



Monterey County

Parks Commission

Agenda Item #5b

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Board of Supervisors
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

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b. Receive a Status Report on the Toro Park Trails Project and provide a recommendation to staff and the Task Force on steps to address items of concern.

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive a Status Report on the Toro Park Trails Project and provide a recommendation to staff and the Task Force on steps to address items of concern.

SUMMARY:

The Toro Trails Task Force continues their planning work on the trail system at Toro Park. Recently there were reports of illegal trail use and unauthorized trail work, which was brought to the attention of the RMA-Parks, the Task Force and Parks Commission. This update provides a summary of the issues and the efforts taken to address them, and requests your Commission's consideration, input and recommendation on an immediate approach to addressing items of concerns related to the trail system at Toro Park. The recently reported concerns consists of:

- Unauthorized trail-building taking place, specifically at Marks Canyon trail
- Mountain biking on both illegally constructed trails and on designated hiking-only trails
- Bike tire marks are visible on a portion of the trail where bikes are not allowed (at the confluence of the Marks Canyon trail/creek bed)
- Cyclists (and hikers) are getting lost or redirected onto trails that aren't clearly marked and maintained, and
- Unauthorized entry into the park from the Harper Canyon gate

In the past nine (9) months there has been a focused effort to address the opportunities and constraints associated with the trail system at Toro Park. The planning effort and various activities that the Task Force has identified and is working on have been reported to your Commission on a regular basis. The Task Force is aware of the related concerns of unauthorized trail work, trail user conflicts, trail damage or erosion and the protection of natural resources. There's also an awareness of the need to inventory the authorized and unauthorized trails and list and record their attributes, research the relevant documents related to Toro Park property and the need to address the management of the trail system including the planning, design, development, maintenance, operations and enforcement. However, the recent reports of unauthorized trail building were a surprise to those involved and were looked into as soon as they were reported on May 2nd.

Staff and members of the Task Force have responded and hiked the areas to investigate and document the concerns. No recent, significant trail work, earth moving, or vegetation removal has been discovered and confirmed as of late. There is recent evidence of minor brush removal at the edges of some of the trails, but no evidence of significant vegetation removal or earthwork. A few months back staff had received a report of work occurring at a remote area near Ollason and Black

Mountain Trail, leading down towards Harper canyon, and have stopped the work by placing stacked brush to block the trail, added signs with code citation regarding unauthorized work and continue to monitor the area. Staff had also received a report of people entering into Toro Park through the Harper Canyon gate with tools, and immediately responded from both ends of the area (from the Toro Park side and at the Harper Canyon gate) but did not see any one. The backcountry trails are remote, require a good amount of time to reach from the Toro side and have limited management presence. The many “gates” from the surrounding developments of Toro Park easily provide access to these areas. One solution is to completely close off these access points and trails, while additional management and enforcement efforts are identified.

The Task Force hiked the area of the Marks Canyon trail where fresh tire marks were seen. Instead of tire marks there were what appeared to be cattle-hoof marks. Regarding the cattle grazing practices at the park, this will require more time to consider in terms of where sustainable grazing will be allowed. A solution to redirecting the trail traffic from the canyon may be addressed by adding directional signs keeping users to the right and monitor the results. Regarding the situations where trail users (both cyclists and hikers) get lost or redirected onto trails that aren’t clearly marked that have been inadvertently been created by cattle/deer paths that have become duplicate trails or off-shoots from a main trail is typical in a trail system like Toro. Additional trail sign posts and maintenance of the existing ones, regular trail maintenance activities and enforcement will help to address this issue as well as keep trail users on the designated trail. Some of these efforts may take longer than others to identify, address and implement.

DISCUSSION:

The following approach to immediately addressing items of concerns related to the trail system at Toro Park has been developed for your commission’s consideration, input and recommendation:

- Develop letter from the County RMA-Parks to the trail community clarifying both work on the trails need to have prior approval, waiver form, etc. The formal notice is a courtesy warning about the serious effort to end unauthorized trail work and that if caught, people will be fined and/or prosecuted. The County also has the authority to close the trails.
- Provide a Toro Park Trails call-in number for people to report incidents. The calls will be monitored and routed to appropriate staff, with the information that these calls will be for non-emergency purposes only.
- Add a link to the RMA-Parks web page for the Toro Trails County Connect, another way to report a problem.
- Develop an app so the public can submit issues/concerns they encounter on the trails, a draft version called “MC Trails Reporter” is in progress.
- Develop User Friendly “Trail Etiquette” brochure to provide information on appropriate trail use and safety.
- Install an informational kiosk (similar to Fort Ord) at the main entrance or at a designated location. With the trail map and other trail related information.
- Update the RMA-Parks website announcing “authorized” trail work days so that trail users can find out more about what to expect on the trail and so that they may also want to participate.
- Develop trail friendly signage to post throughout the Park and at key trailheads/confluences/entrances. The signs would be similar to the official letter to reiterate the

message and list appropriate codes and potential penalties and also provide other relevant trail information.

- Repair the existing signposts and add new ones in areas where directions are needed.
- Place or replace the "NO BIKES" emblem on existing posts for the hiking only trails.
- The status of the equestrian "posse" group.
- Continue to identify immediate, trail maintenance renovation or repair projects that can be done by staff, volunteers, Cal Fire Gabilan crews or the CA Conservation Corps.


OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

RMA consults with the Office of the County Counsel and will work with Auditors Office for fiscal support if necessary.

FINANCING:

There is no impact to the General Fund.

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