

22 February 2011

Notes from the Bruce Ridge Consultation, 17 February 2011

Vision:

- Increasing the Biodiversity of the Nature Park
- People in the natural environment
- Family Friendly Nature Park where all members of the community can appreciate the natural beauty of Canberra.

1. Communication.

- The community felt that appropriate communication could be used to educate all users on appropriate uses for Bruce Ridge (and others?) and impacts on the trails and other facilities.
- Signage was seen as a key means of communication to all trail users.
 - Signage should be both at the trail-head(s) and at regular or appropriate intervals on the trail.
 - Community members felt that if there were better communication on the trail (through signage) it would reduce conflict by alerting all users of the presence of other users within the trail system.
 - Interpretative signage and cultural history is important.
 - Signage should not be dominant but rather sympathetic to the environment

2. Resourcing

- It was noted that 'enforcement' of existing rules had not been possible and this was, in part, due to a lack of resources for PCS staff.
- The community felt strongly that they wanted to ensure that trails were adequately resourced and that this did not take away from existing (stretched) resourcing.
- Walking trails and XCO trails are compatible and can be used by all users if appropriately designed or modification were undertaken to ensure their suitability and sustainability.

3. Riding Styles.

- Most people at the meeting felt that XC type riding was appropriate within Bruce Ridge.
- Others identified that if DHI riding was removed from the area it would just recreate the problem elsewhere.
 - Are there locations that are appropriate close by that a DHI track could be constructed?
 - DHI riding should be included in appropriate areas
 - Is it possible to develop a DHI track on an old, superfluous fire trail? It could incorporate technical trail features and jumps etc.

4. Partnerships.

- The entire community was very keen to work in partnerships with PCS and with other community members to develop a park care type group to maintain the park – this included maintaining the trails as well as undertaking land management activities such as rehabilitation and revegetation, erosion control and weed control activities. The details of the ratio between 'conservation management and trail management' has yet to be determined but could be a "10:2" model where 10 working bees are on the trails and 2 are on conservation management but this will be determined over time.
- The community noted that a Park Care group could be started within the next 6 to 8 weeks utilising a current PCS Park Care group format.
- Park care groups role would be to:
 - help manage the park including trail repair and maintenance, conservation management and data collection etc.
 - It was suggested that there potentially be two separate park care groups, one to look after conservation activities and the other to look after the trails. Some members of the community nor PCS did not support this idea. The (PCS) preferred approach was that of a single park care group.
- Groups that may be able to help with the identification of sensitive areas and species:
 - ACT Native Plant Society;
 - University of Canberra;

- ANU;
- CSIRO;
- friends of Grass lands; and
- National Botanic Gardens.

5. Share the trail

- At the meeting it was noted that community members at the meeting had much more in common than not. All community members were concerned with the well being of the environment and wanted to ensure the protection and continued existence on Canberra Nature Parks.
- The majority of the community was generally happy to share the trail with other users however they identified that this should be done on a case-by-case basis.
- Trails should be multi-directional.
- Some members of the community could not understand how a mountain bike rider could enjoy the bush as a bush walker enjoyed the bush.

6. O'Connor Ridge

- would like to see included in the process although at this stage this area is not considered as part of this initiative
- that area already includes trails that are signposted as multiuse. These trails were part of the original multiuse trial trail network from 1998.

7. Events

- Events should be generally social and/or family based events and non competitive;
- Mountain Bike races (XCO type) should not be encouraged.
- Events transiting the area (XCM, Triple Tri, Capital Punishment) may be OK but need to be monitored and need to 'fix' any damage'
- Through type (passing through) mtb events would be considered on a case by case basis although circuit type events (staying in the ridge) is not be considered to be appropriate or sustainable

8. Legitimacy

- The community identified that mountain bikers were legitimate users of the Nature Park System
- There were some people who felt that legitimising illegal trails would send the wrong message, others felt that if the trails were appropriate and well located they should be used. It was identified that many existing walking trails were themselves developed from desire lines.

9. Baseline information

- There is a need for baseline information:
 - numbers and types of users, just who are the current users of the forest?;
 - plant species;
 - fauna species; and
 - the trails and their state.
- There is a need to identify areas of high conservation
- Ensure that Heritage sites are not effected

10. Time Frames

- The community noted that:
 - this community initiative would be reviewed for success (or not) over 5 years. They noted that there should be regular and on-going assessment of the initiative.
 - The aim for the formation of a Park Care type Group is to occur within 6 to 8 weeks
 - The process for formalisation and remediation will occur (subject to the consultation process) by the end of this (2010/11) financial year
 - The information would be circulated to community members within 7 days of the completion of the workshop.

11. Families, Beginners and Kids

- At the moment Bruce Ridge is the only place that is suitable for children to learn how to mountain bike;
- The trails are used by family groups frequently.

12. Assessment Criteria

- The community wanted to know what assessment criteria would be used for the trails (which would stay open, which would close, which would be rerouted).
- The community suggested a range of criteria:
 - Trails subject to high erosion or where the soil structure was inappropriate
 - Trails passing through sensitive areas or through known endangered or threatened species/communities
 - Trails that were a safety hazard such as crossing over management/ fire trails
 - Trails that follow or cross a water course
 - Trails close or that could impact on heritage sites

- Trails that would cost a lot of money or be overly resource intensive to maintain

13. The next steps

- The community wish to undertake a walkthrough of the site in the near future
- Identify Key Timeframes (see timeframes)
- Park Care Group formalisation
- Identify areas of high conservation
- develop baseline data (include user surveys conservation data and relationship of this site to others)
- 5 years process with ongoing monitoring



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