

North Van forests on trail to ruin

BY ELISE ROBERTS, NORTH SHORE NEWS AUGUST 24, 2011

Dear Editor:

Monica Craver is not the only citizen in our community concerned about the excess of mountain bike trails and the harm they are doing to the ecology of our local forests (A Different Track, Aug. 14, North Shore News).

There is plenty of evidence on the NSMBA website itself about erosion and the damage that has been done.

The article in the North Shore News showed a photo of two participants digging through an old log to promote drainage. Those rotting logs have more living organisms than live trees and are crucial to the biodiversity of the forest. It is the species that live in them that we don't see, the species that live underground -- moles, salamanders, invertebrates and so on -- that are hugely effected.

The little forest wetlands are more threatened every day by the excessive erosion caused by building these trails. This is the only place where skunk cabbage grows, an essential source of food for black bears.

There should be no bike trails anywhere near them, let alone built right over them. All that rich forest soil is dug mostly from around trees and from the forest floor, compromising the trees' health. Giant rocks are also being dug up, and the constant maintenance required on all those trails because of the wear and tear from bikes means even more digging. This is much more invasive than people walking and hiking -- contrary to the belief of mountain bike advocates.

I submitted to district council six months ago that signage in these wilderness areas is required to educate bikers about the important species at risk -- especially given there is no enforcement in the wilderness. I have yet to see any signage about salamander habitat.

Citizens should go and see for themselves how many trails and mountain bike-specific structures are being built up there and speak up before it's too late.

This sport is being driven by big bucks. It's taking precedence over the ecology of our forests. North Vancouver district council has lost its will regarding environmental protection while catering to the mountain bike industry.

Elise Roberts

North Vancouver

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