

Subject: FW: Wickenden Park Vandalism

Date: Sat, 24 Jan 2004 14:07:28 -0800

From: "Ernie Crist" <ernie_crist@dnv.org>

To: "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>

Dear Crawford:

Your lament is being repeated in all places where Mountain bikers have been allowed to use District trails and parks. District Council not only allowed the bikers and continues to allow it, but Council is actually encouraging it. This is done by spending large sums of money to accommodate the bikers even though this has resulted in serious confrontations with existing neighborhoods. The damage to trails and parks is reaching calamitous proportions.

It does not exactly take a rocket scientist to figure out that this kind of sport cannot be accommodated within regular District boundaries, at least not near residential areas, without serious consequences. To insist on doing so is to insist on putting a square peg into a round hole. The sport is growing by leaps and bounds and the District is being advertised throughout the world as a Mountain Bikers paradise.

When this item came before Council I suggested that we work with the GVRD and the Provincial Government to find a more appropriate place for this sport, but to no avail. I was outvoted six to one and the results are here for everyone to see and this is just the start.

Now I understand that staff is working on a strategic plan to find an alternative site. However, I would take this with a grain of salt. It is my opinion, based on experience and the makeup of this Council, which includes "environmentalists", that this is an empty promise. The only solution, as I see it is for people including community associations to organize and fight back, to win back not only their neighborhood parks and trails, but also their neighborhood peace.

Cheers,

Ernie Crist

-----Original Message-----

From: Crawford Kilian [<mailto:crof@shaw.ca>]

Sent: January 24, 2004 10:27 AM

To: Don Bell2

Cc: Richard Boulton; Graham Knell; Richard Boase; Ernie Crist; Janice

Harris; Maureen McKeon Holmes; Lisa Muri; Alan Nixon; Richard Walton

Subject: Wickenden Park Vandalism

Dear friends,

Last night a neighbour phoned me to say she'd encountered three young men in Wickenden Park who were busily constructing a mountain-biking course in one of the main walking trails in the park.

This morning I visited the trail she mentioned, and found the damage somewhat worse than she had described. A large vine maple had been ripped out of the ground to provide head clearance, a bank of soil had been shovelled out to provide a steeper slope, and some log-supported steps now have soil piled beneath them to make an easier downhill run from another newly excavated course.

This isn't the first such case. Last year a similar group (perhaps even the same people) built and abandoned a course on a less-traveled trail in Wickenden. And in the park's northeast corner, someone has built what looks like a paintball site.

When I talked to Graham Knell about the first biking course last year, he said he'd speak to the RCMP liaison with mountain bikers, and a welcome side effect was the volunteer repair team under Graham's leadership who improved the boardwalks on the park's main east-west trail. But the abandoned course

is still there, the paintball site was still there the last time I was in the area, and now we have yet another effort to turn a public park into a private playground.

If bikers can't be bothered to use the existing trails up on the mountains, they already have a course in Myrtle Park. So I don't see why Wickenden, treasured by local residents as a lovely place for a quiet ramble, should be vandalized.

Facilities tend to be abused when they already look neglected. The vandalized trails in Wickenden, and the paintball site, send out a signal: no one cares about this place. From biking trails it's a short step to tossed litter, damaged trees and bushes, and avoidance by people who just want a pleasant walk in a beautiful place. Then the bikers, party animals, and vandals take over.

Please act now to dismantle the existing bike courses and paintball site, and to carry out whatever trail maintenance Wickenden needs to make it look like a place people care about and look out for. If you would like a tour of the park, several of my neighbours and I would be glad to accompany you.

Sincerely,

Crawford Kilian
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