

DRAFT Cheasty Mountain Bike Pilot Project Recommendation
4-1-15

Dear ...

The Commission first wrote to you on April 2, 2014 concerning the proposed Cheasty mountain bike pilot project. We have followed this project an additional year, hearing from both bike advocates and those who feared environmental impacts. On March 11, the Commission toured the proposed site. Based on that experience and review of related documents, we have further recommendations.

The Commission urges refocusing this project to a pedestrian only trail. Recreational uses would be limited to low impact activities such as nature study, bird watching, environmental education, walking for pleasure, and wildlife/habitat preservation. Our reasoning is this:

1. Mountain biking can be expected to cause serious erosion to a site known to be a landslide hazard/steep slope area and likely also is an erosion hazard area.
2. Mountain biking can be expected to result in too much loud, sudden noise that will frighten wildlife. A Cooper's Hawk nest has been located on the site. The male and female are likely within the 20 individuals said to have been counted in the whole City during the last Audubon bird count. Other wildlife species/individuals have not yet counted by Parks as part of pre-project analysis and thus are vulnerable to not being recognized in post-project evaluation.
3. Mountain biking can be expected to destroy too much habitat as bikes cannot be expected to stay within 2 foot wide trails without crashing. A pedestrian only trail could avoid the interior wetland area of the park and go around the Park landscape yard near its entrance gate.
4. Mountain biking can be expected to expand on site as the Seattle Board of Park Commissioners recommends adding connecting mountain biking trails, further fragmenting habitat in the park.
5. Mountain biking can be expected to cause the Washington ____ to ask the City for millions to be refunded because its grant in the 1980's (check date) was designated for greenbelt preservation and low impact uses only.
6. Mountain biking can be expected to attract out-of-neighborhood users who will come by car and need to park. Primary parking would be along Cheasty Blvd, but this street is part of the Olmsted Legacy with limited parking only.
7. Mountain biking has been used as an incentive to get people involved in forest restoration. However, the local Green Seattle Partnership success story has demonstrated that pedestrian only trails can generate public passion for restoration. Cheasty could become a magnet for further public support.
8. Mountain biking at Cheasty has become very controversial. Refocusing to a pedestrian trail only would have the advantage of enabling the City to give its full attention to developing a new policy for its natural areas and greenbelts unencumbered by a bike pilot project.

The Commission stands open to your questions and to following this project however you decide.

Sincerely,