staff responded that the trail crew has added features to Fool's Gold to slow down the speed of bikes on that trail and that the design intent of Flying Squirrel was to slow people down, and get people moving on their bikes in ways that they cannot do on a straight trail. There are switchbacks and tight turns on *Flying Squirrel* that do not invite mountain bikers to go fast.
- A Committee Member commented that there seemed to have been miscommunication regarding the definition of a "Family Flow Trail" in the 2022 Trails Master Plan. More communication during the building of trails and well placed signage would help all users. *Flying Squirrel* is the 'new thing on the block' and should see less usage in the future.
- A Committee Member commented that *Flying Squirrel* has concentrated mountain bikers in a small area.
- John Groom mentioned that a goal of the 2022 Trails Master Plan was to bring some of the trails for kids closer to Alder Creek Adventure Center so that they don't need to drop down into Euer Valley. He also stated that traditionally new trails aren't announced, but there could have been better communication on this trail and that the popularity and word of mouth on this trail caught us by surprise. He stated that he and the Trails Manager will be working on a list of future trail projects to eliminate surprises.
- A Committee Member commented that we should get good data on public vs Member use. They
- A Committee Member stated that trails near the Alder Creek Adventure Center will require more communication than other trails
- A Committee Member commented that no one expected the speed aspect of Flying Squirrel and that we need to consider placing speed trails elsewhere and work on how to draw people away from congested areas.
- John Groom spoke about using adaptive management to change the location of the end of *Flying Squirrel* to be closer to where the boardwalk trail heads back to the parking lot and where trail users can link to Wild West or Chickadee in order to concentrate their impact.
- A Committee Member stated how we're treating adaptive management as a learning process and how, as a community we are treating this as a learning process based on concerns from Members.
- A Committee member acknowledged the input of the Equestrian Subcommittee and the safety issues that were raised and are being addressed.
- **Member Comments:** Chair Peter Sawyer invited brief member comments on this agenda item.
 - A member made a comment asking why *Flying Squirrel* was built where it was, the location of the trail, public use, and the possible relocation of the trail.
 - A member made a comment about which trails are mentioned in the 2022 Trails Master Plan, signage, and the cost of the *Flying Squirrel* Trail.
 - A member made a comment regarding better communication and making better use of the Alder Creek Adventure Center as a way of monetizing our trails.

- A member made a comment about the popularity of our trails and that speed and volume on the *Flying Squirrel Trail* could be mitigated by the blocking of this trail on Strava. They also mentioned the need to publicize other trailheads and to build more ‘Family Flow Trails.’
- A member made a comment about safety on our trails, being fair and equitable, and moving the mountain bikers to the ski hill.
- A member made a comment about residing near the Alder Creek Adventure Center primarily for the mountain biking experience, they spoke in favor of ‘Family Flow Trails,’ and stated that the Membership is subsidizing all of the Tahoe Donner Amenities.
- A member made a comment about what it is like to have bicycles around horses. They asked that *Flying Squirrel* be decommissioned and that dogs be more under control.

VII. Upcoming Meetings and Meeting Adjournment [Wednesday, October 2, 2024] (4:57 pm)

The meeting was adjourned at 4:57 pm by consensus of the Committee.