

BOULDER MAY MAKE ROOM FOR MOUNTAIN BIKERS IN OPEN SPACE (DAILY CAMERA)

By MITCHELL BYARS

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Despite upholding a ban earlier this year, the city of Boulder could make some room for mountain bikers on its open space.

On Tuesday night, the city's Open Space Board of Trustees heard proposals for alternative trail designs for Anemone Hill that would allow mountain bikers.

The Boulder City Council in March upheld a ban on mountain biking in the vast majority of the West Trail Study Area. The decision was part of the management plan for the open space land that lies west of Broadway and stretches from Linden Avenue south to Eldorado Springs Drive.

But the City Council hired Design Concepts, a Lafayette-based community and landscape architecture company, to explore the possibility of creating a bike trail on Anemone Hill that would connect to the Boulder Canyon bike path.

Design Concepts came up with three path possibilities. One caters to mountain bikers, another caters to hikers and the third follows the trail recommendations made by the Community Collaborative Group — which was made up of 15 members who represented a variety of open space users, from conservationists to equestrians to dog owners.

Leaders also could still opt for the recommendation in the West Trail Study Area plan.

One of the main concerns expressed by the board is the trail's effect on wildlife, including black bears and Abert's squirrels.

Will Keeley, a wildlife ecologist for the city's Open Space and Mountain Parks, said all four trail proposals would affect habitats, but the original plan in the West Trail Study Area would create the least amount of "habitat blocks," or sections of habitat separated by trails.

"There are going to be impacts from any trail you put in," Keeley said. "The trails that minimize habitat fragmentation are going to be the best."

However, he did say that if creating a shared-use trail keeps people from using social trails, it would end up helping the environment.

"If we can keep users on this trail and restore the other trails, that would minimize the impact, as opposed to a free-for-all," he said. "Of course, our success at restoring them is another question."

Axel Bishop, of Design Concepts, said creating a trail that bikers and hikers could share would help keep them from using social trails and cutting through habitats.

“If you give people a good trail experience, 99 percent of people will do the right thing,” he said.

The designs also tried to avoid areas with steep grades where erosion would create sustainability and safety concerns with both hikers and mountain bikers using the trail.

To keep conflicts between the two groups to a minimum, several board members also brought up the possibility of making the trail a one-way course for bikers.

The Open Space Board of Trustees will have another meeting at 6 p.m. Aug. 17 at the City Yards on Old Pearl Street. The public will be invited to comment on the alternative routes.

The board will make a recommendation to the City Council, which is tentatively scheduled to discuss the matter Sept. 6.

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