Outdoor Alliance Washington

Access Fund • American Alpine Club • American Whitewater • El Sendero Backcountry Ski Club
Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance • The Mountaineers • Washington Climbers Coalition
Washington Trails Association

26 September, 2014

RE: Policy development for motorized use of State Parks long-distance trails

The Access Fund, American Alpine Club, American Whitewater, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, The Mountaineers, Washington Climbers Coalition and Washington Trails Association - all human-powered recreation organizations in Washington State - come together as a coalition on issues relating to recreation, access and conservation. As the group Outdoor Alliance Washington, we represent more than 34,000 members who recreate on public lands.

Many of our community members use and value State Parks' long-distance trails for activities including hiking, cycling, skiing and access to climbing areas. These are quiet, low-impact, human-powered activities and any consideration that would allow motorized use alongside our recreation is always of great concern to us. Accordingly we offer the follow items to consider in the development of a policy that will apply to all long-distance trails statewide:

- No recreational or concessionaire motorized use should be permitted. Current law is quiet on this but we are opposed to any use other than agricultural and then only with reservations and restrictions.
- Non-motorized recreation use of long-distance trails should be given priority use of the trails.
- Motorized use (crossings and linear) should be permitted only in circumstances where there are absolutely no viable alternatives, such as an adjacent/alternate road or the permitted user cannot construct an access road to their property.
- The policy should specifically identify safety and quality of the non-motorized recreational experience as the overriding objective for long-distance trails and that motorized use can only occur at locations and times which are very unlikely to interfere with this objective.
- The speed limit for those permitted users should not exceed 10 miles per hour and the driver should be responsible for driving slower if required for safe operation.
- The types of vehicles that may be authorized should not be large enough to prevent safe passing by bicyclists or equestrians while remaining on the trail tread. Vehicles that may cause significant damage to the tread surface, potentially leading unsafe conditions for a bicycle, should not be permitted. This includes tracked vehicles or vehicles whose weight is likely to cause significant tire indentations resulting in a hazardous condition.
- Motorized users, as part of the permitting process, should be held fully responsible for all costs associated with repair of any damage done to the trail as a result of the use as well as all liability for accidents that may occur directly or indirectly as a result of the use.
- A permit fee should be charged which is sufficient to cover the costs to State Parks of both the evaluation process and ongoing inspection to ensure compliance with all terms.

- A consistent permitting process should be used for evaluating applications for motorized agricultural use. This process should include a public comment period on each application which will aid Parks in assessing the likely impact of the usage on recreationists and other stakeholders.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input as you develop a State Parks policy which will guide any possible motorized use of your long-distance trails.

Best regards,

Joe Sambataro, Northwest Regional Director, Access Fund
Eddie Espinosa, Northwest Region Manager, American Alpine Club
Thomas O'Keefe, Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director, American Whitewater
Gus Bekker, President, El Sendero Backcountry Ski Club
Glenn Glover, Executive Director, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance
Martinique Grigg, Executive Director, The Mountaineers
Matt Perkins, Washington Climbers Coalition
Andrea Imler, Advocacy Director, Washington Trails Association