

Officials say mountain bikers ruining park

By Marianne Napoles | Posted: Saturday, June 23, 2018 8:00 am

The Chino Hills State Park is asking the mountain bike community to put pressure on fellow riders who are cutting down trees and removing brush to create illegal trails.

Sector superintendent Ryann Gill said a small minority of mountain bikers are causing a blatant destruction of park resources that could cause park managers to close all trails to mountain bikers.

Ms. Gill said that some are using tools and equipment to intentionally build non-system trails, some of which have destroyed sensitive habitat such as coastal sage scrub and walnut trees.

“The Chino Hills State Park does not wish to ban any user group,” she said. “We are asking for the help of the larger mountain bike community to help us police themselves and discourage this illegal and detrimental activity.”

Ms. Gill said parks officials are discussing a course of action that can be taken to protect resources and public safety.

Claire Schlotterbeck of Hills for Everyone, the group that founded Chino Hills State Park, said some mountain bikers have used chain saws to cut down branches that are in the way of a good ride. They are also using shovels to dig out bushes, she said.

“Many mountain bikers appear to be making new trails all over the park,” she said. “They are looking for more extreme rides or simply new routes.”

Ms. Schlotterbeck said state parks are established to protect natural resources and cutting new trails disrupts wildlife movement and breeding. Equestrian Jennifer Joines of Fullerton, who uses the park on a regular basis, said last year she noticed a couple of trails that were noticeably steeper than before. She said the trail used to be relatively easy for her horse to climb but this time, the grade was so severe her horse had to stop and catch her breath, despite being fit and healthy.

She said she couldn't turn the horse around for safety reasons and had to continue up the grade. Ms. Joines said she finds most mountain bikers to be very respectful and hopes they won't be banned from using the park because of a “few bad eggs.”

She suggested that park officials improve public awareness on how to use trails and install signs at all trail intersections because the trails are not well marked.



Mountain bikers are shown using a trail meant only for hikers and horses at the Chino Hills State Park. Shown is the Gilman Trail.

Ms. Joines said there is a communication breakdown on how to properly approach a horse while on a bike. She said horses have the right-of-way on most horse trails in California and tension often occurs between mountain bikers and horse riders.