

12/13/2022	<p>Dear Director Shearer and Commissioners,</p> <p>The good news is Belmont received 3 inches of rain between Friday and Sunday morning (Dec 9-11). The bad news is the mountain bikers were out just hours after the last cloudburst to ride the open space trails in the mud.</p> <p>Attached is a video of six bikers entering Hidden Canyon at the unapproved Hallmark Parklet entrance on Sunday. This video illustrates two issues the City has failed to address:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Damage to muddy trails. Rain can be damaging to trails, but it's the rutting from wheels and traffic on muddy trails that really exacerbates drainage and erosion problems. Even mountain bikers denounce use of muddy trails, yet bikers are always the first ones on the trails following a heavy rain. In the video you can see the 5th biker slips and falls midway down this steep and slippery trail. At the bottom of the trail you can see the large puddle and generally muddy condition of the trails, as you would expect after prolonged rain. While the City discourages use of wet trails, Belmont has no clear or enforceable trail protection policy. Many open space agencies routinely close wet trails; some automatically, and others unilaterally by ranger judgment. Arastradero has pre-identified "seasonal" trails that are automatically closed following only 0.5" of rain and not reopened until after 48 hours of no rain⁽¹⁾. It's time for the Commission to establish a clear, practical and enforceable policy to close trails in muddy conditions. 2. Unauthorized trailheads. The trail shown in the video is not an approved trailhead, but large groups of bikers enter here, including night-riders entering after dark. In response, the City recently installed a log barrier, which only led the bikers to create a new trail around the adjacent tree, or to ride straight down the hill from the other end where no logs were placed. Additional logs might be needed to prevent increasing damages. In addition, signs such as those placed elsewhere indicating "Not a designated trail" or "closed for restoration - Do Not Enter" may be another way to alert users that this entrance is illegal. This location is just one of at least 6 unapproved open space access points. The uncontrolled access to trails sends a message that our open spaces are not valued enough to warrant respect and protection, and that illegal activities are not enforced. Residents want our Commission to assert control of our open spaces by adopting clear and enforceable laws against night-riding and entering through unauthorized trailheads. <p>It is the role of the Parks Commission to deliberate and recommend policies for the protection of our open space.</p> <p>Thank you,</p> <p>Kristin Mercer</p> <p>(1) https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/News-Articles/Community-Services/Pearson-Arastradero-Preserve-Seasonal-Trails-Closed</p>	Kristin Mercer
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Duplicate emails received at Info@BelmontPROSplan.com

Dear Belmont Belmont,

As a local resident, someone who is concerned with wildlife and wilderness protection, and a supporter of In Defense of Animals, I am writing to urge you to prioritize the protection of wildlife and habitat at Waterdog Lake & Open Space in the PROS Master Plan.

Belmont offers many recreational opportunities, but Waterdog is its primary natural open space, and only by prioritizing protection over recreation will we leave future generations of all species the same beautiful and essential wild land we witness today.

While opportunities for outdoor recreation and simply being able to enjoy nature are important, with increasingly little habitat in the Bay Area, this open space is critical for wildlife, and provides an invaluable and much-needed corridor that many species rely on and benefit from.

Protecting spaces like this is also important to residents, who see and respect the value of conserving natural spaces and habitat; Belmont and San Francisco Bay Area residents care about the environment, and they care about protecting wildlife.

If the area is given over further to recreational purposes, it will cease to function as it should. I am also extremely concerned that trails will be further opened here to mountain bikers, who have been damaging trails and running over wild animals.

I sincerely hope you will put conservation first when planning the future of this open space, and prioritize the need to protect it over development.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Date Received	Quantity	Commenter Name
12/21/2022	1	Sonia Romero Villanueva
December 2022	1	Duplicate Emails Received at Info@BelmontPROSplan.com