

Ramirez, Angelica

General Public Comment

From: Kathy Rosenthal <ksrvaquera@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 23, 2022 8:27 AM
To: sbcob
Subject: More Issues at Live Oak Trail



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I wish to submit the following letter for the public comment period at the Board's hearing on Tuesday, May 25th. Please distribute the following letter to the Board of Supervisors.

I will be also registering to speak during public comment at tomorrow's meeting.

Thank you,
Kathleen Rosenthal

Dear Honorable Supervisors:

Equestrians continue to monitor the "Pilot Project" at Live Oak Trail. The project was not properly vetted and removed any input from the public and removed the decision making authority about activities allowed on the trail from your Board to Park Staff. Issues and problems continue to plague the Parks Division's "Pilot Project" (that allowed hikers on the Live Oak Trail and is slated to end in October 2022). Last week it was reported via one of our riders that there was a motorcycle on Live Oak trail on Thursday March 20th, 2022. The rider reported the incident to the main number following the procedure as you have directed us to follow. We have contacted Parks staff to determine what was the Cachuma staff's response and what is planned to make sure this trespass incident does not happen again?

On Sunday, I rode for the first time in over a month yesterday at Live Oak Trail and followed the motorcyclists' tracks out around the 12-mile loop (please see photos attached). Not only did the motorcyclist put our rider's safety at risk but also potentially disturbed the sensitive wildlife resources out in Santa Cruz Canyon. You will recall last year, prior to its unprecedented implementation, trespass and opening Live Oak Trail to any mechanized travel such as mountain and E-Bikes, we noted this is one of the glaring issues that was not addressed under the "Pilot Project" but is one of the major impacts we identified and one that needs to be mitigated. How does the Parks Division expect to protect the hiker, riders, and the natural resources at Live Oak from this same type of trespass in the future? This is the second time a fatality could have occurred where no such threat was present prior to implementation of the "Pilot Project". The first was a hunter detained on County land that resulted in gunfire as he shot a deer. This is unacceptable. What will be done about it?

We understand Cachuma may be under-staffed and unable to respond to these incidents. We continue to believe that the Trail was opened without proper planning, staffing, and funding. Therefore, we suggest a return to the proven method of entry to Live Oak Trail that minimizes staff oversight – a return to the previous and proven method of security by locking the gate and requiring people to call in for the gate code for access. Equestrians were expected to and successfully accessed the Trail via this method for years and it worked. It is unreasonable to ask anything less of other users until such a time staff can be dedicated to the area to provide the security necessary with today's trail users and their attitude that they can do what they want. The signs are ignored and are doing no good.

On a second issue, the Live Oak Trailhead is beginning to look like a dump. Large tree trunks have been placed willy-nilly around the native oaks and Sycamores. It appears the trunks are hauled in from off-site. The trunks are eucalyptus and could introduce invasive pests to the area. The tree trunks have precluded any access to the already minimal shade provided by the trees. Hikers, riders, and their horses have NO SHADE available to them in the hottest part of the day and summer is just around the corner (note that the attached photos were taken around 4:00 PM). Is this really the best way to promote recreation at this beautiful site? Besides, it looks like junk and is not aesthetically complementary to this natural area. This is not protecting the trees, but providing more habitat for ground squirrels, creating more holes in the parking area – another danger to horses. Live Oak is not a dumping ground. We realize it is expensive to dispose of large wood, but Live Oak is not an appropriate place to dispose of it, particularly since the trunks are from a non-native species found nowhere in the area. Are the trunks being accepted from work completed at Cachuma, or are they doing a favor for other US Bureau of Reclamation leases (Boy Scouts) or local tree trimming/removal contractors? We need to think in terms of priorities; the cost for transportation of the trunks alone must be outrageous and that money can be better used elsewhere. If the trunks are being accepted from other lessees or tree contractors from off site and they are dumping them here, that's a conflict with County ethics and must stop immediately. The trunks surrounding what are favorite picnic areas need to be removed. We enjoy this area after our rides. The trees have been near the roads for years. Placement of trunks in this area make no sense unless it is to make visiting Live Oak less pleasant for visitors.

Finally, there has been little effort to “fix” the illegal trail that was cut during the Lucidity Festival. Only a small pile of rocks placed at one of several entrance points off the main trail and a small sign. I had an opportunity to look closer during my ride and concluded that it took several people quite a bit of effort to construct it. Whoever did it, planned it and knew what they were doing. It has altered the creek bed (rocks piled to make an obvious path) and introduced straw and possibly invasive seed to the Santa Ynez River. I had asked previously for Cachuma staff to review the security tape to identify the offenders, but I've never heard back. We are trying to learn from Parks staff: Was the tape reviewed? What was the conclusion? If the tape is not archived, I would imagine it has been taped over by now. This is another glaring gap in the security necessary at Live Oak under this “Pilot Project” and is something that the Parks Division cannot fulfill under the current unlimited access method.

As it stands more trespass and environmental damage will take place without some type of action on the Parks Division's part. There is not enough staff or funding to adequately address the security issues and the prioritization of actions at the Trailhead needs a good, hard look. What has been done thus far to “fix the problems” with the “Pilot Project” is simply not enough.

Thank you for your time and attention as we continue to monitor the Pilot Project and off-shoot projects at the Live Oak Trail. We realize there are a lot of things going on at present requiring your attention and the Parks Staff's attention, but this is just another indicator that the funding and staff are not available to address all the challenges, especially at Live Oak Trail, which are necessary to protect recreation visitors and natural resources. We are in fire season now and watching who goes in and out of the north shore at the Live Oak Trailhead is more important than ever.

Thank you for your time and attention to these issues.

Best Regards-
Kathy Rosenthal
2022 President
Santa Ynez Valley Riders

Motorcycle tracks on the Live Oak Trail:













