



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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Santa Barbara Ranger District

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Dear Trails Alliance and Past Trails Working Group Members,

Forest Supervisor, Gloria Brown, requested that I respond to your letter to her dated November 9, 2005 regarding the recommendations made by the Trails Working Group (TWG).

The safety and maintenance issues on the front country trails have been controversial and a matter of discussion among agencies and community members for over 20 years. As we know there are no easy solutions to trail use or we would have implemented changes a long time ago. The Forest Service and various committees have made several attempts in the past to develop a consensus among the different user groups. The recent TWG efforts and recommendations represent a milestone in the history of these issues. Once the TWG submitted its recommendations to the agencies, Forest Service, City, and County staff held several meetings to determine how to move forward. With the differences in how the agencies do business to get approvals, this is taking time to get worked out. With last season's winter storms and subsequent trail damage, we diverted our attention to the repair of the trails. Also during the past months, Forest Service staff has been working on streamlining our processes especially as it pertains to trail maintenance measures.

With this letter, I would like to formally recognize the work of the TWG and begin the process to implement some or all of the recommendations put forth over a year ago. I have been and continue to be impressed by the sincere and dedicated work that has come from you in seeking well thought out and balanced solutions to front country trail safety and maintenance issues. I recognize that many of the individual efforts and contributions from the original TWG has carried over in the establishment of the Trails Alliance (TA). It is my intent to formalize an agreement with the newly established Trails Alliance to assist us in management of the front country trails. As the cornerstone of the agreement, I hope the TA will continue to be the consortium of all front county trail users. I believe that the TA can become the needed community forum to begin working toward trail safety solutions, trail maintenance, and implementation of some or all of the TWG recommendations.

The recent accident involving the horse and mountain bicycle riders on the Cold Springs trail has accelerated my resolve to ask for the local community's help in improving safety on trails. As I have shared in the past, that Forest Service is ill equipped to supply the needed field presence to enforce safety changes on our trails. From our meetings with the City and County, it is clear that they also lack the resources to enforce these changes. It is time to recognize we need your support. Also, the recent accomplishments we have made in streamlining some of our processes, allows us to explore the use of volunteers in taking a greater roll in trail management. Therefore, it is timely to enter into a formal agreement with the Trail Alliance to assist with the



management of Santa Barbara front country trails. I propose that we start by beginning the work to draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Forest Service and the Trail Alliance on the interim and long-range solutions as put forth by the TWG. In this initial agreement I would like to see the development of an Annual Operation Plan that will help define the timelines and specific measures to be adopted from the Trails Working Group proposal.

Although, I cannot speak for Santa Barbara City or County, all three agency's representatives supported the consensus building process and the resulting proposal concepts as developed by the TWG. Regarding the odd/even aspects of the TWG recommendations, the agency staff requirements and expectations developed last year were:

- All three agencies are supportive of an odd/even pilot program;
- Enforcement from the agencies would be minimal to none;
- The program would be voluntary in regards to compliance;
- Volunteers would provide trail user education through the proposed host program concept and through the development of odd/even signing;
- Volunteers would submit a time line for pre-work needed to be in place prior to a starting date; and
- The agencies want certain components in place before implementation, such as trail hosts and signing.

I am currently reviewing the TWG document, TA's willingness to implement some or all of TWG proposal, and the above requirements with City and County representatives. At the same time it is important for the agencies to understand and have a commitment from the TA detailing the work and support the TA is currently able to provide. It is the intent of the agencies to officially inform the public of the forming of this new partnership, either through a news article or press conference; and it is important for us to know the scope and level of commitment that the TA can provide at this time. The City and County have both indicated that they will work through a public process to inform and receive input from the general public. That process may take the form of a joint hearing between the two Park Commissions and trails committees and potentially a hearing on a pilot program before the County Board of Supervisors and City Council respectively. I hope to have their continued support as we proceed with this agreement.

While I am working with the City and County representatives, we can begin drafting the agreement and the 2006 Annual Operating Plan. Please work with Kerry Kellogg, the District's Trails Manager, as my representative. I value all the work leading up to this initiation letter that supports moving forward with recommendations drafted by the Front Country Trails Working Group.

/s/ *Linda K. Riddle*

LINDA K. RIDDLE
District Ranger