

Editorial News

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Like to hike? Get a license

Voice From Goleta; Peter Bergman

8/15/03

In her Monday letter, a writer presented an analysis that may help find a solution to the bikers-hikers conflict. Her analysis counters the commonly held belief that everyone is fit to walk on Santa Barbara's beautiful canyon and forest trails. The notion that these trails can be used by those with slower reflexes or hard of hearing, and even by those addicted to incessant conversation, is obsolete:

"The real problem in trail sharing is the lack of alertness . . . of some hikers. People who are deaf should not hike alone. And people who talk so constantly they can't hear the bells of trail bikes coming . . ., they pose a greater hazard to themselves than is posed by any bicycle rider."

One way to implement that idea of trail sharing is to introduce hiking licenses with which to prevent unfit individuals from exposing themselves to the growing trail danger. A newly formed "county hiking patrol," sort of a "CHP," would administer tests of candidate hiker's alertness, especially his/her ability to hear the sound of bike bells and immediately jump off the narrow trail.

The test would also identify the incessant talkers and send them to logorrhea clinics. It may be harder to discern deep thinkers and other types of oblivious walkers. Here, our numerous local psychologists would be of major help.

Also, local cardiologists should be warned not to recommend hiking as a therapeutic exercise to those who tremble at the mere sight of a biker's helmet. Hikers with hearing aides should be required to make their instruments highly sensitive to the spectrum of biker's bell frequencies.

To avoid the view of licensing as an act of discrimination, those found to be only partially fit to walk on trails with bikers can be issued conditional licenses, requiring that they wear orange shirts or specially designed orange hats clearly visible to bikers.

Even if this proposal seems complicated, a capable new CHP-SB will be able to implement it.

Peter Bergman lives in Goleta.