

north shore news

LETTER: Equal voices needed in trails debate

North Shore News

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Dear Editor:

Regarding recent events on the trails of Mount Fromme between hikers, dog walkers and mountain bikers:

I have been a mountain biker for 20 years and a hiker for even longer so I like to think I see both sides of the fence on this conflicting issue.

Two experiences I have had that are the exception not the rule come to mind. One day I was mistakenly identified by two hikers at Rice Lake for poaching the trail there. Rice Lake is designated hiking only.

I had walked my bike in from the main road on return from the LSCR to enjoy a quiet moment on a lakeside bench. The hikers proceeded to scold and blame me for riding past them on the trail and not heeding the trail designation. I was innocent, but they didn't believe me. It became a very uncomfortable moment so I left quite upset.

On the flip side, I have heard from fellow mountain bikers that poaching trails can be an acceptable practice. I was shocked once to see a mountain biker try to elbow a passing hiker and conversely I have seen hikers wielding walking sticks at oncoming cyclists. I wish I could say I hadn't seen any of these mishaps.

While all these events and behaviours are distasteful, I maintain that the mountain bike side has a much stronger voice and lobby on the North Shore than the hiking set.

Both need to be heard equally. Both have their perspectives as to the use of the trails in our natural areas.

The NSMBA is very well organized, funded, and lobbies its interests very well. There is no such countering body for the hiking/dog walking set on Mount Fromme with the exception of a very few random, frustrated voices in the community, sticking up for what they believe in.

The trails belong to all of us, but until we have equal voices on both sides of the fence, a sense of imbalance and conflict will likely continue to exist.

John Sharpe
North Vancouver

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