

## SCOPE

**Santa Clarita Organization for Planning and the Environment**

TO PROMOTE, PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE ENVIRONMENT, ECOLOGY  
AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE SANTA CLARITA VALLEY

POST OFFICE BOX 1182, SANTA CLARITA, CA 91386



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County of Los Angeles  
Department of Parks and Recreation  
510 S. Vermont Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90020

Sent via email to: lbradley@parks.lacounty.gov

Comments on the Canyon Trail draft Assessment for Placerita Natural Area

The Placerita Canyon Natural Area operates under the guidance of an operating agreement with California State Parks (State Parks) and the *County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation Natural Area Staff Handbook, 2000*. The regulations of Natural Area Staff Handbook preclude the use of bicycles in Natural Areas, referring such use to designated and approved trails which are located primarily in Regional Parks. We believe that this regulation was enacted after reasoned consideration and investigation. It should not be overturned.

The Assessment goes on to acknowledge that:

*State Parks allows bicycles on some of its trails but "...trails are not designed or intended to serve as active recreation facilities where nature appreciation may be secondary to athletic or skill challenge...trails are generally designed to accommodate a passive, nature-oriented type of shared trail use..."<sup>1</sup>*

It is a mystery to us as to why the Assessment seems to proceed to support mountain bikes on the Canyon trail after citing these two publications that advise against such a decision.

### **CEQA Reviewed Required**

Allowing a change such as this in the regulations for a particular Natural Area could affect other Natural Areas throughout the County. When a regulation is waived in one area it becomes difficult to defend it in others. Therefore we believe that this change must receive CEQA review to explore how it would impact not only the Placerita Natural Area but also other parks throughout the County. An "Assessment" is not a sufficient document on which to base a decision on this important matter.

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<sup>1</sup> Administrative Draft Trail Use Conflict Study California State Parks Road and Trail Change-in-Use Evaluation Process, prepared by Alta Planning + Design, October 10, 2011; page 1-3.

The Natural Area is home to several sensitive species named in the Canyon Trail Assessment. How will allowing cyclists affect the viability of these plants and animals? How will widening of the trail, as required to safely accommodate this sport, affect these species? This question too must be evaluated in an EIR if the County decides to move forward with this proposal.

**Safety**

The assessment fails to fully explore the potential safety issues to the many school children that use the Canyon Trail. Fast moving cyclists coming around curves or on narrow areas of the trail can and do create hazards for both hikers and horses. We believe that the County should evaluate and list all pedestrian/cyclists and equestrian/ cyclist interactions that have occurred while cycling was illegally (allegedly mistakenly so) allowed.

**Cost**

At a time when parks throughout the state are under financial stress and threatened with closure, it seems improper that the County would incur the substantial additional financial costs outlined in the Assessment to allow cycling on this trail. It is not only the costs needed to make the trail safe for multiple uses that were never intended, but also maintenance costs for a sport that may cause far greater wear and tear on a trail than pedestrian use.

For the above reasons we recommend that the County continue to abide by the rules outlined in the Handbook governing this park area and not allow cycling on the Canyon Trail.

Sincerely,



Lynne Plambeck  
President