

Friends of the Pogonip
P.O. Box 7927
Santa Cruz, CA 95061
February 6, 2017

Santa Cruz City Council
Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation Commission
809 Center Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Re: Proposed Santa Cruz Parks Master Plan (PMP);
February 7, 2017 Joint Study Session

Dear Councilmembers and Commissioners,

On behalf of Friends of the Pogonip, we are writing, once again, to object to the proposed amendments to the existing Pogonip Final Master Plan that are contained in the current draft PMP under consideration at the Feb. 7 joint study session. (Please see the Friends of the Pogonip letter of June 7, 2016, to the Parks Dept. and Councilmember Terrazas appended to this letter.)

We have participated in the Parks Master Plan process since its inception in 2015, attending all meetings, and providing input to the process, including a tour of the Pogonip with Parks staff for in the field observation of ongoing issues and problems. See our June 7, 2016 letter for issues and problems noted then.

It remains our conviction that the **first priority** of the City should be to remedy the insufficient supervision and maintenance to date on the Pogonip, to increase ecological restoration and natural resource protection on the Pogonip (as the existing Master Plan provides), and to carry out **all mitigation measures** mandated in the final Pogonip Master Plan EIR of June 1988.

IN OTHER WORDS, FIX IT FIRST before considering the proposal of the PMP for the Pogonip.

Unfortunately, the current draft PMP has increased the potential environmental impacts of mountain bike activity on Pogonip, including a proposal for the upper Rincon Trail and associated access along Glen Coolidge Drive, that was not previously mentioned at any meeting.

Like all mountain bike trails proposed in the draft PMP for Pogonip, an exact on-the-ground route location has not been included in the draft PMP or any City public documents for any of the three new trails proposed. The only place that the new downhill only bike trail on Pogonip can be viewed seems to be on the website of the Mountain Bikers of Santa Cruz, who evidently have a source of information not available to the general public.

If the City Council desires that the proposed amendments to the Pogonip Master Plan suggested in the PMP go forward, then we would make the following requests.

1. Withdraw the proposed Pogonip Master Plan amendments from the PMP. The draft PMP is totally lacking in the level of on-the-ground environmental information necessary to do a credible review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). That information must be provided, at a minimum, for the three additional mountain bike trails suggested in the PMP, as well as for the new parking lot proposed at the end of Golf Club Drive. CEQA review of the draft PMP by itself **cannot substitute** for separate, project level CEQA review of the proposed Pogonip Master Plan amendments.
2. Eliminate from the PMP the attempt to do a back door revision of the City's 2030 General Plan regarding the meaning of "passive recreation". Pogonip is a designated open space/natural area in the City. The 2030 General Plan provides (p. 110) that "the beauty of these areas compels resident and visitor use for passive recreational activities such as walking, jogging, hiking, picnicking, bird watching, and relaxing." Mountain biking is NOT included in that definition. It is NOT a priority use for Pogonip.
3. Continue the Feb. 7 study session consideration of the PMP until City staff has provided full information as to how the CEQA mandated environmental review process is proposed to take place. Ensure that there is sufficient time for public engagement in that process.
4. Acknowledge that the initial GODBE Survey Research showed clearly that hiking or walking outdoors (at 37.8%) far outweighed mountain biking (at 9.1%) in preferences of City residents for fitness, athletics, or sports activities. The staff decision to do further GODBE surveys did not change that preference significantly. Mountain biking desires of non-residents are not relevant, and should not outweigh, the needs of City residents.

Pogonip is the crown jewel of the Santa Cruz City Greenbelt created in 1979 by the citizens of Santa Cruz through the initiative process, and affirmed by the 1988 CALPAW funding for acquisition of Greenbelt lands. Pogonip is a treasure that should be preserved and protected by our City for now and future generations.

Thank you for consideration of our comments.



Celia Scott



Peter Scott

for Friends of the Pogonip

cc: Mauro Garcia, Director of Parks and Recreation
Noah Downing, Park Planner

encl: Letter from Friends of the Pogonip of June 7, 2016



Friends of the Pogonip

831-423-0796

PogonipWatch.org

June 7, 2016

To:

Mauro Garcia, Director of Parks & Recreation

Noah Downing, Park Planner

Meta Rhodeos, Park Superintendent

David Terrazas, City Council member

On behalf of Friends of the Pogonip, we are writing to strongly urge that the proposed Santa Cruz Parks Master Plan respect the Vision Statement for Pogonip in the final Pogonip Master Plan, in particular that “Pogonip is a place to be appreciated for its natural beauty, habitat value and serenity, in contrast with the built environment.”

We are deeply concerned that some of the proposed modifications to the Pogonip Master Plan will unnecessarily damage that natural beauty, habitat values, and serenity. We are opposed to many of those modifications, which are discussed in more detail below.

It is our view that the **first priority** of the Santa Cruz Parks Department should be to **implement** the existing Pogonip Master Plan, to **remedy** the lack of supervision and maintenance to date on the Pogonip, and to increase ecological restoration of the Pogonip.

We also suggest that the Parks Department develop a volunteer docent program similar to the existing docent programs in Santa Cruz County State Parks and elsewhere in the California State Park system.

Over the past few weeks, we, and others, have been surveying the existing conditions on Pogonip, and have been especially dismayed by the trail erosion, the extensive number of unauthorized illegal trails that have not been closed by the Parks Department, faded directional signs, as well as the absence of much needed signs. The list below is just a sample of what we found. We can provide photo documentation as well.

1. At the Spring Street entrance, there is no large sign (it has been removed) indicating that bicycles are not permitted to enter Pogonip there, and must turn left toward UCSC. There is also no sign at the adjacent entrance from UCSC onto the Pogonip that bikes are not allowed on the Spring trail. We have encountered out-of-town visitors on the Spring trail who had no idea that bikes were not allowed there. The directional post near the bike racks is so faded that it is hard to read.
2. The Spring trail leading into the Pogonip from the top of Spring Street is badly eroded and excessively wide due a lack of barriers that contain the trail to a reasonable width, and inadequate maintenance.
3. Unauthorized trails exist throughout the Pogonip, in particular off the Spring trail (e.g., up to Coolidge Drive on the UCSC campus) and many other places.

We discovered that a recent unauthorized trail has been created from the Emmy McCrary trail through the redwoods to the Fern Trail. The Parks Department is fully aware of that trail. On one of our recent visits to the Pogonip we encountered a Park Ranger (Caldwell) and a member of the Santa Cruz Police Department looking for an illegal campsite on that unauthorized trail. We later visited that location and found that the unauthorized trail had not been closed, and evidence of camping still existed.

Illegal biking is also intruding into the Pogonip Creek Nature Loop Trail area, a part of the Pogonip which is of great environmental sensitivity, and easily damaged by bicycle use.

4. Trail erosion exists throughout the Pogonip in various locations. In particular, the Ohlone Trail is badly eroded, and problems exist on other trails, such as the Lookout Trail, and portions of the Rincon Trail.
5. At the crossing of the Spring Trail and Pogonip Creek, signs posted to inform visitors that there has been non-native plant removal at that location are so badly torn, faded and messy, that an impression of neglect is sadly conveyed rather than an effort to protect the habitat.
6. There is inadequate signing of fines for dogs off-leash and bikes on unauthorized trails. The impression is conveyed that there is little, if any, regular supervision of activities on the Pogonip. We regularly observe many on the Spring Trail with dogs off-leash, and have, on several occasions recently observed bicyclists on the Spring Trail.
7. It is our opinion that the designation of the Emma McCrary Trail as a "multi-use trail" is inappropriate, since with its often large numbers of bicyclists it is both hazardous and unpleasant for hikers. It should be designated as a trail for bicyclists, with hikers being advised to use the adjacent Lower Meadow Trail and Fern Trail.

The proposed modifications to the Pogonip Master Plan of which we are aware to date will not be beneficial to the environmental integrity of the Pogonip.

In particular, we object to:

1. The proposed creation of multi-use connections from Harvey West Park to the Emma McCrary trail, which will only further damage the sensitive Pogonip Creek area, and destroy the serenity of the existing Harvey West Trail for pedestrians.
2. A proposed separate downhill mountain biking trail in an undisclosed location.
3. Excessive parking on Pogonip lands at the Golf Club Drive entrance.
4. A sports field in the Upper Main Meadow.
5. Uses of the Pogonip Clubhouse (badly neglected by the City for years due the City's failure to match a generous grant in the past) such as a mountain bike hub (which presumes mountain biking on Golf Club Drive). Restoration of the Clubhouse is certainly desirable but not for that purpose.

We would like to invite you to join us on a Pogonip tour sometime this month so that we can acquaint Parks staff and others with the issues and problems we have listed above. We will be posting the above concerns on our website (PogonipWatch.org) to ensure that the public is fully aware of the problems presented by the proposed Parks Master Plan with regard to the integrity of the Pogonip.

Thank you for your timely response,



Celia and Peter Scott,
for Friends of the Pogonip.