

Briones Regional Park is encircled by a significant number of equestrian facilities (Briones Horse Center, K&R, We Do, Willis Stables, Franklin Canyon Stables, Caldecot Stables, Rawkin Horse Ranch, Hossmoor etc..... plus numerous private horse properties). Over 300 horses are kept with either direct access or in close proximity to the Alhambra Creek Staging Area or the Bear Creek Staging Area. Whilist many disciplines of riding are represented, there is an historical tradition of trail usage long established in the park and it has been a highly popular destination for riders from all over the Bay Area.

The current trail use conflicts experienced by horse riders have already impacted Briones reputation as a horse friendly venue and have the potential to economically impact commercial barn owners as riders look for friendlier trails. Horse riders are being forced to defend the use of trails which they have enjoyed for many years against an influx of extreme mountain bikers (distinct from those which normally use the park) whose avowed intent is to travel at speed on their own 'home made' trails and whose ebikes are unfettered by the limits of human muscle power.

Countless new pathways have been and are being created by bikers, which erode the landscape and allow bikes to exit onto maintained trails at high rates of speed without any line of sight or warning to other trail users. Such usage cannot reasonably be described as 'development' or 'improvements' of the trail system or have any justification when it comes at the expense of the safety of other users. Hikers and equestrians are constantly the victims of 'near misses' at these junctions and reporting such incidents is difficult as such 'bootleg trails' have no names and are not marked on any map.

With the increase in park usage it is difficult to see how the network of maintained trails could be expanded without significant ecological impact. The impact of new pathways created by bike usage on the flora and fauna of the park is significant as there are fewer and fewer quiet areas beyond the reach of humans. The Deer, Coyote, Bobcats and Newts that used to be so common are now seldom seen.

It should also be noted that extreme mountain bikers use the park in an entirely different manner to walkers and equestrians and not in the way that the park was created for. Those travelling at speed through Briones have no interest in the song of the birds, the wild flowers, the soaring hawks or the beauty of the Buckeye in full bloom. They have no time to appreciate the beauty of nature as they concentrate on searching for challenging trails that give them speed and obstacles. Briones is not important to them, merely convenient for their sport. What they seek might be found on a garbage tip with the same satisfaction.

Briones is characterized by its many hills which previously made it less attractive to bike riders. The opposite is now true as its peaks are easily obtainable to pedal assist bikers (who have been observed towing other riders!) who seek the thrill of

excessive speed. While the park's mandate to open access to all users is laudable, it has a duty of care towards all, which cannot be negotiated or bartered away to the interests of one group.

The idea that all trail usage can be compatible if we just get together and talk about it is disingenuous. No amount of reasonable negotiation can possibly reconcile the sedate paces of pedestrians and equestrians with the speed of a biker streaking down the trail. Reaction times are simply not quick enough to allow for safety around blind corners and problems are frequently compounded by the use of ear buds and the fact that bikers navigate dips and obstacles by concentrating on the ground directly in front of them, rather than scanning the area for other trail users.

In the past such potential problems have been managed by the goodwill of park users who have respected and looked out for each other. Equestrians try hard to foster this by being friendly and communicative with those that they meet. Conflict is in no ones best interest but the pressure on park resources that has been seen in the last 14 months has eroded this happy state.

While walkers and equestrians are usually found in groups of two or three, organized groups or 'clubs' of bikers can number over ten, which leads to dangerous crowding on maintained trails. Access to the park from the Alhambra Creek Staging area is limited to only three trails (Diablo View, Alhambra Creek and Orchard) which serve as 'feeders' for all bootleg trails. The preservation of safe usage on these trails is critical. The idea that bikers can have their 'own' trails away from other users is completely misleading. For example, the only access to the bootleg 'Hank and Frank' is via the Alhambra Creek, Spengler or Old Briones Road Trails, probably the most used trails in the entire park.

Equestrians request the following:

1. The Park acknowledges the historical place of horses in Briones.
2. The current prohibition on motorized vehicles in Briones Regional Park continues and is actively enforced by Park Police.
3. The safety of all users and the preservation of park resources are primary considerations in all park policies.
4. The Park recognizes and supports trail usage by horses through signage and user education.
5. The Park limits the number of bikers riding together to four (the number of dogs is already limited to three per person without a permit).
6. The Park acknowledges that all user groups should be accorded equal consideration and that any new trails developed should be for the use of all.

