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**Head to Head: Bikers Vs. Horses (and Hikers)**

... continued from page A1



From left: Zette Thierra on Ruby Slippers and Marianne Mckay on Zane Photos Chris Lavin

At issue is a new approval of the Watershed Master Plan, which hasn't been revised since the mid-1990s and is due for an update.

"At issue of course, first and foremost, is to preserve water quality," Figueroa said. "Second is preserving the environment, but we also have a priority to provide recreational activities in the watershed. But the first two issues come first."

The Lafayette and Orinda reservoirs allow some watersports, and hikers can use 82 miles of trails in the watershed as long as they buy a permit. Bikers would be allowed the same access with the permitting process.

"One of the things we'll have to look at is the enforcement process," said Scott Hill, a district supervisor based in Orinda. If more people are using the watershed, more rangers might be needed to police the trails.

"It will take more staff time and there will be costs involved," Figueroa said.

The opinion of every bicyclist who spoke at the meeting said it wasn't fair that horsemen and hikers were allowed to use the trails but not bicyclists. They also said there was an issue of safety: Many East Bay Regional Park trails cross over EBMUD trails. Bicyclists have to stop when they reach watershed lines, and are forced to divert into traffic to go around those sections.

Richard Disstra, a bicyclist who did not speak at the meeting but was interviewed while diverting his bike on a trail near Moraga, said he did not think it was fair that bikers had to get off the trails to find alternative routes in traffic. "I just don't think it's right," he said. "If they are allowed onto the trails, I think we should be allowed on the trails. I think 99.9 percent of bikers would be respectful of horses."

Janet McBride, the executive director of the Bay Area Ridge Trail, suggested a compromise: All bicyclists who have to traverse the trail over just those EBMUD sections on

the ridge trail should be allowed to pass.

"It's something we think the board should look at," she told the directors.

Mckay doesn't like that idea. "People with dogs are supposed to have them on leashes," she said, "but 99 percent of people let their dogs off leash." Her horse got nipped one day "and now he's afraid of dogs."

Even hikers can spook horses. She likes to take her time when riding Zane on the trails – never trotting. She goes slowly, particularly around

large numbers of people. On a recent morning she and a friend had to pull off the trail to allow a large number of hikers from Orinda to pass them by. "Hikers love to see the horses, so it's a treat for them," she said. "But ... it's very slow going."

EBMUD will likely review the watershed plan early next year, Figueroa said. "There will be more public hearings, you can count on that," she said. "We'll try to work out a fair solution for everyone. But the important thing is protecting the watershed."



Keegan Beattie, 11, of Lafayette explores a trail in Moraga on his mountain bike. Keegan's face brightened when told that nearby EBMUD trails might be opened to bikers. He would "definitely" use them, he said.



Members of the Hercules Cycling Club ride through the EBMUD watershed in Moraga. Many members would be happy to get off the roads and use trails, they said. Bikers include Christopher Bunag, Andy Manuel, Arnel Dionisio, James Tolosa, Kenny Leduc, Mario Olivarez, Ron Magcauas and Walter Weber.

**Letters to the Editor**

Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence -- we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters should be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. Visit www.lamorindaweekly.com for submission guidelines.  
 email: [letters@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:letters@lamorindaweekly.com); Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Editor:

I am very pleased to see SB 707 pass through the Assembly, and I'm thankful my representative, Assemblywoman Catharine Baker supported this important measure. Too often do we hear news of yet another tragic shooting on school grounds and college campuses. Parents shouldn't have to worry about their child's safety when they drop them off at school, or send them off to college, and students deserve the opportunity to learn in an environment free from the threat of violence. Our children's safety must be our number one priority, and SB 707 takes a big step towards safer campuses.

Cathy Reed  
 Orinda