

Hi PROS Advisory Committee Members and Park Commissioners,

Last September I was given the opportunity to lead a few Park Commissioners on a walking tour of Hidden Canyon. It's very aptly named; most residents are largely unaware of this southern end of the Waterdog Open Space. But in fact Hidden Canyon is larger than the Waterdog acreage and the John Brooks acreage combined:

Waterdog 51 acres

John Brooks 49 acres

Hidden Canyon 180 acres

On our hike we stopped and discussed the extensive damages. We observed heavily eroded trails, especially on the southern slope where Rambler trail has ditches 4 feet deep and is widened to 30 feet in places. We saw drainage issues – some natural and some from homes above - that contribute to trail and slope damage. We hiked down the notorious Finch switchbacks, noting that no amount of maintenance could make them safe or sustainable. And we saw dirt and debris tossed into the creek – a direct violation of state guidelines for protection of riparian habitats.

All of this is even more saddening when you become familiar with the Western Hills Area Plan, adopted in 1990. The Plan recognizes the unique chaparral, riparian and oak woodland habitats of the canyon – areas that are now designated as “sensitive communities” for the diversity of plants and the animals that call them home. I urge you all to visit Hidden Canyon and to learn why it's protection is so important to our regional Biodiversity Hotspot.

Thank you,

17-Apr Kristin Mercer

and sustainable place for recreation, connecting with nature and building community. In the new Master Plan, I request you to consider:

Keep maintaining Waterdog Lake just as it is today. There are a ton of parks and outdoor spaces designated as "hiking only" available to hikers already, whereas mountain bikers already have very limited options. Please consider educating hikers that are uncomfortable sharing the trail about the hundreds of trails that are available for hiking exclusively in other areas. Closing Waterdog Lake Park to mountain bikers will result in people having less chances to engage in healthy exercise. I have biked dozens of times at Waterdog and never had any issues with hikers, it's easy to be careful and polite and make space for each other, even on single track.

Some additional points:

- Maintaining the trails, as they are, for multi-use for hiking, biking, dog walking, exercise, connecting with nature, and community-building, consistent with best practices of other open spaces;
- Continuing outreach and education to trail users and groups to ensure safe and sustainable use of our trails such as the excellent new "Love Waterdog" campaign.
- Continuing to collaborate with community groups and volunteers to support the maintenance and preservation of the trails. They are doing a great job along with Belmont P&R workers. Our trails get healthier every year.
- Open space recreation has enormous benefits for the community, it's a local park for stress reduction, exercise, revitalization, appreciation of nature, cultivating conservationist and environmentalist ideals, fostering community pride, and improvement of quality of life. Our community has a need for recreational open space - Water dog has served this public need well for decades.

18-Apr

Hello,

I support keeping Water Dog Open Space as a mountain biking friendly area. There are very few places like this in the Bay Area (maybe even country) and none on the Peninsula. Most other spaces in the Bay Area are for hikers only. This should be just thought of as a mountain biking park, it should get more funding to maintain the park but stay open to all types of use.

It seems that people who are against this are very Not In My Backyard, as there are plenty of nearby places for great hiking but none for mountain biking. More people need to get outside and mountain biking offers people an outlet. Bikers love the outdoors and appreciate it. The more people who enjoy the outdoors and can appreciate it the more likely they are to care about the environment in other ways, i.e eat less meat, drive less, recycle, consume less, etc.

All in all this is one of the best places to mountain bike in the area, people will have to drive hours to get to something similar. On top of that there is a very strong community around mountain biking at Water Dog and for years hikers, bikers, dog walkers, etc have all been able to enjoy the space with no real problems.

So I would like to see more funding in the master plan to support mountain biking and other uses at Water Dog.

Thanks,
Mike

19-Apr

Hello All,

I forgot to email this to the above address so that all interested parties will receive this message regarding the survey. Are you getting ample input? Should the survey stay online longer?

Thank you,
Connie

-----Forwarded Message-----

From: "Connie S. Tettenborn"

Sent: Apr 18, 2021 7:23 PM

To: "ParksRec@belmont.gov"

Subject: PROS Master Plan Survey

Dear Commissioners,

I just noticed an online plea for mountain bikers to fill out the survey. Given that anyone can fill out the survey and may not necessarily give an honest answer regarding residency, is there some analysis that can be done to determine whether the survey results are valid and give Belmont citizens' views priority. We live here and pay city taxes and are responsible for the infrastructure here. Is there an estimated response rate, which could be compared with the number of people living in each neighborhood?

Thank you,
Connie Tettenborn, PhD

19-Apr

To whom it may concern,

Our trails, through our open space and parks are being overrun by bikers, and now some with electric bikes. This is largely because other cities are outlawing bikes in their parks and open spaces.

These bikers disregard the safety of the walkers which always have to go off the trail to get out of their way often in unsafe situations like going up an embankment or into poison oak, unstable ground or a steep downslope. Many of the walkers are elderly and have a lot of trouble getting out of their way. Why are we making our parks and open spaces a playground for people that neighboring cities don't want in their parks and open spaces?

We didn't work hard to preserve our open spaces for bikers! We had no idea at the time that they would end up being the predominate users since many walkers are finding it unpleasant and too dangerous to use with the proliferation of bikers.

(I have a recurring fantasy of being blind and 'accidentally' poking my stick through the spokes of a fast passing bicycle.)

19-Apr

This Earth Day we are reflecting on sustainability for our planet. But since conservation begins at home, I'd like to address our sustainable stewardship of Belmont's Open Spaces.

The first and foremost aspect of sustainability is balance. We want people to enjoy nature, but not to the detriment of the very thing they come to enjoy. That balance is achieved by managed trail density – enough trail access to enjoy nature, but not so much that it fragments habitats and destroys the ecosystem.

Last year I undertook a study of all open spaces within 20 miles of Belmont. I compiled data for 44 of the comparable preserves, and shared this data with Parks Commissioners. Now I urge you to watch the video of this presentation: Open Space Preserves in the San Mateo Region. (choose the 12 minutes in full, or a 3-minute summary at this link)

Fact: Waterdog has the highest trail density of any open space area on the peninsula, and probably the bay area. It has twice the trail density of other comparable small open space areas. This fragmentation and intensity of use is not sustainable.

As stewards of our city and our planet we are tasked with adopting sustainable policies. For Waterdog that means fewer trails and a more thoughtful approach to trail planning. For the sake of future residents, please consider this legacy as you guide our new Master Plan.

Feel free to contact me with questions.

22-Apr

Hi,

I have been mountain biking in Water Dog for years and absolutely treasure it! It's very unique to offer such amazing mountain biking right next to home.

Love sharing the space with all (hiking, groups, nature walks, etc.).

Please do not eliminate mountain bike riding there. There are many great hiking trails around, but only one place to mountain bike.

Cheers,
Julien

21-Apr

Hello Park Consultants to Belmont:

I live close to Waterdog Lake Park and have for a long time been concerned about how bikers are ruining the trails there. In addition, one time when I was walking there, I almost got hit by a biker. The trails are ruined because so many bikers in the Bay Area come to Belmont to bike in the Park; however, people like myself who live near the Park should be given first priority about its uses. I hope that you will stop all bikers from using the trails near the Park.

Thank you for your attention!

Carol

Carol Epstein
2716 Wemberly Drive

30-Apr Belmont