
OPEN SPACE

DIVISION

MEMO

To: OSAC Members

From: Ralph Schell, Director of Open Space

Subject: North Table Mountain Park Management Plan – Staff’s Perspectives

Date: November 17, 2005

Listed below are staff’s perspectives on several key policy issues affecting the North Table Mountain Management Plan. Staff was prepared to bring forward these perspectives at the November 3 meeting. However, the meeting didn’t progress toward formulating a recommendation on the plan. Since the North Table Mountain Park Management Plan is again on the agenda for action in December, I feel compelled to provide you with staff consensus on North Table Mountain management. These positions are based on staff’s park visitor and natural resource management experience and on comments received from the general public, user groups, constituency groups, Trails Task Force and OSAC members during the last couple of years.

Through professional expertise, experience and research over the past few years, staff has always held that North Table Mountain’s natural resources are special and sensitive. The primary policy issue that continues to be challenged is whether a reasonable amount of hiking, horseback riding, biking, nature walking and other public use can occur primarily on existing trails without significantly affecting natural resources. Staff continues to feel confident that this balance can be achieved with appropriate management and maintenance techniques.

Here’s the Open Space Management Team’s position on several North Table Mountain Park policy and management issues:

- Manage the park more conservatively than a typical Open Space park (limited improvements, smaller parking lots, stronger enforcement of regulations, eliminate social trails, construct new trails only to connect to the main system as shown in the plan, etc.).
- Locate and size parking lots to control use including safety of users.
- Work with concerned individuals/groups/organizations to further protect sensitive areas along the trails and the mesa.
- Increase signage and communications to encourage park users to stay on trails.
- Don’t exclude any user group.

- Move to a shared use concept instead of alternating day (neither enough support nor anticipated use to justify alternating day).
- Eliminate the concept of a bike challenge course.
- Post a 10-mph speed limit for all trails.
- Implement a robust use-monitoring system and report findings annually.
- Follow through with adaptive management, i.e., if users go outside reasonable guidelines that impact the natural resources, modify the plan/vision by restricting use, implement zoning, etc.
- Increase communications regarding North Table Mountain's natural resource significance and management concerns
- Use Trails Task Force to help with monitoring and communications associated with trail use on North Table Mountain.

Although the Trails Task Force has a network for self-regulation and education, staff acknowledges that Open Space should abandon expectations for the Trails Task Force to be involved in policy analysis. Such a forum is not effective, and TTF members have expressed discomfort with that expectation.

From a broader context, Open Space needs to examine trail use policies system-wide and take action to reduce user conflicts and natural resource degradation where appropriate.