

From: Terry Karlin
1580 Green Meadows Way, Ashland

Thursday, February 24, 2022

To: The Ashland Community & City of Ashland Parks & Rec Trails Master Plan Review Subcommittee:

I'd like to express my concerns and questions about Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association's (RVMBA) proposals, both in content and in process. I focus here on two of the ten proposals, and I'm hoping that you may consider the idea of just doing nothing; to know that inaction is also action.

Do the RVMB's proposals match up with what we know and what we value?

Regarding the Imperatrice Property proposal and its potential impact on grasslands and bird populations, we know from Oregon Conservation Strategy that Oregon has lost 50 to 90 percent of grasslands to agriculture, development and invasive plant species. Living Bird magazine's fall 2019 issue tells us that since 1970 one in four birds in the U.S. and Canada have disappeared. The Imperatrice Property is our own grassland that supports a breeding colony of Grasshopper Sparrow, designated as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Oregon. Local Ornithologist and Audubon Conservation Co-chair, Pepper Trail, describes this proposal as: ". . . *an extensive system of bike trails . . . that can only be described as industrial in scale and potential impact . . . these mountain bike trail proposals would destroy the habitat value of this unique property.*"

The South Ashland Connecting Climb and DH Trails proposal reads: "*While bike legal, White Rabbit and Siskiyou Mountain Park see very little bike traffic due to the fact that **the trails aren't conducive to either climbing or descending via bike** . . . RVMBA is advocating for multiple changes.*" This sidehill is great for walking and many other activities, and not so much for biking. Walking up the trails on spring mornings you'll see hikers, runners, middle-schoolers building shelters with downed timber, a person meditating silently by the waterfall, toddlers playing in the stream, Red-shouldered Hawks building nests, a black bear sideling off the trail, the occasional mountain lion . . . This space is well-used! Our trail system is a tremendous asset to the community and it is "our" responsibility to strike a balance between needs and wants of the community and preservation of our resources.

Has the process demonstrated our community values for communication and conservation, while examining the reality of budgets and robustly maintaining ongoing projects? What current usage data has been collected and shared? How will community input be "heard" and continue to be honored? Not one person I've asked knows of these proposals. Why does the RVMBA Project use "City of Ashland" in its title? This implies a collaboration with the city.

I urge the committee to protect our wildlife populations and grasslands of the Imperatrice Property, while retaining Ashland's postcard-like setting on our northeast side. Hopefully, the committee will carefully examine trail usage, taking into account potential conflicts and environmental impacts, and arrive at a decision that will maintain quality of life for the majority of Ashlanders, and the spirited cacophony of wildlife and humans existing together in our treasured watershed.

Thank you for your time, your hard work, and consideration for the greater good of our community
Sincerely, Terry Karlin

Email from Joshua McFarland on March 3, 2022

Dear Ashland City Council and Ashland Parks & Recreation Parks Commission,

I am writing to you as a bicycle commuter from Southern California, and former childhood resident of Ashland, Oregon. I have great concern regarding the proposed plan to further subject the peaceful and sacred land of Ashland, to the disruptive and violent activity of mountain bike hill bombing and track carving.

Growing up in Ashland during the 70's and 80's, I was fortunate to live in a town with very few cars. I was free to ride my bike and skateboard back and forth across town. I grew up on Grant St. above Siskiyou Blvd., attended Briscoe in Kindergarten, Helman Elementary for 1st-5th in Quiet Village, and then Ashland Middle School. It was a safe and quiet community. It was peaceful, spiritual, and loving. This was possible because of strong law enforcement. We rode our bikes on the street and the occasional dirt hill or parking lot. And this was fine. It never occurred to me or the other children that we were missing out by not encroaching on nature with our heavy metal bicycles. At some point after I had reached adulthood, a few trails were put in. During a short stay in Oregon the 1990's, after having moved to California, I went out one day with two friends to ride mountain bikes on the trails in Ashland. I borrowed a friend's bike and was excited to race down the mountain. What I realized that day, was how destructive our activity was to nature. Obviously, it scares the animals and none of them would vote for our presence. (Do we consider them in our decisions?- this is what equity involves, deep compassion and a sensitivity for all, even the voiceless). Also, there were times that we slid off the trail. One of my friends missed a turn and went crashing into the bushes, tumbling through the foliage. I realized right then and there that mountain biking was something I would not do. I love and respect our earth too much, and I observed that it was a selfish activity. No amount of thrill seeking was worth the inevitable damage I was sure to inflict.

Over the years I have spent a lot of time on the bike, as a commuter. Exploring cities, asphalt trails, neighborhoods, country roads. I don't feel that I am missing out by not barreling down hills through the animals' homes. I hike the trails. Often, I walk barefoot. It is peaceful and calming to be in nature, thankful for the ability to use my feet, enjoying the sounds of birds and the wind rustling through the trees. Seeing the sunlight bouncing and reflecting off the leaves. Going slowly and seeing the squirrels and bees, the lizards, and beetles. What is often frightening, and is a source of constant anxiety, are the mountain bikers. They come racing down the hills sometimes unannounced, some with bells ringing, whipping around the bends, fury on their faces, focused on their quest for speed. Occasionally there is the respectful biker. The one who stops and allows me to pass, says "hello". But this is not the norm. Downhill mountain biking has a certain energy that is not congruent with nature. The battered bodies of black beetles on our trails, sometimes still alive and writhing, are not the result of hikers. Mountain biking is inherently a selfish sport. Many of the bikers go off trail, cutting new paths, making jumps, smashing earth. A large percentage of bikers admit to this behavior. (Wuerthner, 2019) It doesn't matter how many trails you give them. They will never be satisfied, always wanting more, pushing for expansion. Casey Botts is

doing just that- has been doing it. And if he finally gets his way, he will be the hero of the southern Oregon mountain bike community. He will receive endless pats on the back, and the tale will be told as legend, of how Casey schmoozed and smiled his way into convincing Ashland's protectors to succumb to his advances. You see, Casey doesn't understand that no means no, and doesn't care. He has been hearing no for years. However, many of the people that are familiar with Casey, and told him "no" and to go home time and time again, have moved on. And he has found an opening with the new guard. Those in positions of power, some who also like to ride their bikes through nature. Some wielding their environmental degrees as double edged swords. Michael Black has stood vigilant for years, but now worn down and weary of fending off Casey, no longer surrounded by those with standards of environmental excellence, flanked by bad actors with shiny credentials, and he may be losing the will to resist. It appears the Casey is attempting to exploit the situation and has found an accomplice in Leslie Eldridge; an inside job.

I spend a lot of time on the trails here where I live in Los Angeles County. Although we are not blessed with the air quality of Oregon, we have often been fortunate to have leaders who are proactively progressive and firmly conscientious towards environmental issues. With population growth, it is recognized that the precious natural areas must be preserved and allotted to activities that best serve the interests of the overall populace, while taking into consideration, the native species. Many of the trails have been designated as non-bike trails. This is very common. When mountain bikers lobby for more trails, or bike-only trails, they are told "no". And this is what the Ashland Parks Commission used to do, and ought to be doing now. It is the council's and the commission's obligation to protect the environment and make choices that are not self-serving or influenced by friendly alliances. I am saddened that Leslie is so quick to voice optimism for mountain bike projects, without taking the necessary scientific steps to consider the real damage that is not only likely, but imminent from Casey "Carve It Up" Bott's proposal. I believe science is real. And science is not based on a professor's credentialed gut feelings or whimsical desires, but on processes that gather data and make fact-based decisions. Hard data. Anyone who truly champions the environment, will always err on the side of caution; not on the side of fun or south Ashland trail convenience connections.

Casey's blatantly manipulative RVMBA report, is a long, drawn out, rambling proposal, designed to confuse and fatigue the reader into submission. A document of deception. A paper that can only be deciphered by those who either built the trails or have spent a large chunk of their life enjoying them. It is a proposal that is dishonest at face value and is rife with contradictions and inconsistencies. It starts with the word "Sustainable". This is misleading. (Vandeman 2004) Unless we want to play semantic gymnastics and redefine the word. Casey's proposal makes the argument that his plan will lower the carbon footprint by expanding trails for those who don't wish to be inconvenienced by riding their bikes from home. (If lowering pollution is the goal, just post no parking signs. Easy.) Then, moments later, Casey informs, that he is not marketing when he states that this will be an economic boom to replace Shakespeare (which is projected to have huge growth in the future by all estimates of those in the theater community-that's what we should focus on). So much for lowering carbon, as the world descends on

Ashland with their SUVs and bikes to bomb down the hills of Ashland, before buying a six pack and Monster drinks on the way out of town. This is so ridiculous. Why is he being taken seriously on any level? As he exploits Covid and short-term economic shortfalls, for selfish desires. He has been at this game for years. "Carve It UP" Casey Botts is nothing new. This is not a fresh face on the scene. He is the perpetual squeaky wheel that never stops screeching, begging for grease. And it looks like he may have finally found some sympathizers. Recognize what you are dealing with here- selfish interests. Years ago, Casey was trying to carve trail in Siskiyou Mountain Park. It was determined by geologists and environmental scientists, that it was geologically unstable, and that it would be detrimental to the Pacific Fisher. Yet here again, Casey is back, pushing not only to further carve up the hills, make trails bike-only (It's always frustrating to slow down for those pesky pedestrians when you're a hill bomber), and disregard the environment and science regarding Siskiyou Mountain Park. This man will never quit pushing. It's obviously a personal challenge for him. Environment and peace of mind for wildlife and hikers be damned. This has been clear for years, yet somehow, he seems to be working his lobbyist magic on some of those with the power and ability to make his wishes come true. He seems to be taken somewhat more seriously this go around, and people are spending lots of time on committees, and discussing at great depth, something that should have been shut down with a quick and simple "No.". Casey would make a great lobbyist. Once he wants something, he doesn't give up. He continues to chip away with his axe, believing with all his heart that one day the tree will fall. Will you let the tree fall? Will you allow Casey to yuck it up with his buddies about how he bamboozled and slicked the people at City of Ashland? Will you allow him to convince you to make trails "bike-only", so that wildlife and hikers must be subjected to the sounds, sights and effects of humans tearing through the environment, not to enjoy and respect nature, but to thrill seek and pillage our precious land? Will you allow Leslie to posture as an environmental scientist as she turns her back on the environment to make her own personal fun time for her and her bike buddies?

All the propaganda out there that states that mountain biking is not harmful to the environment, or that it is on par with hiking boots, is just that, propaganda. It is talking points spun by mountain bikers, who look to dupe state and city officials, often successfully, into making decisions that have long term and generally irreversible ongoing negative impacts. (Wuerthner, 2019)

"Nearly all prominent photos show a mountain biker racing downhill and often flying through the air. "Fast and furious," says one ad. "Strikingly fast," says another. To many thrillcraft advocates, including mountain bikers, the natural world is merely an outdoor gymnasium where they play.

By comparison if you were to review ads for hiking gear, the theme is more sedate, and about being out in and appreciating the natural landscape. In other words, some recreational pursuits are more about bonding and learning to respect the natural world, while others are about self-glorification.

The iconology of these ads also says much about the mountain biking culture. Compare side by side photos of dirt bikers and mountain bikers, and you will be hard pressed to tell the

difference. Both wear gaudy shirts with company logos, crash helmets, and other protective gear.

One of the rationales given by mountain bikers to justify the ever-expanding trail systems is that it allows one to get closer to nature or out in nature.

But if one takes the industry advertisement as insight into the mind of the user, communing with nature is not the primary goal. Instead it seems the main goal is tearing up the miles and self-gratification. Roaring along at high speeds on a machine is hardly conducive to communing with nature.

If anything, thrillcraft use exacerbates our society's alienation from nature, creating a barrier that separates people from experiencing nature on its own terms." (Wuerthner, 2019)

Please just tell Casey "no." Do not compromise with this man. He is tenacious. Resist him. He is self-serving and has proven that the environment is of no concern. His document is deceptive. He ends it with

It's our hope that the city and stakeholders accept it as such, and will join us in the collaboration and progressive thinking it will take to carry out this plan in creating an environmentally and ecologically resilient Sustainable Trails Plan for the City of Ashland.

This pandering to those with a progressive mind state. It is deception. It is salespeople trying to sell you on terrible ideas for the community of Ashland. Do not allow yourselves to be hypnotized by his smooth and/or pushy talkers with personal agendas. Put protections in place for further generations. Please read the report and reference article I have attached. The arguments against the bikes are resounding, truthfully scientifically based. Please choose carefully who are the future stewards of the precious Ashland park and surrounding land. I am asking you respectfully to not give any further consideration to Casey Botts or any of the RVMBA. They can go ride their bikes in the 450 acres of environmental catastrophe they created in Grants Pass. Tell them to leave Ashland alone.

As a final note, Ashland could do very well to focus on making Ashland a bicycle friendly city. More bike lanes. Pamphlets encouraging people to walk. Ashland had very little vehicle traffic in the 1980's. It was very pleasant. Ashland is a very walkable town. The hills offer a wonderful opportunity for strengthening and maintaining health. Many of your newer residents who have relocated from the car culture of California, are conditioned to drive everywhere, even very short distances. Walking and street cycling brings community together. And these activities truly lower pollution. Ashland sits in a bowl, and minimizing emissions is an important priority. If making Ashland a healthy community is a focus, and preparing for busy Shakespeare seasons, Ashland will continue to thrive and be an enjoyable place to live. Let's keep the hills and unpaved natural lands, sacred and unscarred. Let's keep our nature places of reflection for renewing of minds, bodies, and spirits.

Thank you for being stewards and protectors of a very special and wonderful place. Guard it from those who will sacrifice serenity for supposed pleasure.

SAVE ASHLAND'S HILLS and PARKS !

Best reagrds,
J. Carl, Los Angeles

<https://www.thewildlifeneews.com/2019/06/18/impacts-of-mountain-biking/>

https://www.culturechange.org/mountain_biking_impacts.htm

Science Proves Mountain Biking Is More Harmful Than Hiking

'Admittedly, backpackers and horsepackers can cause damage to wilderness trails. But this is a poor argument to suggest that we add another source of damage to those trails.' - Dave Foreman

www.culturechange.org



Impacts of Mountain Biking - The Wildlife News

Mountain Biking is a significant threat to our wildlands—both in designated preserves like national parks, wilderness areas, and the like, but also Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) and roadless lands that may potentially be given Congressional protection under the 1964 Wilderness Act.

www.thewildlifeneews.com

From: [Caitlin Guthrie](#)
To: [Dorinda Cottle](#)
Subject: trails plan public comment
Date: Thursday, March 17, 2022 4:12:52 PM

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Dear Trails Review Committee,

I am writing in full support of the City of Ashland Sustainable Mountain Bike Trails Plan and am overjoyed to see this proposal by RVMBA to address lack of beginner trails, user safety and neighborhood connectivity in Ashland.

I am a citizen of Ashland, and avid biker, both for commuting and for recreation. As a beginner mountain biker and a parent of a young child who enjoys riding trails on her strider bike, it is clear to me that our community desperately lacks easier, low angle trails mountain bike trails for kids and beginners.

It's important that we plan for and install these types of trails to increase equity, inclusion, fun and community. This plan:

- Facilitates people spending more time in nature, connecting with the Ashland watershed, which will lead to a stronger community.
- Supports people using non-motorized transportation, which will lead to healthier citizens.
- Invests in quality of life for our citizens (through appropriately placed mountain bike trails in areas designated for recreation), which increases community economic resilience. The economic benefit of outdoor recreation, including mountain biking is well documented and yields tremendous returns.
- Is in alignment with the City of Ashland's adopted [Climate Energy and Action Plan](#), including but not limited to direct support for:
 - Strategy ULT-2. Make Ashland more bike and pedestrian-friendly
 - Strategy NS-1. Promote ecosystem resilience.
 - Strategy PHSW-2. Promote a sustainable local economy that minimizes emissions and vulnerability.

This proposal is in the best interest in the citizens of Ashland and will greatly enhance our community in numerous aspects including sustainability, financially, equity and quality of life. Thank you for your dedication to our community and consideration of adopting the Ashland Sustainable Mountain Bike Trails Plan.

Best regards,

Caitlin Guthrie
Ashland citizen

From: [Carol Wilder](#)
To: [Dorinda Cottle](#)
Subject: Trails plan public comment
Date: Saturday, March 12, 2022 5:01:52 PM

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hi, this is Carol Wilder. I am a 54 yo sports medicine physician and a Mountain biking enthusiast. I am writing this letter in support of the new mountain bike trail plans. In my personal life and my medical practice I see people of all ages who enjoy biking. Literally I see eight--year-olds up to 80 year olds who are not only on road bikes but also electric bikes and mountain Bikes who love getting outdoors. Some can't hike or play pickle ball or run because of bad knees or hips and Biking is a great low impact form of exercise and a also gets you in the great outdoors. My teenage son has grown up mountain biking and what mom doesn't want their kid involved in a healthy /fun activity. (it saved his mental health during the pandemic!)

Ashland is a unique place in that it has some incredible mountain biking! Encouraging a sport that supports all ages, families, And biking abilities I feel is important to keeping Ashland active and diverse and supporting active lifestyles.

Thank you for considering supporting more trails.

Carol Wilder

From: [Carolyn Rennie | Noble Coffee Roasting](#)
To: [Dorinda Cottle](#)
Subject: Trails Plan Public Comment
Date: Thursday, March 17, 2022 4:28:00 PM

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Good afternoon!

I would like to put my two cents in for full support of expanding our trail system in our beautiful town. I'm so grateful for how wonderful it is to live here and enjoy what mountain biking offers me and my family personally but also say that it greatly benefits our local economy. So many mountain biking folks support our businesses here in town and add to the spirit of health and overall wellness of our community.

Adding to the current trail systems will only make our town more attractive to all - visitors and locals alike.

Thank you,

Carolyn Rennie | Chief of Operations

[281 Fourth Street, Ashland, Oregon 97520](#)

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From: [Chelsea Mannebach](#)
To: [Dorinda Cottle](#)
Subject: Support for the MTB trail project in Ashland - public comment
Date: Saturday, March 12, 2022 6:15:57 PM

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Dorinda,

I'm writing in support of the RVMBA's proposed Sustainable Trails Plan to the city of Ashland. As an avid cyclist with a young family who wants to get young kiddos more into riding the local trails, I strongly support this plan for new designated bike trails. I am also a runner and a hiker and know that having designated biking only and hiking only trails makes the most sense for safe and fun recreating for all. We live on the south side of Ashland and having a mountain bike climb trail on this side of town would be awesome and allow us to ride from home rather than drive to the quarry.

The last two years have been challenging with Covid but thankfully we've still been able to ride our bikes. We have noticed growth in the mountain biking community and out of towners coming to Ashland to ride these trails. This is great and the trail system needs this plan to support the growth in this sport. It would be in Ashland's best interest to take this well constructed project and run with it. We are looking forward to seeing these ideas come to fruition. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you would like any additional input / thoughts.

Sincerely,
Chelsea Houshour

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Dillon Houshour](#)
To: [Dorinda Cottle](#)
Subject: Support for the Mt. Bike Community
Date: Sunday, March 13, 2022 12:17:07 PM

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hi there,

I am writing in reference to the RVMBA Proposed Sustainable Mt. Bike Plan. I feel strongly that we need to have a good plan for the future of our trails, both Mt. Biking and walking/hiking. This proposed plan is very well designed and thought out and answers some of the many issues we currently have with our trails in our immediate watershed. I myself, have a young daughter whom I would like to have more options of lower, closer trails for learning how to get outdoors and enjoy and respect her surroundings. White Rabbit is not always a very good option with the drive and if there is snow etc. We live on Park St and find that the Oredson Todd Trails do offer a great option for hiking, but do not offer a good route for bikers looking to get up or down without interfering with hikers. I am a strong believer in the need for separate lanes of traffic for hikers/bikers. Our community is always growing and changing and more people on the trails is a good thing, as long as we stay ahead of it with sustainable and well thought out trails. My background includes environmental construction and I am very in tune with the techniques of sustainability in relation to water run-off and erosion control.

Thanks for your time,

Dillon Houshour
Houshour LLC

From: [Eric Dinger](#)
To: [Dorinda Cottle](#)
Subject: Re: Trails Plan Public Comment
Date: Thursday, March 17, 2022 2:22:11 PM

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Dear Mrs. Cottle and others,

I'm writing to you in strong support of the proposed "Sustainable Mountain Bike Trails" plan for the City of Ashland submitted by the Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association (RVMBA). Firstly, I live, work, and recreate within the city of Ashland and the watershed. My wife and daughter (attending Bellview Elementary School) have enjoyed the trails as well – hiking, running, and yes – biking. By way of profession, I am an ecologist with a PhD in Biology, and have a solid grounding in environmental assessment.

While each proposal of the RVMBA should be individually considered, it appears from the public record that current opponents have a blanket opposition to the proposal. I believe that each proposal and step of the proposal should be evaluated in terms of the very first word of the title, "Sustainable." If an individual proposal or portion of a proposal is not-sustainable, then I think there is both opportunity for rejecting a portion – but also, to ask, "How can we make it sustainable?" Outright biased opposition with closed minds is not the way forward.

Indeed, I read a letter of opposition from an individual who spoke of growing up in Ashland in the 70's and 80's. The writer expresses a longing for peace, spirituality, and love – all due to strong law enforcement. I, too, remember the 70's and 80's, of buying leaded gasoline and CFCs in our air conditioning. Point being, not everything about the 70's and 80's are worth maintaining, and we know this due to progress. His personal experience with mountain biking should not categorically, single-handedly shut down my family's opportunities for sustainable mountain biking. This individual then attacks Casey Botts, quite personally. He further cites "evidence" of the supposed non-sustainability of bike trails by citing Vandeman (2004), which amounts to one man's personal vendetta against mountain biking and appears to be a rambling screed, where he uses the transparency typical of scientific studies to try and discredit the study itself. To add upon this, Vandeman was found guilty of multiple felonies stemming from assault, battery, and vandalism against mountain bikers. The letter writer then seems to stereotype mountain bikers. According to him, my ten-year old daughter must finish her bike rides with a six-pack and a Monster Energy. Please, don't reject proposals based on such highly biased people who don't even live in our area.

Likewise, two recent letters (clearly more nuanced and respectful than the above referenced letter) speak against any proposed action at the Imperatrice Property. These come from Terry Karlin and Pepper Trail, and both speak to protecting the Grasshopper Sparrow. Being sustainable is part of the RVMBA plan, but instead of simply shutting down this proposal, the actual impact to the bird should be the arbiter – not perceived impacts. If the RVMBA proposal can utilize existing tracks within the Imperatrice Property, with only key trail additions – and avoiding known nesting areas, isn't this the kind of activities that allow sustainable activities with minimal or no impact? Indeed, maybe the consideration of seasonal closures could be dictated. This has been a success story to allow rock climbing in raptor nesting areas. From reading the RVMBA proposal, it is clear that mitigation steps to achieve sustainability are all part of the process, which should be a conversation, and not an outright "No" that the opponents dictate. Let's work together to see if we can make this happen.

Lastly, I'd like to voice the strongest support for proposals for the beginner trail projects – these are the areas that speak to the value the increased mountain biking will bring to families and tourists.

Sincerely, Eric Dinger

Letter to the Parks Commission in Support of Mountain Bike Trail Expansion

Hello, and thank you for considering my comment. First and foremost, I want to thank you for the volunteer work that you are doing on behalf of the community, and I recognize the difficulty of your task as you seek to balance the desires of competing interests in the community. I agree with Terry Karlin's comment that "Our trail system is a tremendous asset to the community and it is "our" responsibility to strike a balance between needs and wants of the community and preservation of our resources." I respectfully disagree with Terry's assertion that an expanded mountain bike trail system is at odds with that statement.

My name is JP Newman. I am a 22-year resident of Ashland, where I am an educator, homeowner, and small-business owner, raising two children who attend Ashland Public Schools.

I am dismayed by the tone of some of the other commenters' letters, mostly for their vitriol, character attacks, and attempts to divide the community. I will address some of these issues later in this comment, but I would like to begin by focusing on what unites us as a community instead. Ashland prides itself for its tolerance, rich culture, sense of community, and outdoor access. Please recognize that Ashlanders who ride mountain bikes are part of the community and support these values as well. I believe that mountain bike trails can continue to coexist with other natural features, even as both continue to expand, and I hope that you will come to this conclusion as well.

Community members who ride mountain bikes span the economic, cultural, and age spectrum that is Ashland. We enjoy the Shakespeare Festival, eat at downtown restaurants, listen to live music, buy local, and cheer our kids in youth sports and school activities. Most of us are environmentally minded, and appreciate the opportunity to pedal our way into the woods without further consumption of fossil fuels. We support equal access to the woods. We treasure the outdoors. Mountain bikers also hike, trail run, walk, bike commute, and enjoy other outside activities. We are small business owners; we work in healthcare, education, community development, and other industries central to the fabric of Ashland and the Rogue Valley. We are students. There is no "us" and "them" here. Most Ashlanders who ride mountain bikes also vigorously campaign for energy conservation measures, laud the expansion of the arts in the community, advocate for services for the homeless, plead for transparency in local government, support funding for the library, and seek strong leadership in our public schools.

We enjoy the woods for many of the same reasons others do. Mountain biking is no more violent or injury-prone than other activities where a small percentage push themselves beyond their limits. We do not have "fury on our faces", as one of the other comments suggests. Given that writer's disdain for mountain bikers, and in particular for Casey Botts (who, I expect, he has never met), it makes me wonder if he actually knows *anyone* who bikes on the Ashland trails.

There are several important points I hope you will take into consideration: 1) Mountain biking is not at odds with the shared goals of access to, and preservation of, nature voiced by other user groups; 2) The area of proposed trail expansion is not a wilderness area; 3) Mountain bikers are

often most active in maintaining all woodland trails; 4) Like other forms of access, mountain biking is a multi-age activity that is enriching for kids and adults alike; 5) Mountain bike trails are a community asset. 6) Designating trails as “pedestrian only” and “bike only” is prudent for safety and sustainability.

Mountain Biking is not at odds with the shared goals of access to, and preservation of, nature voiced by other user groups. Instead, I think we are all looking for the same thing: develop recreation opportunities for multiple stakeholders in a way that is both sensitive to the environment and accessible for multiple uses. The Impeatrice Property and the Ashland Watershed are vast landscapes; development for mountain bike trails is only proposed on a small portion of each. Contrary to other commenters, please consider that mountain bike trails are seldom wider than hiking trails. Some, like the uphill sections of Bandersnatch (a hiking trail), and Lizard (a downhill only mountain bike trail) are wide and partially machine built, whereas Lower Catwalk, both sections of Lynx, and Vegan Chili are seldom wider than Red Queen. I frequently use, and enjoy, all of these trails for different purposes.

The area of proposed mountain bike trail expansion is in an otherwise highly impacted region, not a wilderness area. In fact, nearly all of the Ashland watershed has been heavily impacted by mining, logging, and other resource extraction. Selective logging operations have done much to reduce the fire danger, but have also heavily impacted the landscape, and will continue to do so as underbrush is thinned and burned on an ongoing basis. So, to suggest that these trails are going into a pristine wilderness is ridiculous. There are some areas of the watershed that are more ecologically sensitive with rare plants, animal populations, and within the Reeder Reservoir watershed, but neither mountain biking nor hiking trails are proposed in these areas. Instead, the trail expansion is proposed in an area that is already heavily impacted by human activity. While trail expansion will add to that, it will compliment the other impacts already in place.

Mountain bikers are active in maintaining all trails in the watershed, including hiking trails. Anyone who has attended one of the many trail maintenance days will attest to this. Trail maintenance of hiking, running, and biking trails is heavily supported by the trail running and mountain biking communities in Ashland. Trail maintenance improves safety, reduces erosion, ensures access, and strengthens the trail network. Often, it seems like there is only a focus on the damage of illegal trails—while this should not be ignored, it seems disingenuous to broadcast the work of fringe individuals on the community as a whole. Mountain bikers maintain the trails that they use and they do so to support the sustainability of the trails network as a resource.

Mountain Biking is a multi-age, enriching activity

Ashland is a town that, for its size, has precious few activities with equal access to all ages. Shakespeare, while an asset, is largely geared and marketed toward an adult tourist and retirement age group. The YMCA is a community asset. But, with the potential closure of the Daniel-Myer pool and closure of The Grove, many of the active outlets for young people have gone away. My oldest son first rode the BTI trail when he was in kindergarten. Both of my children have continued to treasure their access to Ashland bike trails. Now both middle school

aged, they often ride the trails with friends, pedaling up from town and riding back to the house. What a wonderful, active, healthy outlet for youthful energy! Most of the people I ride with are in their late 40s and 50s. Yet, we seek out mountain bike trails for the same reasons that my kids do, often alone, but sometimes in small groups. I have encountered several riders in their 60s and 70s on the trails as well.

Mountain Bike trails are a community asset

Ashland is rich with culture and a sense of community, which is enhanced by an active citizenry. But, as the pandemic has laid bare, our economy is highly dependent on tourism, and on Shakespeare in particular. While the festival is definitely a treasured part of the fabric of our town, I think it is obvious that we are stronger with multiple attractions. Many people who come to town for Shakespeare bring their bikes with them. Others visit during the winter months, when the trails are at their best and Shakespeare is dormant, bringing tourism dollars with them. Unfortunately, the image of “who is a mountain biker” is largely distorted by some. The commenter who suggested that mountain bikers “descend on Ashland with their SUVs and bikes ... before buying a six pack and Monster drinks on the way out of town” is perpetuating an outdated stereotype that, frankly, never really had a place here. To suggest that this represents the sport as a whole is akin to suggesting that everyone who drinks wine is an alcoholic. Remember, WE (business owners, educators, retirees, youth, Ashlanders) ride bikes. Mountain biking is as synonymous to Ashland as Shakespeare, the Ashland Grizzlies, SOU, and Rogue Valley Runners.

Designating trails as “pedestrian only” and “bike only” is prudent for safety and sustainability.

Simply put, the trails are used for different purposes and need to be maintained differently. I have past and current experience in trail building and maintenance. As mountain bikes can have a greater impact on soils, trails need to be carefully designed and maintained to accommodate them. Similarly, hiking only trails have different use and design needs. For example: embedded rocks in the trail bed are not hazardous for bikes, but can lead to twisted ankles and abrasions for hikers. Similarly, hikers are more likely to cut off the corner of a trail, whereas mountain bike trails need to be better reinforced on corners to avoid erosion and destabilization. But, speed of travel is also an important consideration. Bikers travel at a range of speeds, depending on rider ability and terrain, but all of those speeds are faster than hiking speed. Trail runners can often approach biker speeds on certain terrain, but have the ability to stop faster, reducing the possibility of collision. My closest call in the watershed in the last year was when I rode around a tight corner on Jabberwocky and encountered a family sitting on the trail, enjoying a picnic lunch—they were apparently unaware of the trail’s “bike only” designation, but more strategic sign placement and education at the White Rabbit trailhead might have averted this.

In closure, I believe that it is time to move past the notion that mountain biking, as an activity, is inherently incongruent with nature. Most bikers pass by unannounced and quietly, and many (including myself) choose to ride in the watershed seeking opportunities for exercise, quiet, reflection, and immersion in nature. There should be room for everyone. The Mountain of the Rogue trail network near Rogue River is an example of a multi-use trail system built on similar

soil types to the Impeatrice Property. It successfully balances hiker and biker designated trails while maintaining wildlife presence and opportunities for quiet.

Let us please stop the name calling, character assassination, blind stereotyping, misleading "facts" and accusations espoused by J. Carl. Let us instead continue to look for ways to achieve our shared interests together. Mountain bikers are not an exclusive group; instead we are part of the essential fabric of community in Ashland. Thank you again for your important work on this committee and for your volunteerism on behalf of the community.

Respectfully,
JP Newman

From: JSpaulding@medfordeyedoctors.com
To: [Dorinda Cottle](#)
Subject: trails plan public comment
Date: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:21:26 PM

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Trails plan public comment,

Please consider the plans for the new bike tails. My family (2y and 3y old girls) are avid balance bike riders and hikers. They love being on the mountain and would greatly benefit from more beginner areas to improve. Currently we use the watershed, the jumps, and the skate park on a weekly basis. I work full time and my wife is constantly busy with the kids. We have a very hard time setting aside time to attend Ashland meetings and because of this we are a very unrepresented voice.

I know there is a lot of negative comments about bikers and the trails and I do not understand why. We are a group that attracts a lot of business to the community and contribute constantly. I am truly saddened if this proposal for new tails and pump track is overlooked because of a few negative voices in the community.

We love Ashland and we hope to see it continue to prosper. I support all hiker proposed trails and I wish they could do the same for the bikers.

Respectfully
Justin Spaulding
607 Terrace St

From: [lukasz krolak](#)
To: [Dorinda Cottle](#)
Subject: Trails Plan Public Comment
Date: Sunday, March 13, 2022 12:23:36 PM

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Dear Ashland City Council Member

I am writing to you today in support of the RVMBA's proposed Sustainable Trails Plan to the city of Ashland. I strongly support the proposal in addressing some of the issues on city-owned property to make this community more bike friendly and address the flaws in our current trails. In order to keep Ashland as a premier mountain biking destination, we need to address these issues and keep upgrading and building new trails.

I have been an Ashland resident since 1991. I now own property and my two children are also beginning to mountain bike the trails that surround our wonderful town. After living here for 30 years, I have watched the sport grow exponentially as I have met many riders who travel long ways to ride the trails we have here.

It would be a very good thing for our town to embrace this activity as it truly brings in many young professionals to our community and supports our local economy. Mountain Biking is an expensive hobby and most of these enthusiast are happy to spend this money in our local economy through our hotels, restaurants, and car shops. I have a car shop and have met many travelers through our business throughout the biking seasons.

Improving biking trails in the mountain that surround our city would be a huge benefit to the next generation. The new generation of people who enjoy the outdoors who have money to spend and improve our city. It is time to embrace the change of people who want to live in this area.

--

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From: [Nathan Van De Graaff](#)
To: [Dorinda Cottle](#)
Subject: RVMBA proposal for more MTB trails in Ashland
Date: Monday, March 14, 2022 2:36:11 PM

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hi Dorinda,

My family and I (wife and four children under 7) moved to Ashland in September 2020. We relocated from Arizona to live in a place where we could spend more time outside and have thoroughly enjoyed our time here. What has been concerning to me, however, is the number of schools that currently sit unoccupied by the students they are meant to serve. Whether Ashland wants to admit it, it is a dying town. I believe the proposals put forth by the RVMBA to expand mountain biking trail access are a crucial way to attract younger people to Ashland and keep the city thriving and healthy.

The plans to build more beginner friendly trails are the most important, in my opinion, as those just learning to ride are presented with few poor options to improve their abilities and enjoy the beautiful forests surrounding us. With more beginner options, Ashland could become not just a travel destination for bikers, but one where more families see a great environment to raise children.

I've read the counterarguments. Some have suggested that mountain bikers present a fire risk because of all their discarded cigarette butts. I've never seen a biker smoking anywhere near the trails. Others imply that we have a callous attitude towards nature and or others using the trails. I'm also an avid hiker and have never come across a biker who didn't slow down or dismount completely to let me pass. The benefit of having bike only trails is that everyone can find space in these lands for the activities they enjoy most, while minimizing the potential for trail disputes.

We love Ashland and the trail systems here, and we want our children to be able to experience it the same way we do. We hope you'll take the proposals presented by RVMBA seriously and look for ways to accommodate this activity that will add to the city's desirability for families and outdoor enthusiasts.

Regards,
Nathan Van De Graaff

From: [Peter Philbrick](#)
To: [Dorinda Cottle](#)
Subject: Comments in support of RVMBA Sustainable Trails Plan
Date: Wednesday, March 16, 2022 9:03:18 PM

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Dorinda - please see my comments for the Parks Commission below. Thanks! -pete

Dear Parks Commissioners,

I am a resident of Ashland and frequent user of our mountain biking and hiking trails in the Watershed and beyond, and I write to offer my support for RVMBA's vision for the future of our trail networks.

Outdoor recreation is a cornerstone of Ashland life. It is the reason my family lives here along with many of our peers, and it is also a growing economic driver for our community. The local mountain bike industry supports no less than a half dozen bike shops, a bike shuttle company, and a renowned bike mechanic school. Bike-related tourism contributes hundreds if not thousands of annual restaurant visits and hotel stays in Ashland, recently during a period when many of our tourist attractions have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the popularity of mountain biking has exploded in the last decade, so has the demand for additional trails to serve the needs of our local community. I appreciate the concerns of user groups who would prefer to exclude mountain bikers, but I would point out that there are approximately 16,000 acres in the Ashland Watershed -- most of them are nowhere near a bike trail. I believe there is ample room for bikers and non-bikers to coexist and thoughtfully grow our trail networks while continuing to preserve a majority of the watershed as open space.

I would additionally like to throw my support behind the concept of turning the Imperatrice property into a public park. I realize that the City's acquisition of the Imperatrice property was for another purpose, and the politics of turning it into a park may be complicated, but it is a unique piece of land that has the important distinction of being one of the only publicly-owned tracts of land in the Valley east of I-5. For minimal additional financial investment by the City, local volunteer groups could create a network of hiking and biking trails while preserving this special land as open space — in perpetuity — for generations to come.

As an aside, I appreciate all that the Parks Commission has done to make Ashland the amazing recreation community that it is. In particular I would like to thank the Parks Commission and AWTA (and other agencies) which have done a wonderful job of thoughtfully separating trails by user groups as necessary to minimize conflicts.

Thank you for your time -- I look forward to watching our City's recreation opportunities continue to evolve and grow.

Regards,
Peter Philbrick

From: [Rebecca Walker](#)
To: [Dorinda Cottle](#)
Subject: Trails Plan Public Comment
Date: Tuesday, March 15, 2022 2:49:11 PM

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

To: Ashland City Council, Ashland Parks & Recreation Commission and Trails Review Committee

Trails Plan Public Comment 15 March 2022

I am writing in support of the City of Ashland Sustainable Mountain Bike Trails Plan. I moved to Ashland in November 2019 from Scotland and work at Southern Oregon University as the Sustainability Manager. Mountain biking was one reason I was attracted to this area and I feel the Ashland Mountain biking community is so supportive and welcoming. I moved from an area in Scotland that has now invested in a world innovation center for bike testing and developments as well as running a biking college program and producing world champion athletes. This old mill town has become revitalized with a constant stream of tourism and supportive locals. It attracts young families by having a range of trails catering to different abilities, a pump track for skills development and new jobs in the area (see link below).

To me, Ashland is another world class mountain biking town with a range of businesses being supported around this from restaurants and coffee shops to bike shops. We also have an internationally renowned bike mechanic school in town! Mountain biking creates economic resilience and diversity in Ashland as well as a recreational enjoyment and a strong community feel.

When trails are managed right they come with minimal impact and bring so much benefit (see link below). This is exactly what the Sustainable Trails Plan is highlighting and aims to do. Studies have concluded that hiking and biking show small to no difference in trail degradation effect. As someone who has dedicated their career to environmental protection and developing climate change policy in Scotland and now working in the same field at SOU, it is hugely important to me to connect to the outdoors and for everyone to enjoy all it has to offer while minimizing the impact.

I started mountain biking in my 30s in Scotland and now at 43 it is something that has given me fitness, a community and opportunity to learn new skills. I think Ashland offers so much potential in relation to economic diversity and resilience and the mountain bike trails are an important part of this. The Sustainable Trails Plan is a great start in making these trails more sustainable while continuing to grow the sport in a considered and managed way.

I am also very excited to see the family participation and growth of Ashland Devo, a non-profit that friends and families in Ashland have put 100s of voluntary hours into and it is so special to have this as part of the community. The new SOU Cycling Program will also be a great addition to this and it will be amazing to have a collegiate cycling team in town with access to incredible trails for training.

It pains me to read one of the letters that has been submitted for public comment, where someone has personally attacked people that have given up hundreds of hours of voluntary work to make mountain biking accessible to all ages. A healthy discussion with different perspectives always helps get to a good outcome but personal attacks, name calling and comments like this are neither useful and helpful. I

hope this isn't representative of this beautiful community I now call home. Mountain biking brings so much to a town, a community and an individual. Ashland has a real opportunity here.

Sincerely

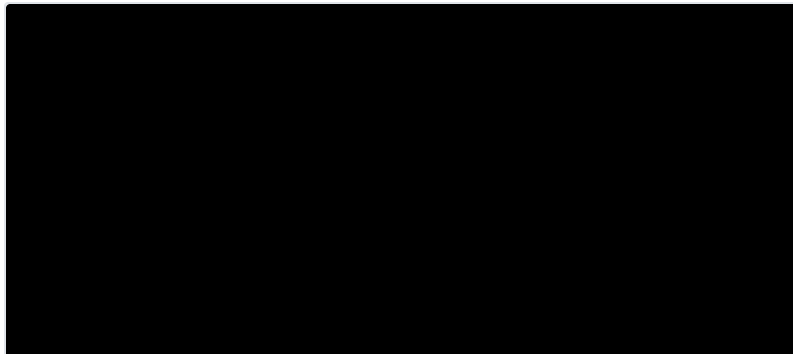
Becs Walker

Jobs and Mountain Biking Innovation Center – Innerleithen, Scotland

<https://www.thesouthernreporter.co.uk/news/people/former-innerleithen-mill-to-become-mountain-bike-innovation-centre-3555674>

Effects of mountain biking versus hiking on trails under different environmental conditions

[Effects of mountain biking versus hiking on trails under different environmental conditions](#)



Effects of mountain biking versus hiking on trails under different envir...

Recreational use of nature areas is increasing worldwide. All trail-based activities have a certain degradation ...

From: [Sara Campagna](#)
To: [Dorinda Cottle](#)
Subject: Trails plan public comment
Date: Sunday, March 13, 2022 9:33:03 AM

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Dear Dorinda,

I'm writing to you today in support of the RVMBA's proposed Sustainable Trails Plan to the city of Ashland. I strongly support the proposal in addressing some of the issues on city-owned property to make this community more bike friendly and address the flaws in our current trails. In order to keep Ashland as a premier mountain biking destination, we need to address these issues and keep upgrading and building new trails.

I have lived in Ashland for 10 years and been mountain biking for the past 6 years. Over that time, I have seen a significant increase in usage and degradation of our current trail network. I am a mother of two boys, ages 8 and 11, and it has been difficult to share my love of mountain biking with them due to the steep nature of the current trails. It is more important than ever for me to be outside as a family getting exercise in nature and the addition of beginner trails would allow that not only for my family, but for so many more in our community. There are so many individuals I know that would like to bike but are intimidated by the steepness of the current trails. It would also be a huge benefit to our community to have increased access to the south side of town to allow easier accessibility and more trails to spread bikers out, thereby promoting safer riding for everyone.

Additionally, it would be prudent for the city of Ashland to bolster mountain biking as a tourism activity in order to diversify the industry since it can be done year-round and outside of smoke season. The more access to activities that we can offer residents and visitors alike will keep our town thriving and healthy.

Sincerely,
Sara Campagna

From: [Steven Crowthers](#)
To: [Dorinda Cottle](#)
Subject: Loved to death
Date: Saturday, March 12, 2022 2:29:56 PM

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Good afternoon Dorinda.

On my run from the quarry up Red Queen to the loop road back to Alice In Wonderland then to Jub Ju Jub and finally down Red Queen I witnessed 12 cars in the quarry and 28 cars at white rabbit. When I returned to the parking area there were now 21 cars.

7 bags of dog waste between Witzend and Red Queen Trail heads, 12 dogs off leash and the smell of dog waste when I got to the parking lot at White Rabbit.

I have heard a lot of commotion regarding modification to the Ashland Trails Master Plan. There is one thing that all of ashland and it seems the rogue valley have in common: we love the ashland watershed trails, in fact we are going to love them to death. Please for the love of God add some more trails, trail heads, trail connections, waste receptacles and signs reminding people to pick up after their dog.

there are many benefits to a robust trail system:
health and wellness for trail users
retainment of property values
attraction and activities for our Shakespeare visitors

Please do something!!!

Steven Crowthers

p.s. If you need any help or information on what a trail system can do for your town please don't hesitate to ask, I have lived in numerous small mountain towns that have functioning trail systems. For example Durango Colorado has over 78 miles of in town trails(this is not including the Forest Service and BLM that also have a robust trail system!!!! Aspen has a trail that connects to Crested Butte!!!!