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Save frontcountry trails for hikers

Voice From The Sierra Club; Tony Biegen

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The Sierra Club recognizes that bicyclists can be legitimate users of many non-wilderness backcountry trails and supports responsible off-road bicycling. In an effort to find common ground and work for positive and shared environmental and recreational goals, the Sierra Club and International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) agreed to a set of principles (Park City Agreement). The Sierra Club affirms its commitment to those principles.

The Sierra Club believes that mountain bicycling is a legitimate form of recreation and transportation on trails, including single track, when and where it is practiced in an environmentally sound and socially responsible manner. In the Park City Agreement, both the Sierra Club and the International Mountain Biking Association agreed that not all non-wilderness trails should be opened to bicycle use.

When a land management agency reviews suitability of a trail for bicycle use, bicycle use should not be allowed where it would cause the following measurable effects. This list is not all-inclusive.

1. Significant soil erosion or significant damage to streams or fish habitat.
2. Rutting, impairment of trail drainage, breakdown of trail shoulders, and other forms of damage not correctable using U.S. Forest Service trail maintenance standards and techniques.
3. Significant disturbance of plants or animals or their habitat.
4. Damage to archaeological, scientific, historical or other significant resources, including rare natural features of interest for scientific study.
5. Danger to the safety of bicyclists or other users because of bicycle speed, steep grades, steep terrain, sharp curves, slippery or unstable trail surfaces, or limited visibility.
6. Significant displacement or annoyance of other non-motorized users.



With respect to the single-track, frontcountry trails under consideration by the Trail Working Group,

there are serious safety issues because of high speed, steep grades, steep terrain, sharp curves and unstable trail surfaces with limited visibility. The Sierra Club observes that there has been significant displacement and annoyance of other users because of mountain bike use on these trails. There has also been evidence presented showing damage to trails from the use of mountain bikes.

Therefore, the Sierra Club recommends:

1. That the single-track trails on the frontcountry be closed to mountain bike and other mechanical use. This includes Tunnel, Rattlesnake, Cold Springs, McMenemy, San Ysidro, Pueblo Viejo, Buena Vista, Arroyo Burro, Jesusita, and the single-track trail through Romero Canyon.

2. That all trails should be closed to mountain bike and other mechanical use unless posted "Open."

This has been successful in other areas to reduce vandalism of signs.

3. That appropriate signage, education and enforcement procedures be put in place to accomplish the above closures.

4. That the county, city and the Forest Service cooperate with the mountain biking community to identify an appropriate location for the construction of a primary mountain biking trail that can serve that community. The Sierra Club will actively support this process.

5. That standards for mountain bike and mechanical use on trails not closed be established and published, e.g. speed limits, usage practices, environmental standards, types of mechanical vehicles, etc.

6. That these recommendations should not be construed as recommendations for closure to mountain bikes and mechanical use of frontcountry fire or power access roads (such as exist at Tunnel and Romero) nor backcountry trails outside designated wilderness. (In particular, the historic Romero Canyon road, while now single-track in its upper portion, is not recommended for closure).

The author is vice chair and outing chair of Sierra Club, Santa Barbara Group.