

Carpenter, Katherine

From: Brad fel <bradccg09@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 8:57 AM
To: Eggers, Dave; Robinson-Flowers, Rene; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Long, Janet C; Peters, Kathleen; Seel, Karen
Subject: Walsingham Park Mountain Bike Trail
Attachments: Opposing Viewpoint Walsingham Park Mountain bike trail.pdf

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This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. **Do Not Click** on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Pinellas County Commissioner:

I am contacting you concerning the February 3, 2021 revised mountain bike trail plan for Walsingham Park. Since the plan was only recently revised, I am not sure if you are aware of the disaster this new plan will cause. I attach a copy of the primary trail diagram and you can find this slide at the SWAMP website for Walsingham Park. This is the plan that is to be considered by the Park Advisory Board on Thursday, March 18.

I am contacting you because several members of the Park Advisory Board were apparently in favor of the previous trail plan and the SWAMP website indicates the new plan was developed based on concerns about the old plan and after consulting with park staff. Although that is not necessarily an endorsement, I assume SWAMP thinks they have developed a plan that will be approved. Although this matter is not before you now, the problems it will cause will certainly come before you if the plan is approved.

No better trail plan is available to the public than what I have attached below. If you have trouble deciphering the maze, you are not alone. It appears that the trail crosses the existing paved trail and road numerous times. The trail plan is not decipherable enough for me to count the number of times it crosses pavement, but it is possibly upward of a dozen times. If the Park Advisory Board does not have any more detail than this, how can they even consider the plan?

What is clear is that the trail is directly across from the busiest area of the park; the Shelters and parking lots on the East side of the park. SWAMP has said they will not disturb existing users. How can that possibly be true when the trail runs directly next to the parking lots in front of the shelters and crosses the road and paved path numerous times? This plan is a disaster for pedestrians, bikes and autos. The plan will clearly create conflicts with existing users.

This trail was originally billed as not being any cost to the County. SWAMP might not charge to build the trail, but there are certainly going to be costs associated with this plan. Are there contingencies in the County budget for this disaster?

Please give some consideration to this trail proposal before it is approved. I also attach a more detailed list of problems that will be caused by the proposed trail. I ask that you convey to the Park Advisory Board that you are opposed to this plan. Thank you for your attention and consideration of this matter.


Sincerely,

Brad Felske
Largo, FL

Updated Concept Propo

Walsingham Park

A Pinellas County Park



Phase 1 on the East side of the park inclu off-road cycling designated trails and natur areas. All areas open to general public with signage including speed warnings, trail etiq wildlife warnings and potential wildlife ba (if needed) to keep pedestrians and riders all interfering with tortoise habitat. Original pr trail includes the best route for continuity direction of the trail and also includes all p restrictions and spacing to keep Gopher To and their habitats safe according to FW

We will consult with staff and the tr builder to determine viability of a fs path within the proposed area to be used for walkers. This will be highlighted in the detailed build out plan that must be submitted before building commences.

Please note that this is not the final route which may change due to staff and biologist requirements.

Some here are asking you to approve a proposal to add Mountain Bike Trails to Walsingham Park. I ask that you deny this request. If you are already inclined to vote against the proposal, I thank you for your vote. If you are undecided, I say there are too many possible conflicts and concerns that cannot be answered and you should vote no. If you are inclined to vote for the proposal, I ask that you reconsider. If your trail information is not any better than the trail map I see at the SWAMP website, you cannot vote for this plan and know exactly what you are approving. It is impossible to even determine how many times the off road trail crosses paved areas. However, you can vote no on the trail proposal because it is clear that whatever the details, the trail is a bad idea. The trail will be a burden on the park, will create more congestion and cannot possibly avoid negative interactions with pedestrians and auto traffic. You would not sign a blank check and this proposal is a blank check.

You are going to hear many good reasons for opposing the mountain bike trail and there are no real solutions to any of these reasons. Any one of these reasons would be adequate to justify denying the Mountain bike proposal. Cumulatively, the reasons for denying the mountain bike trail create an insurmountable barrier to approval.

The reasons for denying the mountain bike trail fit into several categories, including:

- Inadequate Infrastructure;
- Safety of pedestrians;
- Permanent harm to the park;
- Pushing out current users;
- Harm to wildlife and vegetation; and
- Poorly designed mountain bike plan with conflicting goals.

I apologize if my tone seems somewhat incredulous, but I understand some members of the Board were willing to approve the original SWAMP plan. The original plan was to attract thousands of avid mountain bikers to the park. Now the plan is to destroy the park for 12 NICA students and a few SWAMP club members. It is beyond my comprehension that such obviously flawed plans would receive any serious consideration from this board. So, what seems to me as obvious flaws in the plan may not currently be seen as flaws by all of you on the Board. Maybe you were not previously aware of the variety and serious nature of the problems in the current plan. The new plan was only published on February 3. I hope that by reviewing some of the problems and SWAMP's answers, you will see why anyone except a devoted mountain bike advocate would be skeptical of SWAMP's answers. And, if you become skeptical of SWAMP's answers I hope you will see it is necessary for you to vote no on this plan.

SWAMP posted their updated trail plan on February 3, 2021. Now the trail map shows a fanciful maze in an area of the park that is primarily across from the shelter areas on the East side of the park and crosses paved areas (including the walking path and road) 10 or more times (it is hard to tell because of the small size of the trail map). The new trail is even more hazardous for pedestrians than the old trail. The new trail proposal is such a major departure from the old proposal that it needs its own public comment period. The new trail is objectionable in additional ways than the old trail route.

The area by the shelters is the most heavily trafficked area in the park as far as pedestrian and auto traffic. There is no access to the new trail except by riding on the existing paved road or paved trails. Now you have the mountain bikers (who are supposedly going to only ride their bikes to the park) tangling with all the existing pedestrian and auto traffic. It is hard to envision a more hazardous plan for pedestrians, bikes and autos.

Some here are asking you to approve a proposal to add Mountain Bike Trails to Walsingham Park. I ask that you deny this request. If you are already inclined to vote against the proposal, I thank you for your vote. If you are undecided, I say there are too many possible conflicts and concerns that cannot be answered and you should vote no. If you are inclined to vote for the proposal, I ask that you reconsider. If your trail information is not any better than the trail map I see at the SWAMP website, you cannot vote for this plan and know exactly what you are approving. It is impossible to even determine how many times the off road trail crosses paved areas. However, you can vote no on the trail proposal because it is clear that whatever the details, the trail is a bad idea. The trail will be a burden on the park, will create more congestion and cannot possibly avoid negative interactions with pedestrians and auto traffic. You would not sign a blank check and this proposal is a blank check.

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Let's look at some of the problems SWAMP acknowledges in proposing this plan, their answers, my comments on their answers and some problems SWAMP did not address.

- Problem: Inadequate roads.

SWAMP Answer: Our members will ride their bikes to the Park.

Comment: What about non- members? Is this trail exclusively for SWAMP members? When it becomes a problem what will be done? No cost effective or use effective answer.

- Problem: Inadequate parking.

SWAMP Answer: Same answers as above.

Comment: Same as above.

- Problem: Not enough bathrooms and mountain bikers can only access the bathrooms by riding on paved and heavily trafficked areas.

SWAMP Answer: Not addressed.

Comment: Does this mean not a problem or not even a plausible answer? It will be a problem in terms of number of users, access to the bathroom (you need to go on paved paths to get to the bathrooms), no space for bicycles in the area of the bathrooms and burden on maintenance staff.

- Problem: Inadequate infrastructure (roads, parking and bathrooms) and safety.

SWAMP Answer: The trail will not be considered a destination for off road cycling. Swamp has no desire to hold events at the park. It is too small and not worth the time and effort to plan something there.

Comment: Does it need to be a destination point to cause overuse problems? What about "meet up" groups and other social organizing platforms? Might members organize their own "little" events? Originally the trail was to be used by thousands of mountain bikers. Even tens of mountain bike users will be a problem. If the trail will be used by only a few mountain bikers and only occasional use, then there is no need for the bike trail and no reason to destroy the existing character of the park.

- Problem: Safety problems – mountain bike trail crosses pedestrian path and road multiple times.

SWAMP Answer: Trail crossings will be looked at to see if there is a way to reduce them without impacting the direction and flow of the trail.

Comment: This acknowledges there is a problem and maybe something can be done if it is not too inconvenient for the bicyclists.

- How about stop signs at each point where the bike trail crosses pavement? Or would that also be inconvenient for bicyclists? I realize few bicyclists will actually stop, but that is another matter.
 - How about a sign on the walking path that says “Hazardous Crossing – Proceed at your own risk.”
- Problem: Safety problems - Trail speed.

SWAMP Answer: The trail will be designed so that speeds over 10 mph will be made difficult to achieve.

Comment: Is this a speed limit or just a challenge to some riders to see how fast they can go on a 10 mph trail? Did these trail designers go to the same school as road designers? We all know you can drive 30 or 35 mph around a curve with a 25 mph speed limit. Can't you? Would any of you even recognize a 10 mph trail if you were standing in the middle of it? Once you approve the plan in front of you, SWAMP will build whatever type of trail they want to build. SWAMP has told you “The GPS coordinates do not lay out the final build out of the trail.”

- Problem: Safety problems - There are concerns that the trail will bring extra traffic to the heavily used paved areas.

SWAMP Answer: Reality is off road cyclists do not want to recreate in those spaces and **will stay within the designated space as much as possible.**

Comment: So, off road cyclists will stay on the bike trail except when they don't. The mountain bike trail crosses the paved trail and road numerous times in the busiest area of the park and yet the mountain bikers will not burden the park or interfere with existing users. And when they are not on the trail, these mountain bike users will not interfere with the heavily used paved areas or with other users, even though the mountain bikers are in the middle of other users, nor will they create any burden on the park. How can the mountain bikers avoid interfering with the heavily used areas when they are going to ride through the middle of the most heavily used areas and cross the pedestrian trail multiple times?

- Problem: Safety problems – the trail will attract a large number of mountain bikers.

SWAMP Answer: The mileage, difficulty level and space is not considered a destination for off road cycling.

Comment: So, the trail will not be attractive to very many mountain bikers anyway. The proposed trail is a mere trifle as a mountain bike trail. The trail is maybe a 15 minute ride for mountain bikers, depending on whether they stop for stop signs (assuming there are stop signs on the trail). Current users spend hours and days enjoying the park. The existing park is a substantial and irreplaceable resource for many current users, including walkers, runners, nature lovers, families, users of the shelters, dog walkers and wildlife. Why allow what mountain bikers would consider a trifle of a trail ruin the park? Don't build the trail.

- Problem: Damage to wildlife and vegetation.

SWAMP Answer: We will protect wildlife and plants.

Comment: As I interpret various comments about how wildlife and vegetation will be protected, mountain bikers will all ride slowly, quietly and respectfully and only on the trail. Mountain bikers will diligently avoid running over wildlife and not disturb the wildlife. Really??? Even the few current mountain bikers in the park do not regularly meet this standard.

- Problem: Damage to wildlife and vegetation.

SWAMP Answer: We will protect wildlife and plants.

Comment: So mountain bikers are only going to ride on the official trail and will not ride in other areas of the park where there is no “official” trail? Once mountain bikers get to the park, they will ride where they like. There is nothing to prevent them from riding all over the park. Random off road riding is not a big problem currently because very few people ride off road. Once the trail is built and more mountain bikers come to the park it is likely other areas will be damaged by mountain bike riders “adding” their own routes to the trail. Is the entire park going to be posted to stop off road riding except on the “official” trail?

- Problem: Economic cost:

SWAMP Answer: No economic cost. SWAMP will not charge to build the trail.

Comment: Ok! Who is going to pay for all of the problems the trail will cause? Oh, the trail won’t cause problems. What if it does? Then who pays? What type of contingency budget does this board have to cover unexpected problems? No problems? When have you ever seen a project this big not have problems? Start planning now for where or how you are going to find the money needed to solve all of the problems this proposal is going to cause.

- Problem: economic impact.

SWAMP Answer: The trail will provide a viable economic impact.

Comment: That was possibly true for some businesses when the trail was attracting thousands of mountain bikers. Is it still true if only a few local residents occasionally use the trail? If by economic impact they mean economic burden then I agree. I used to bicycle along a trail that was originally welcomed by merchants along the trail. Within a short time the merchants locked their bathroom doors and began charging for bathroom access because cyclists used the restrooms and other facilities, created a mess, interfered with access by other customers and did not purchase anything from the merchants. Should we expect to find pay toilets at Walsingham Park or perhaps an entrance fee?

- Problem: The survey is not valid.

SWAMP Answer: The survey is legitimate because SWAMP shared raw data with staff and the public.

Comment: The survey was not scientific in its design or implementation and a poorly designed and implemented survey cannot provide valid results. So the survey is invalid in many respects, but it does show a couple points.

- SWAMP was very good at mobilizing its members to take the survey. Almost every yes vote was by a SWAMP member.
- We have only scratched the surface of opposition to this trail. Other than SWAMP members, not very many people even knew about this survey. If you look at the quality and not the quantity of responses, you will find many thoughtful reasons for opposing the bike trail.
- In my own unscientific survey, I spoke with other park users about the bike trail and the bike club survey. All of the park users I spoke with were opposed to the bike trail and none of the users I spoke with knew there was a trail survey (and frequently we were standing next to a bike club sign announcing the survey). “Pinellas County and SWAMP want to hear from you. We are working together to enhance your park experience. Visit the SWAMP website or use the QR code to view the plan and take a third party survey”). Also,

all of the people I surveyed indicated they would not take the SWAMP survey because it was hosted by the special interest group advocating for the trail and they were afraid their name and contact information would be made public and result in harassment.

For some outdoor activities, the sports person is supposed to go to the activity not vice versa. If I want to climb a mountain, should I request a mountain be built in the middle of Pinellas County so I can practice climbing at my convenience? No. The mountain climber must go to the mountain. Similarly, mountain bikers must go to the mountain and the mountain is not to be found in the middle of Florida's most densely populated county.

How can you possibly vote in favor of an indecipherable trail plan? You cannot. You can only vote "no" and put this matter to rest or put this revised plan up for public comment once a legible trail plan is available.

SWAMP has tried to come up with simple solutions for some of the most obvious problems. Are SWAMP's answers to the problems credible? No! And, there are no consequences for SWAMP if they are wrong in their conclusions. They will have their trail and that is all they want. You will be left to try and clean up the mess. There are serious consequences for this Board and for current park users if SWAMP is wrong. Once the trail is built, this Board will not be able to ignore the problems or un-build the trail. There is only one way for SWAMP to be right on many of the problems and there are multiple ways for them to be wrong. The numbers of ways for SWAMP to be wrong far outnumber the ways for them to be right and are far more likely to occur. You must act now to prevent the problems from occurring. This is a bad plan for Walsingham Park and sweeping the problems under the rug is not a solution. You must vote "no" on the plan.

Carpenter, Katherine

From: Pinellas County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller <noreply@mypinellasclerk.org> on behalf of noreply@mypinellasclerk.org
Sent: Thursday, March 18, 2021 12:07 AM
To: Comments, BCC Agenda

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Live Form

Topic Walsingham Park Proposed Mountain Bike Track

BCC Agenda Date 3-18-2021

Your Stand on the Issue Oppose

Comments

Please vote NO on the proposed mountain bike track system. This sort of recreation is antithetical to the beauty and peace found at Walsingham Park. I live just two blocks from the park, and we bought our home to be close to Walsingham Park. I am a member of the Clearwater Audubon Society and the Florida Native Plant Society local chapter. I bicycle through the park almost daily and know it well. I am also an avid hiker and bird watcher -- a mountain bike track system would wreak havoc with the natural habitat, the birds, and the wildlife (particularly the threatened gopher tortoises) that depend on the park. The group requesting permission to proceed with this project is far outnumbered by the citizens who depend on the safe harbor provided by the park. Walsingham Park gives us all a chance to escape the hustle and bustle and traffic that is an ever present part of life in Pinellas County. Please vote NO so that we may preserve the little bit of peace we still have. Thank you for listening, Nancy Keita 13127 Cimarron Circle South Largo 33774

Citizen Name Nancy Keita

Address 13127 CIMARRON CIR S
Largo, FL 33774
United States

Phone 404-4511245

Email mnkeita@bellsouth.net

Carpenter, Katherine

From: Matthew Bignotti <mbignotti@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 3:11 PM
To: Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Eggers, Dave; Seel, Karen; Peters, Kathleen; Robinson-Flowers, Rene; Burton, Barry; Cozzie, Paul A
Subject: Mountain Bike Trail In Walsingham Park

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. **Do Not Click** on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Pinellas County Administrator Barry A Burton and commissioners:

We are sending you this email to express our concerns and views about constructing a mountain bike trail in Walsingham Park. We frequently walk and enjoy this beautiful, serene park full of birds, turtles and other wildlife. We feel the mountain bike trail will disrupt the wildlife and the residents that love to spend time at this park. We have lived in Pinellas County, specifically in Largo since 1961. We have been going to the area's county parks for many, many years and would strongly oppose the construction of a mountain bike trail in Walsingham Park or any other park in this county. After all, these parks are for all the citizens of Pinellas County to utilize and the mountain bike group would definitely create a negative impact on why we love to spend quality time in these parks.

We would appreciate it if you would please take into consideration our request to deny the construction of the Swamp Mountain Bike Club trail in Walsingham Park. We are imploring you, as our elected officials, to send them the message that our beautiful parks are not to be utilized for just a special interest group racetrack. That is certainly NOT what these parks were built for. They are nature preserves and therefore should be kept that way.

Sincerely,

Matthew & Donna Bignotti
Largo, Florida

:

Carpenter, Katherine

From: Pinellas County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller <noreply@mypinellasclerk.org> on behalf of noreply@mypinellasclerk.org
Sent: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 12:48 PM
To: Comments, BCC Agenda

CAUTION:

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Live Form

Topic Mountain Bike Track System@Walsingham Park

BCC Agenda Date 3-18-2021

Your Stand on the Issue Oppose

Comments

WE ARE AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT OF MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL I am a resident of 25+ years. We moved next to Walsingham Park for the natural undisturbed make up of the park. The Mountain Bike Trail is a great idea, but a bad fit for this particular area. It is a huge liability to mix this sport with this area. The fact it will crisscross pedestrian trails is NOT a good idea. The Pedestrian trail is already dangerous with blind corners and the volume of usage. I am a tax payer who is against the development for safety reasons. What about other developed Parks in Pinellas? You can build mounds of dirt anywhere! We can't destroy the little bit of natural habitat we have left here in Seminole

Citizen Name Nancy Kaufman

Address 12480 104 Ave N
Seminole, FL 33778-3411
United States

Phone 727-564-7097

Email edrena@tampabay.rr.com

Carpenter, Katherine

From: jallyn727@gmail.com
Sent: Tuesday, March 16, 2021 11:56 PM
To: Eggers, Dave; Burton, Barry
Cc: Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Long, Janet C; Peters, Kathleen; Seel, Karen; Baker, Deann; Cozzie, Paul A; Robinson-Flowers, Rene
Subject: Mountain Bike Trail Proposal for Walksingham Park
Attachments: WalsinghamBikeTrail-Allyn.pdf

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. **Do Not Click** on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Chairman Eggers et al.,

I have grave reservations about the proposal to construct a network of mountain bike trails in Walsingham Park. I will be at Thursday's Parks & Conservation Resources Advisory Board meeting to speak in opposition to the project on behalf of the Pinellas Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, which has already delivered a letter in opposition to the Commission. My personal comments are below, and attached as a signed letter. I have other concerns as well, about the transparency of the proposal process, but below are the most important reasons to reject this proposal as inadvisable.

I am writing to express my firm opposition to the construction of a mountain bike trail system in Walsingham County Park. In trying to accommodate the wishes of a private group, Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources risks depreciating the value of the park to its existing users, both people and wildlife. I have lived near Walsingham Park for 36 years and want its biological integrity and recreational value to be protected and available to residents for many more years to come.

Walsingham Park is much too small and heavily used to accommodate the trail system being proposed. Its 254 acres already have nearly 3 miles of paved trails for bikes and pedestrians, and the park is very near the Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail, so bicycles are adequately accommodated and omnipresent. The park is regularly visited by neighborhood residents of all ages and there are many user conflicts between bicycles and pedestrians now. Many older people have told me that they do not want to walk on the paved trails because they are afraid of being run over by bicycles. The informal pedestrian trails through the woods provide a refuge for them, as well as a place for quiet contemplation, bird watching and nature study. To my knowledge, the County has made no effort to measure the existing bicycle and pedestrian usage in the park and to evaluate the potential additional user conflicts that the addition of the mountain bike trail system would create, a lapse which demonstrates a lack of concern for the safety of park users.

According to the County's own management plan^[i], the scrubby flatwoods in Walsingham Park are "environmentally sensitive lands" worthy of protection. On the subject, the plan says: "Conservation of environmentally sensitive lands helps maintain ecosystem function in a densely populated, urban environment. Preserving green space also provides aesthetic appeal and offers recreational opportunities that lead to healthier communities." The construction of a network of mountain bike trails spidering through the flatwoods will denigrate the quality of the habitat and make it less valuable as a refuge and nesting place for wildlife. According to the management plan, park management should be taking steps to protect the flatwoods from destructive activity, erecting barriers to exclude bicycles from sensitive areas (like the burrows of state-listed gopher tortoises) instead of inviting more of them in. The incidental damage from off-road biking will increase, not decrease, if more bicycles are present in the natural areas of the park due to the mountain bike trails. People and animals need a place of peace and safety to get away from all the bicycles already in the park. The importance of this cannot be overstated.

This plan is counterproductive and contrary to the County's other efforts to protect and restore valuable habitat. The County just cleared understory in Walsingham Park to make the pine flatwoods more open and natural, improving their habitat value – a very good thing. The County just agreed to spend millions of dollars to acquire the Gladys Douglas property in Dunedin to protect it. Ironically, much of its habitat is very similar to that found in Walsingham Park, which the County already owns but will be endangering with this mountain bike plan. The County just renewed its interlocal agreement with the Tampa Bay Estuary Program, providing financial support for its efforts including a recent update of the Habitat Master Plan that aims to restore thousands of acres of valuable wetlands and uplands. That's great, and we do need to restore habitat, but we also need to safeguard the sensitive habitat we already have, not destroy it in the name of providing recreational opportunities that duplicate those already available.

I urge you to reject the mountain bike trail system being proposed for Walsingham Park. It is a project that is in the wrong place. If such trails are needed, a much better idea would be to construct them on property that is in need of restoration, and to enhance the natural resources of the site as part of the trail construction process. This would be a win-win as the environmental health of the site would be improved and the surroundings could be optimized for safety and aesthetic appeal.

Sincerely,
Jan Allyn

^[i] *Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Clearwater Harbor and Saint Joseph Sound*, 2011. Prepared for Pinellas County Dept. of Environment and Infrastructure by Janicki Environmental, Inc.

Carpenter, Katherine

From: Med Rush <medrush@outlook.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 16, 2021 5:55 PM
To: Burton, Barry; O'Donnell, Stacy; janetclong@pinellascounty.org; pgerard@pinellascounty.org; Justice, Charlie; Eggers, Dave; Seel, Karen; Peters, Kathleen; Robinson-Flowers, Rene; lwaters@myseminole.com; tbarnhorn@myseminole.com; redelman@myseminole.com
Subject: AGAINST Walsingham Park Bike Trail proposal
Attachments: Buffer123.jpg

CAUTION: This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. Do Not Click on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Greetings,

I am writing to express my opposition to the SWAMP Mountain Bike park being built in Walsingham park. I am asking that you vote Against the current proposal from SWAMP Mountain bike club for the following reasons:

Proximity of Bike Trails to Residences

The proposed bike trails are too close to people's homes that border Walsingham park. To build these bike tracks so close to residences is a bold invasive move by SWAMP since they once promised to conduct this project "with the utmost care and consideration for not only the community but for the habitats that exist there". Holding mountain bike events including night rides constitutes a disturbance of the peace and shows a lack of consideration to the surrounding community. Our home is directly adjacent to Walsingham park approximately 12 feet from the park's chain link fence. There needs to be a guaranteed BUFFER ZONE established between the bike trails and property lines of homeowners. A distance of 100 yards is a reasonable request.

Entrances to the Park must remain open to public

The 119th Street entrance is used daily by over 400 households in our neighborhood and surrounding area. Walkers, joggers, bike riders and many dog walkers use the 119th Street entrance to access the park. Neighbors have expressed concern that the 119th Street entrance will eventually be closed. SWAMP needs to guarantee that entrance will remain open to the public and not restrict entrance to the park, the park pavilions, existing trails, playgrounds and picnic areas.

Pinellas Residents deserve Full Disclosure and Transparency

Most of my neighbors that live near Walsingham park simply do not have all the facts. When we heard that "they" are putting in bike trails we thought the bike track would be open to the public. It was never communicated that these trails are for bike club members and require a fee. It was not made clear that major bike events would take place in our park and may include night events. Will this lead to bright lights, public address systems and megaphones? The residents of Pinellas county deserve to know all the

facts. Much of the planning has taken place with a minimum of communication from SWAMP. There were no mailings sent to local residents and club members never knocked on our doors. The tax paying citizens who live and vote in Pinellas county deserve to know all the facts.

Summary

The homes directly adjacent to Walsingham park need a guaranteed Buffer Zone. The proposed trails are far too close to private property and this goes against a good neighbor policy. We do not want to see any conflicts arise from bike trails built in close proximity to homes. (Please see attached picture of a proposed Buffer Zone)

I am asking that you please do not approve this project until you have heard from more people. Much of the information presented to you has come from SWAMP and they have done well in terms of self promotion. One could reasonably argue that there are a large number of people that stand in opposition to this project but have yet to be heard.

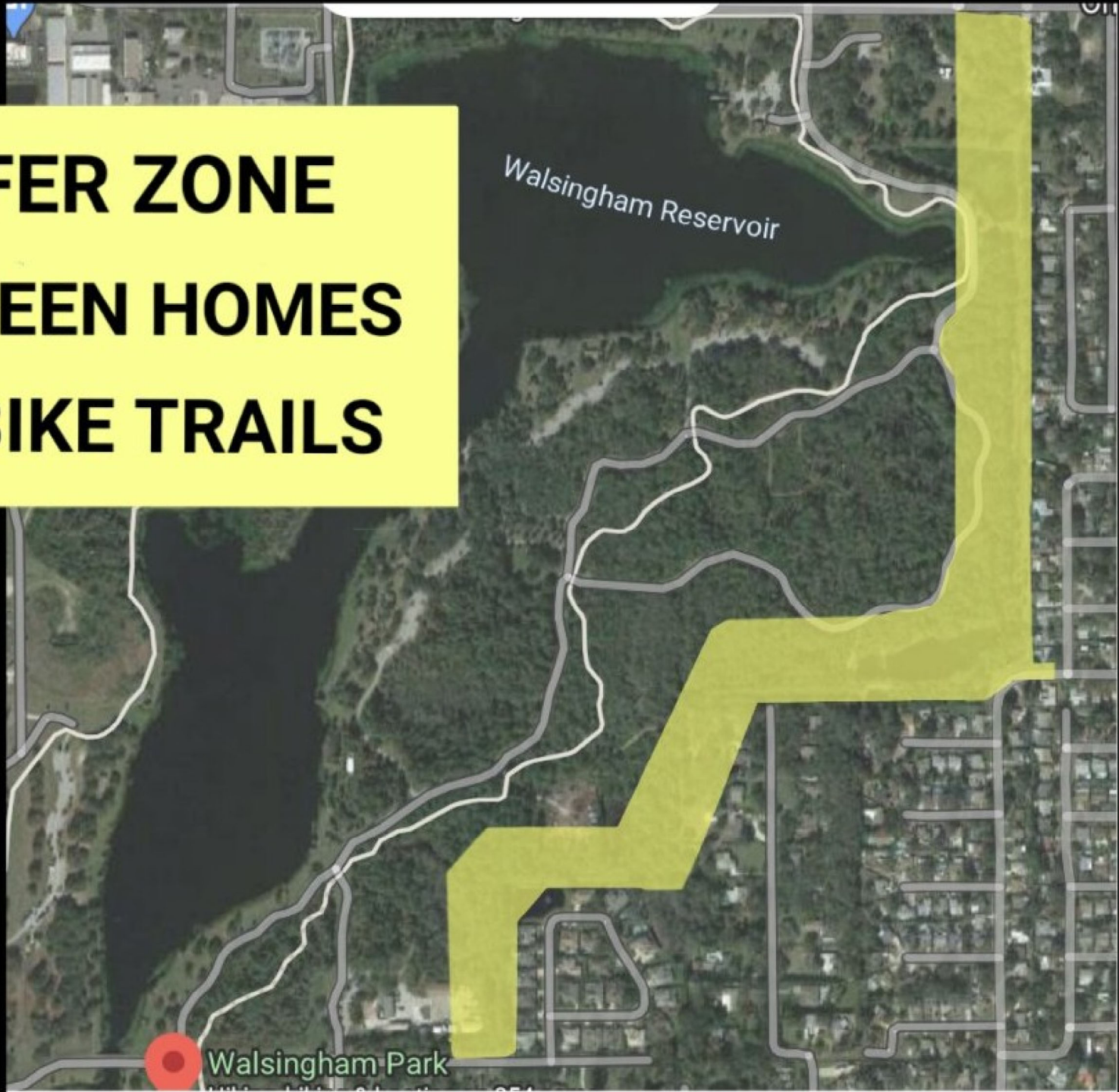
We all want to continue to use the park and have access to the 119th St entrance. I have a direct view of that entrance and watch people using the paved pathway from morning until night. It is particular popular on the weekends with families walking or riding bikes. People love this unique park and visit it daily.

On a personal note, we have just finished a \$30,000 backyard project including screen room patio spa and landscaping. We love our park view and enjoy the many peaceful sounds of nature. In fact we purchased our home specifically because of the unique location and the beautiful park setting.

Thank you

Robert Medicus
12001 108th Avenue
Seminole, FL 33778

**BUFFER ZONE
BETWEEN HOMES
and BIKE TRAILS**



Carpenter, Katherine

From: Lindsey Munson - ienjoy Home <lindsey@ienjoyhome.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 16, 2021 3:57 PM
To: Eggers, Dave
Subject: Pinellas resident- Pinellas Business owner

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. **Do Not Click** on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Commissioner Eggers,

I am a Pinellas resident and also a business owner in Pinellas and wanted to take the time to make my voice heard on behalf of thousands of others in the county in regards to Ordinance 20 – 14.

Per Section 8, this ordinance can be rescinded regardless of the State of Emergency.

Over the last year, everyone has learned a lot about keeping their fellow man safe. We sanitize our homes. Stay home if we are ill. Take care of our elderly. The world will never be the same. I do feel as though being forced to wear a mask or having the choice are two very different things. Majority of the time I wear a mask. But if i'm getting harassed at a store because my 4 year old will not keep a mask on, I don't feel as though that is right. I don't feel safe going into certain public situations. There is a divide that is occurring between our locals, the same sort of divide we saw in our nations with our last Trump/Biden wars. I would like to have the choice to choose, not being forced to do something.

I respectfully ask that you rescind the mask ordinance and let us citizens make up our own minds as to whether we wear a mask or not.

Thank you,
Lindsey Munson
Pinellas County Business Owner
Mother of three small children
Pinellas Resident for the past 10 years.
818-400-3232

--

Thanks,

Lindsey Munson

Chief Operations Officer, ienjoy ®

- - Office: [\(727\) 216-6754](tel:7272166754)
 - Address: 2021 Sunnydale Blvd. Suite 130, Clearwater, FL 33765
 - Website: ienjoyhome.com
 - Email: Lindsey@ienjoyhome.com



Carpenter, Katherine

From: Beth and Doug Fox <beth.doug.fox@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 16, 2021 3:00 PM
To: Eggers, Dave
Subject: End the Mask Ordinance

CAUTION:

This message has originated from Outside of the Organization. Do Not Click on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Commissioner Eggers,

I am a Pinellas resident and wanted to take the time to make my voice heard on behalf of thousands of others in the county in regards to Ordinance 20 – 14.

Per Section 8, this ordinance can be rescinded regardless of the State of Emergency.

Without delving into the studies and the science and facts of the matter (you've heard quite a bit of this already from the public during the commissioners meetings), it's very important to take a look at what the people are asking for and the fact that we need our freedom of choice to remain intact. Not to mention the fact that it's been over a year now and after such a period of time we know what we're dealing with.

Whether we are safe or healthy or not is a personal decision that each of us adults should be able to make on our own.

We respectfully ask that you rescind the mask ordinance and let us citizens make up our own minds as to whether we wear a mask or not.

Thank you,
Douglas and Elizabeth Fox

Carpenter, Katherine

From: Pinellas County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller <noreply@mypinellasclerk.org> on behalf of noreply@mypinellasclerk.org
Sent: Tuesday, March 16, 2021 2:44 PM
To: Comments, BCC Agenda

CAUTION:

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Live Form

Topic Bike track at Walsingham Park

BCC Agenda Date 3-18-2021

Your Stand on the Issue Oppose

Comments

Please reframe from disturbing the natural area of Walsingham Park. With 100 acres of water, only a little over 200 acres are remaining, for the health of birds, plant species, reptiles, and mammals. Since the park opened in 1995, I have seen many healthy, and not so healthy mammals, some hit and run over by bikes on the hiking trail. With more and more visitors every year, hiking, cycling, picnicking, and driving, these 200 plus acres will not protect and preserve our wild life, if we continue to share the park. Please vote against the bike track.

Citizen Name Mary Algieri

Address 13247 - 87th. Ave.
Seminole, FL. 33776
United States

Phone 727-4817658

Email jalgiere@tampabay.rr.com

Carpenter, Katherine

From: Winifred Holland <winnieh1024@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 16, 2021 10:44 AM
To: Seel, Karen
Subject: Walsingham Park

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. **Do Not Click** on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Commissioner Williams Seel:

I have recently (December, 2020) moved back to Pinellas County after living in various parts of Florida during my working career. After I retired in June, I decided to return to my "home" county and one of the main aspects of Pinellas County that has always drawn me back are the parks. When I purchased my home one of the main draws was the proximity to Walsingham Park. The park reminds me of the Pinellas County I knew growing up. I am very unhappy with the changes being proposed to change a portion of the park into a BMX track. I think this is the wrong thing to do with this pristine park and will adversely affect the vegetation and wildlife that makes this park special.

Pinellas County has done a good job of retaining the natural areas of the county in spite of the incredible growth and I would hate to see Walsingham Park destroyed. Why should a private organization have control of an area of the park that is meant for the citizens of Pinellas County. Thank you

Winifred M. Holland
11302 Heritage Way
Largo, Florida 33778
863-673-6036

Carpenter, Katherine

From: Winifred Holland <winnieh1024@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 16, 2021 10:43 AM
To: Eggers, Dave
Subject: Walsingham Park

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. **Do Not Click** on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Chair Eggers:

I have recently (December, 2020) moved back to Pinellas County after living in various parts of Florida during my working career. After I retired in June, I decided to return to my "home" county and one of the main aspects of Pinellas County that has always drawn me back are the parks. When I purchased my home one of the main draws was the proximity to Walsingham Park. The park reminds me of the Pinellas County I knew growing up. I am very unhappy with the changes being proposed to change a portion of the park into a BMX track. I think this is the wrong thing to do with this pristine park and will adversely affect the vegetation and wildlife that makes this park special.

Pinellas County has done a good job of retaining the natural areas of the county in spite of the incredible growth and I would hate to see Walsingham Park destroyed. Why should a private organization have control of an area of the park that is meant for the citizens of Pinellas County. Thank you

Winifred M. Holland
11302 Heritage Way
Largo, Florida 33778
863-673-6036

Carpenter, Katherine

From: Quintana, Vanessa
Sent: Tuesday, March 16, 2021 10:33 AM
To: Comments, BCC Agenda
Subject: FW: Online Customer Service Contact Us Form Result #20399204

From: noreply@fs30.formsite.com <noreply@fs30.formsite.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 16, 2021 10:06 AM
To: Public, AF <publicaf@co.pinellas.fl.us>
Subject: Online Customer Service Contact Us Form Result #20399204

CAUTION:

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This information is a result of a Pinellas County Online Customer Service form submission from the Pinellas County web site.

Direction of Inquiry	General Information
Subject	Walsingham Park
Message	This place is not big enough for a bike trail. That sort of thing is going to have a negative effect on the local environment. Please don't do this.
Your Name	Judy Ellis
Your Street Address	1874 Juarez Way S
City/Unincorporated County	Saint Petersburg
Zip Code	33712
Your Phone Number	7274601586
Your Email Address	jellis5610@gmail.com

This email was sent to publicaf@pinellascounty.org as a result of a form being completed.
[Click here](#) to report unwanted email.



Carpenter, Katherine

From: Pinellas County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller <noreply@mypinellasclerk.org> on behalf of noreply@mypinellasclerk.org
Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 4:11 PM
To: Comments, BCC Agenda

CAUTION:

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Live Form

Topic Walsingham Park SWAMP plan

BCC Agenda Date 3-18-2021

Your Stand on the Issue Oppose

Comments

I am writing today to oppose the plan by the SWAMP club to turn Walsingham Park into a mountain bike course. The plan will alter the nature of Walsingham Park. The park today is a natural environment where the community can walk, run, picnic, or bicycle while enjoying the shade of the oak trees. The park is designed for multi-use activities of a passive nature. Developing mountain bike paths through the forested areas will have many detrimental effects on the park's quiet ambience and its ecology. As a professional Ecological Planning Consultant, (MRP, University of Pennsylvania), I have worked for the US Forest Service and the Western Governors on forestry issues, and wildfire mitigation planning. In fact, I was one of the lead authors of the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management's "National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy", <https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/strategy/thestrategy.shtml>. Much of the undeveloped land in Walsingham Park is pine flatwoods, with an understory of palmetto palms. These areas are densely packed, overgrown, and are a wildfire risk. It is wise to keep humans out of these areas, as they may toss lit cigarettes or other combustibles and start fires within the park. Palmettos are very high fire risk, and burn as hot as California's chaparral. Development and use of bicycle trails will lead to increased soil erosion, and soil compaction, which will have negative effects on the tree roots, and water quality of the nearby lake. Disturbance of natural areas will also destroy habitat for nesting animals. While it is difficult to quantify these effects, and researchers are still working on the question of water quality effects from mountain bike trails, we know that erosion leads to sedimentation, loss of water clarity, and increased algal blooms from increased nutrients in the water. Walsingham Park is a restful, shaded area where residents of Pinellas County can enjoy open space in peace and quiet. To allow a mountain bicycle club to redevelop the park to serve its interests will effectively take the park away from its current users and give it to this single interest group. Please vote NO.

Citizen Name	Cheryl Renner
Address	9330 89th Way Seminole, FL 33777 United States
Phone	813-313-9804
Email	shoodancer@gmail.com

Carpenter, Katherine

From: John Siebenthaler <john@siebenthalercreative.com>
Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 2:30 PM
To: Eggers, Dave; Burton, Barry
Cc: Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Long, Janet C; Peters, Kathleen; Seel, Karen; Baker, Deann; Cozzie, Paul A
Subject: Proposed Mountain Bike Competition Course in Walsingham Park
Attachments: Pinellas_BCC_final.pdf

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. Do Not Click on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Thank you for your time in considering my comments regarding the proposal to create a dedicated off-road mountain bike bicycle trail throughout Walsingham Park.

March 15, 2021

The Honorable Dave Eggars

Chair, Pinellas County Commission

cc: Board of County Commissioners members, Pinellas County Administrator Burton, Parks Advisory Board member Baker, and Parks Superintendent Cozzi

re: Walsingham Park—Construction of Off Road Bicycle Competition Course

DISCLAIMER: The near unanimous support for this proposal was generated overwhelmingly by comments received from dues paying club members of the supplicant whose email addresses formed the basis for the survey's distribution list.

Dear Chairman Eggars, Board Members, and Administrator Burton;

As a private citizen who has enjoyed Walsingham Park for recreational exercise with a relaxing walk, jog, or run through the woods for decades, I was alarmed when last October posters appeared throughout the park by an unknown group promising a, "new park experience."

The poster, Swamp Mountain Bike Club, LLC, (SMBC) is a well funded, well organized advocacy organization that claims 700-900 dues paying members and an influencer reach of over 5,000 mountain bike riders throughout the Bay area. The signs included a QR code link to a survey portal, ostensibly to gather reaction from the park's community of regular users.

Following up, I discovered major omissions in their rationale for constructing a BMX style mountain bike competition course for the singular benefit of off-road riders in general, and their hundreds of club member off-road enthusiasts in particular.

I. Impact—Who Benefits, Who Loses

The club's proposal calls for carving out a four-plus mile bicycle motocross (BMX) style course throughout the limited park acreage available. Design is "single track"—a trail wide enough for single-file travel—which translates into a continuous path throughout the woods about three-five feet wide.

The track's "natural surface" (dirt) roadway would come complete with tortoise exculsion barriers of no value, directional signage, warning flags, and physical degradation of the wood and wetlands experience.

Nowhere is the impact of increased bicycle traffic on pedestrian use of the park, the terrain, and the wildlife, both plant and animal, addressed. Instead, unsupported comments from the club consistently claim that carving a new miles long path would enhance the park, benefitting pedestrians, athletes, plant and wildlife alike. The wildlife can't be surveyed for their reaction, but informal polling of regular trail walkers is a nearly unanimous objection to the intrusion these knobby tired bicycles would bring.

The issue of liability should this project be allowed to proceed is addressed in an MOU between the county and the club dated February, 2020, underestimating the very real threat posed by physical encounters between mountain bikers and pedestrians. The Swamp Mountain Bicycle Club's conversion to a 501c3 LLC came after a lawsuit brought against them by one of their own members as a result of an accident suffered on one of their park wilderness courses.

A) Park Impact Study—Who Benefits: To my knowledge there's no environmental study, existing or contemplated, that objectively measures the projected impact on the park's limited facilities, existing primitive pathways, and already compromised woods that form the basis of the current park experience.

Indeed, there are many park walkers, particularly the elderly, who no longer visit the park or just avoid the path by taking the road instead because of the intimidation and anxiety caused by existing heavy bicycle traffic.

B) Stakeholder Opinion Survey—Missing: Aside from their self-administered, unscientific, and statistically biased polling derived overwhelmingly from the club's membership email list, there has been no measure of public sentiment. It wasn't until well over a year had passed that local users were apprised of the poll, with a handful of those who scanned the QR code posting comments opposing the project.

C) Mission Statement—Park Goals: I am not aware of a comprehensive Mission Statement written for Walsingham Park, least of all one that explains blending the best interests of the public with exploitation by a private corporation.

II. Scale—Comparing Watermelons to Grapes

The SMBC has constructed five off-road mountain bike courses within public parks and/or wilderness areas in the counties bordering Pinellas.

A) Pasco County Starkey Wilderness Park: 8,300 acres

B) Hernando-Sumter Counties Croom Wildlife Management Area: 20,000 acres

C) Hillsborough County Balm Boyette Scrub Nature Preserve: 5,700 acres

D) Hillsborough County Trout Creek Conservation Park: 1,500 acres

E) Hillsborough County Alafia River State Park: 6,300 acres

Total acreage: 41,800

Walsingham Park, by comparison, measures a miniscule 354 acres—including a 100 acre lake used for recreational activities like kayaking, canoeing, and fishing, and minus the main vehicular road connecting the park's north and south entrances, a dog park, eight shelters, parking, restroom facilities, child's playground, exercise station, boat ramp, and the three-mile eight-foot bidirectional pedestrian and bicycle path.

The wooded areas left measure significantly less than 250 acres, a combination of pine and oak flatlands and wetlands that are home to an amazing diversity of plant and animal wildlife, all—all—of which would suffer significant impact and degradation if the BMX style off-road bicycle course proposed by SMBC is allowed to proceed.

Why Walsingham? One of the stated reasons why SMBC is focused on Walsingham Park is its proximity to and ability to connect to the Pinellas Trail and its popularity among bicyclists. The resulting traffic, coupled with the impact of the club's own 900-strong membership, would overwhelm the park's facilities, wildlife, and natural areas.

III. Transparency—Why Were Stakeholders Left Out for So Long

In early October, 2020, St. Petersburg headquartered Swamp Mountain Bicycle Club, LLC, launched a five-week survey campaign within the park to garner support for their proposal to carve four-plus miles of competition bicycle trail out of Walsingham Park's woods. The same survey was pushed to their membership for well over a year to harvest positive comments before being introduced to the park's own user base.

The Park Advisory Board scheduled a decision for mid-January, 2021, following the October marketing campaign and an invitation to attend a hastily slapped together public meeting at a park shelter sent to park respondents just 48 hours prior. Park Superintendent Paul Cozzi refers to this client directed polling and one-time only shelter meetup as the park management performing their "due diligence."

The manner in which this proposal found a receptive private audience with park management raises numerous concerns.

The proposal—first mentioned by SMBC in connection with Walsingham Park in April, 2019—had been in development for nearly a year and a half before park shareholders were made aware of the project in October, 2020. By then, the project had already been considered once by the Park Advisory Board, narrowly missing approval.

An MOU—Memorandum of Understanding—was last reviewed in February, 2020 by Pinellas County Assistant Attorney Deriki Geuka, again months prior to any public announcement and contradicting denials by park management of any negotiations to undertake a project of this magnitude.

Club reaction, apparently in response to a Facebook group's (Walsingham Park Guardians) concerns over bike/pedestrian conflicts, led to a plan revision that adds a parallel pedestrian path, approximately two feet wide, theoretically allowing both bikes and hikers simultaneous access. (In actuality, the probability is that bicycle riders would use the additional pathway for side-by-side competition.)

Concern from the same Facebook group over the resident gopher tortoise population resulted in a course layout alteration that, if conditional as part of the approval process, the club insists will result in another conditional demand that human activity in the woods should also be prohibited altogether.

The first public notification of the SMBC survey was in October, 2020. A dozen or so posters bearing the Pinellas County logo to convey official status were scattered along the path. The request for input was vague. The message promised only a "new park experience." There was no mention whatsoever of any significant increase in bicycle activity within the park. The QR code linked to the club's own mini-survey, all designed to minimize response, and to elicit a favorable response if followed. There was no use of public signage at the park entrances, visible and viewable from vehicles, nor was the parks own Facebook page used to inform the public, neither was local media engaged.

The SMBC laid out an initial budget of \$15,000 for the initial construction of their project, a number recently expanded to an estimate of \$25,000. REI, a national retailer of outdoor sporting and recreational products and a SMBC sponsor, has offered a grant of \$5,000 dependant on the successful approval of the project. Additionally, there are numerous local bicycle retailers associated with SMBC, all of which point to a conflict between private, commercial commerce and a public, taxpayer supported facility.

In Conclusion

There are many questions raised by SMBC's rush to gain approval after two year's worth of behind the scenes plan development with park management.

The existing heavy bicycle traffic currently encountered along the eight-foot (10 mph speed limit, nearly always ignored) path already creates hazardous conditions for walkers and runners alike. The explosive growth of eBikes and their mountain bike offshoots guarantees unfortunate outcomes between pedestrians and motorized riders.

Creating another bicycle magnet destination, while seemingly well intentioned, would inevitably increase significantly the danger to and intimidation of pedestrians, as well as the wear and tear on what is first and foremost a local community park.

I do not believe this park exists for the benefit of the private retail bicycle segment or any single private organization. This project should not proceed, and the manner in which it was brought forward should be thoroughly reviewed.

Sincerely yours,

John Siebenthaler

12421 Regency Ave.

Seminole, FL

Carpenter, Katherine

From: Sandy Rowzie <sandyrowzie@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 1:46 PM
To: Cozzie, Paul A; Burton, Barry; Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Eggers, Dave; Seel, Karen; Peters, Kathleen; Robinson-Flowers, Rene
Subject: changes to Walsingham Park...proposal to allow the development of MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. **Do Not Click** on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello...

I am writing to let you know that I wish to have a **NO** vote from you and the County Administrator and the Pinellas County Commissioners **against** the proposal to allow the development of mountain biking trails in our lovely Walsingham Park.

I am very concerned that this proposed mountain biking trail system will disturb the park's natural areas and wildlife habitat.

If you allow this proposal to pass, we will effectively be eliminating our wildlife and the land.

Please do not pass this tragic proposal!

Sincerely,
Sandy Rowzie
Madeira Beach

Carpenter, Katherine

From: John Alonso <grsholdings1@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 1:35 PM
To: Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Eggers, Dave; Seel, Karen; Peters, Kathleen; Robinson-Flowers, Rene; Burton, Barry; Cozzie, Paul A
Subject: Walsingham Park project

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. **Do Not Click** on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Good Morning as a 46 year resident of Seminole I would like to express my opinion regarding the "SWAMP's bike trail.

Please vote against this project !

Thank you
John Alonso
727-424-1952

Carpenter, Katherine

From: terry alonso <talonso1@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 8:59 AM
To: Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Eggers, Dave; Seel, Karen; Peters, Kathleen; Robinson-Flowers, Rene; Burton, Barry; Cozzie, Paul A
Subject: Fw: Concerns Regarding Proposal to Build Mountain Bike Trails in Walsingham Park

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. Do Not Click on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Good Morning,

My name is Terry Alonso. I am a Pinellas County resident of 46 years and for the last 36 of those years have resided 2 blocks from Walsingham Park. I am writing to address my strong OPPOSITION to the proposed mountain bike trails in Walsingham. I ride, picnic, walk, and enjoying the quiet serenity of the park. I feel that very little of this proposal was made known to the general public before the vote, that your board will address on March 18.

From what I understand, the general manner in which "the Swamp" organization has pushed their agenda appears underhanded.

Please vote NO.

Sincerely,
Terry Alonso

From: Nancy Haig <nancy_haig@piacllc.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 14, 2021 1:07 PM
To: JanetCLong@pinellascounty.org <JanetCLong@pinellascounty.org>; pgerard@pinellascounty.org <pgerard@pinellascounty.org>; cjustice@pinellascounty.org <cjustice@pinellascounty.org>; deggers@pinellascounty.org <deggers@pinellascounty.org>; kseel@pinellascounty.org <kseel@pinellascounty.org>; kpeters@pinellascounty.org <kpeters@pinellascounty.org>; rflowers@pinellascounty.org <rflowers@pinellascounty.org>; bburton@pinellascounty.org <bburton@pinellascounty.org>; Cozzie, Paul A <pcozzie@co.pinellas.fl.us>
Cc: 'Rich Haig' <rmhaig@gmail.com>
Subject: Concerns Regarding Proposal to Build Mountain Bike Trails in Walsingham Park

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

By way of introduction, my name is Nancy Haig, and my husband Rich (of 44 years) and I reside at 10344 Hazel St., Seminole, less than two blocks from Walsingham Park. We purchased our home 2 years ago (after moving from NJ, where I was born), primarily because of the proximity to the Park, and the ability to safely walk our dogs, ride our bikes and enjoy nature.

However, we have owned property elsewhere in Pinellas County since 2002, when our oldest daughter, Dr. Allison Haig (Psy.D) attended Eckerd College. Allison currently lives in St. Petersburg, as does our other daughter, Dr. Dana Malluk

(Pharm.D), and her husband, Randy, who serves on the board of directors of the La Puerta Del Sol condo association. While we are all visitors to the Park, my husband and I are there at least once a day, and we are almost always accompanied by our 2 XL rescue dogs (Lexi – an Anatolian Shepherd, from a GA shelter, and Shane – a Labradoodle from a Police Chief in NJ, who could no longer keep him).

Professionally, I have had a career of over 40 years in governance, risk, compliance and control (GRCC) and I currently serve as the North American board chair, and global board member, of the world’s largest professional association of internal auditors, supporting 200,000 members. I previously served on the Village of Ridgewood, NJ’s Financial Advisory Committee, assisting in the implementation of internal control after the theft of approximately \$750,000 in coin from parking meters, among other volunteer positions.

My purpose for contacting you is to voice my strong opposition to the proposal to allow a private entity to build mountain bike trails in the Park. I respectfully request that you consider the following points, if you haven’t already:

- Open Space at a Premium We support small businesses and the positive impacts of tourism on our community. However, locals are finding it difficult to find space to park if attempting to walk and exercise on our beaches. Similarly, we support cyclists who have taken over the Pinellas Trail, as cyclists need a safe place to ride. This leaves the Park as the only place left for local people to exercise and enjoy nature. The local people we see on a daily basis using the Park, which appears to be at full capacity, include those who are pushing strollers, using walkers or wheel chairs, walking dogs, casually cycling, jogging, rollerblading, hiking and taking photographs. Additionally, local children ride through the woods on the existing trails.
- Current State of the Park The Park, as it is now, is a gem and has outstanding reviews on social media. It has a 4.5 star rating and a Travelers’ Award on TripAdvisor, and is described as a:
 - “Beautiful place, with a lake;
 - Great place to walk dogs, and enjoy nature;
 - Beautiful family park;
 - Peaceful place;
 - Place to bike, walk and fish; and
 - Wonderful park for exercise while viewing nature”

In summary, the Park is prized by visitors for its natural beauty, and low-key activities.

- Preservation of Wildlife Although this is not my area of expertise, I did speak with a representative of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). I learned that the gopher tortoises we frequently see in the Park need 40 acres, half of which need to be herbaceous, and I am uncertain how this need could be accommodated if mountain bike trails are added to the Park.
- Comparative Park Sizes Walsingham Park is 354 acres, including a 100 acre reservoir, leaving a mere 254 acres. The other parks and preserves where trails have been built are significantly larger. For example, the Balm Boyette Scrub Preserve is 4,900 acres, the Alafia River State Park is 6,000 acres, the Jay B Starkey Wilderness Park is 8,000 acres, the Flatwood Wilderness is 16,000 acres, and the Withlacooche State Forest is 158,000 acres. Although I was unable to locate the acreage of Loyce E. Harpe Park, according to the website it is large enough to host 8 – 200 foot youth fields, 4 – 300 foot adult softball fields, 7 miles of mountain biking a dog park, 2 covered batting tunnels, seating capacity for 1,600, concession stands, playgrounds and a pavilion. The mountain bike trails that have already been built in these parks and preserves total over 170 miles.
- Solicitation of Public Comments and Notification –The private entity / special interest group managed the solicitation of public comments on this proposal, which in my opinion presents a conflict of interest, and would therefore invalidate the results of the survey that was conducted. Members of the Swamp Mountain Bike Club were repeatedly reminded on their Facebook page to complete the survey, and were provided a direct link to the survey on the Swamp Mountain Bike Club’s website. Park users, on the other hand, were expected to stop;

bend down; read a sign stating that Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources and Mountain Bike Club “are working together to enhance your park experience;” and then take out their cellphone, if carrying it while exercising, to take a photo of a QR code, or to obtain the Swamp’s website address, where the survey was posted. If you do consider the survey results, imagine the impact on the Park, and the surrounding neighborhood, if even a fraction of the 500 of those in favor are using a mountain bike trail system in such a small space. Additionally, notification to property owners bordering the Park, neighbors and local Pinellas County residents has been ineffective. Just this past Saturday, March 6, I stopped to chat with 10 separate people we passed on one of our walks through the Park to determine how much they knew about the proposal. None of the individuals I spoke with had any knowledge of the proposal, even though two people lived in residences with the same block as the Park.

We respectfully request, for all of the reasons above, that you turn down this proposal and if you can, work with this private group to find a significantly larger space to accommodate a mountain bike trail system -

Kind regards,

Nancy Haig

CFE, CIA, CCEP, CRMA, CRISC, CBA, CCSA, CFSA

+1.201.556.8250

10344 Hazel St., Seminole, FL 33778

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/nancyhaig/>

Carpenter, Katherine

From: Quintana, Vanessa
Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 8:13 AM
To: Comments, BCC Agenda
Subject: FW: Online Customer Service Contact Us Form Result #20382463

From: noreply@fs30.formsite.com <noreply@fs30.formsite.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 14, 2021 5:10 PM
To: Public, AF <publicaf@co.pinellas.fl.us>
Subject: Online Customer Service Contact Us Form Result #20382463

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This information is a result of a Pinellas County Online Customer Service form submission from the Pinellas County web site.

Direction of Inquiry	Report a Problem
Subject	Walsingham Park
Message	We have lived in Seminole over 50 years and adjacent to Walsingham Park for 21 years where we walk daily. We are TOTALLY against allowing any private organization to come in and build bike trails for kids to use which will run out the turtles, racoons, snakes, birds and other habitats who need the park to live. We are actually shocked that our County Commissioners would even consider this. Please do not allow it.
Your Name	John and Elizabeth Turner
Your Street Address	12495 - 104 Terrace North
City/Unincorporated County	Seminole
Zip Code	33778
Your Phone Number	7273913569
Your Email Address	flartist47@gmail.com

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Carpenter, Katherine

From: Karen L M Morgan (Yahoo) <rocks_in_her_head@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 14, 2021 11:38 AM
To: Cozzie, Paul A; Burton, Barry; Eggers, Dave; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Long, Janet C; Peters, Kathleen; Seel, Karen; Robinson-Flowers, Rene; Leasure, Pamela S
Subject: Walsingham Park Mountain Bike Proposal

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We're writing to express our opposition to the proposal to allow SWAMP Mountain Bike Club to build trails in the natural areas of Walsingham Park.

These trails would benefit only a limited number of users by creating a trail system for a special interest group. Many of these trails would be inaccessible to the general park user and many of the bikes already ridden in the park would be unsuitable for use on the trails. The soft sandy surface would be unsuitable for park users with disabilities, as well as create conflicts between bikers and foot and vehicle traffic where the trails cross the existing park infrastructure. There are already issues regarding pedestrians and bike riders on the trails that already exist within the park. Greatly increased park usage would increase county maintenance costs. Once the trails are built there will be no continued review of environmental impacts and there is no way to assure that users will not create additional damaging trails once the initial trails are cut.

Trails would be cut through and disturb the natural forest floor, disrupt the habitat and foraging of endangered gopher tortoises, rabbits and other ground dwelling animals, disturb and damage native plants and provide opportunity for the growth of invasive species by bringing significantly greater human traffic into the wild areas of the park. Trails cut for mountain bikes are not simple flat passages through the habitat, but involve building mounds and cutting ditches in the forest floor. These trails would also increase erosion by removing stabilizing vegetation and surface leaf litter. The plan for creating miles of bike track within the limited wild spaces of Walsingham Park would do far greater damage than the occasional user who walks through the parks natural areas.

We oppose authorizing a private organization to make changes a natural resource specific to Pinellas County solely for the benefit of their membership resulting in limiting the use of the same space to other park users. There are six other mountain bike trails located across central Florida within easy reach of Pinellas County. These trails are located in much larger wilderness areas where the trails can be spaced further apart and thus minimize the environmental impact. The wild space in Walsingham is too small for these trails. What's more Walsingham Park is surrounded by densely packed residential neighborhoods. The Pandemic has greatly increased park usage and should not be expected to support this activity to the detriment of existing users and park neighbors.

Please vote against this development of Walsingham Parks natural areas. Please preserve the second largest natural green space in this county in its native, natural condition.

Thank you.

Karen L.M. and Edward P. Morgan III

Karen L. M. Morgan
Retired Geologist

Edward P. Morgan III
Engineer/Writer

rocks_in_her_head@yahoo.com

In every out-thrust headland, in every curving beach, in every grain of sand there is a story of the earth.

- Rachel Carson

Carpenter, Katherine

From: Mickey Zucker (via Google Docs) <mickeyzucker@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 7, 2021 12:14 PM
To: Seel, Karen
Cc: Cozzie, Paul A; Burton, Barry; Robinson-Flowers, Rene; Peters, Kathleen; Eggers, Dave; Long, Janet C; Justice, Charlie; Gerard, Pat
Subject: Citizen Response to Swamp Mountain Bicycle Proposal

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mickeyzucker@gmail.com has attached the following document:



Untitled document

Snapshot of the item below:

I have been putting off writing this for far too long because the issue is so desperately important to me and so many others that I have been overwhelmed. But we are running out of time, and the issue of the Swamp Mountain Bike proposal is too important to ignore. I hope you will read and seriously consider what I have to say. I apologize for the necessary length.

My bona fides: My family lives on 2-½+ acres directly adjacent to Walsingham Park. We bought the property solely because of its park proximity and access. I am a wildlife rescuer and retired pediatrician, having earned my M.D. at the age of 22. We walk 20,000-30,000 steps every day without fail, and the vast majority are in Walsingham Park. We are in a unique position to study every aspect of the park and see it at all times of the day. Many of the park rangers know us, and we have even visited one at her home. We had been considering willing our property to Walsingham, and the decision on the Swamp proposal will definitely influence our decision.

There is very little wildlife habitat left in Pinellas County, and it is disappearing at a startling pace. I have walked every trail in Walsingham Park repeatedly for years prior to the proposal and hundreds of times since. The flag markers that were put in place by the “trail builders” working for Swamp not only invade more than half of the few remaining areas in which wildlife can safely exist, but they tightly criss-cross it, like a ride queue at an amusement park, leaving no space for wildlife to live or even hide. The proposed areas are not new trails. They are a combination of existing wildlife trails (the “trails that occur when animals move between areas of concealment or venture from their burrows/nests to obtain food and water) and the larger trails created by pedestrians such as birdwatchers, wildlife observers, and wildlife rescuers (who, because these trails are to become “designated bicycle trails” would be banned from areas they have used, cleaned and protected since the park’s inception). That is only phase 1. Note: the phase 1 area is the most wildlife-intensive portion of the park, thus causing the greatest possible harm and taking them from the nature-lovers currently observing wildlife in the proper manner (quietly, cleanly, and still/slow). The phase 1 proposal includes a bicycle racing track, which is couched in terms of “for the children.” The flag markers for this show a huge area where the trails radiate outward and the natural areas would be wholly eradicated. I counted no fewer than four gopher tortoise burrows (and a walking juvenile) in the race track area alone. Phases 2 and 3 would add even more bicycle trails, which Swamp “generously” claims they would be willing to “share” with pedestrians, thus leaving the entire park devoid of any worthwhile fauna and subsuming the last areas where pedestrians can walk without risking injury and death.

Swamp Bicycle Club claims to be working with the Florida Wildlife Commission. Since I, and the wildlife rehabilitation organizations I work with, have permits from the FWC and are in regular contact, I decided to check on this claim. Not one of the FWC workers I contacted had heard of Swamp Mountain Bicycle Club or this proposal, and not one of them thought it was a good idea. In particular, I spoke several times with Kyle Brown, the FWC gopher tortoise expert, whose name Swamp invoked. At the time I spoke with him, long after Swamp claimed they were working with him, he denied having heard from or of them. I will not speak for him, except to say that he did point out that bicycles at slow speed striking an adult gopher tortoise would probably

injure themselves in addition to the tortoise. However, even a slow speed bicycle could injure or kill a juvenile. It worries me that Swamp appears to be making false claims in regard to their association with the FWC. I also spoke with George Heimlich, who does nearly all of the gopher tortoise burrow surveys in Pinellas County. At the time I spoke with him, he stated he had never heard of the proposal, nor would he endorse it. The burrow survey Swamp shows as proof of having done their due diligence does not jibe at all with my own amateur examination of the local burrows. In my personal opinion, I believe it to be falsified. At best, it is not useful for protection of the tortoises.

Swamp claims that bikes on their trails won't be able to exceed much over 10 mph (although they notably refuse to post 10 mph signs), yet they also say they have seen motorbikes using them. They claim they can narrow these exact same trails so that motorbikes can't use them. As someone who has spent most of my time in woodlands since childhood, I do not see any practical way for them to accomplish such a thing. How, exactly, do you narrow a trail without extensive planting of trees that take decades to grow? How much more space does a motorbike require than a mountain bike? There is no appreciable difference in the current models of e-bicycles (allowed in the current proposal) and motorbikes (prohibited), and both are capable of speeds up to 60 mph. In my years of walking on these exact trails for hours every single day from sunrise to sundown, I have never once spotted a motorbike (or the track of a motorbike) on those trails. I have caught a few driving on the paved trails illegally, but that is not the issue. On the other hand, I have seen several mountain bikes and e-bikes roaring over those dirt mounds at 20-30 mph. But the sad truth is that it doesn't matter because **10 mph is easily fast enough to terrify wildlife of any kind, and the close, zigzag nature of the proposed trails would make it absolutely impossible for wildlife to exist there any longer.** It is not as if this displaced wildlife could just go somewhere else; there is nowhere else to go. Walsingham Park is one of the last havens for a long list of endangered, rare, and currently common species.

Swamp claims that the trails are already being used "unofficially," while they would be using them "officially." This sounds significant, until you understand what they mean by these buzzwords. "Unofficial" use is people walking in a park they pay for with their tax dollars observing wildlife in its natural habitat. This has worked beautifully for as long as there has been a Walsingham Park. There is nothing sinister about people walking in public park areas that have not been deemed off-limits. These walkers are nature-lovers, birdwalkers, elders and families who choose to enjoy the fresh air and observe what little nature is left in Pinellas County. Many carry and use binoculars and cameras to capture beautiful pictures of our perfect little park. I have watched dozens of children being taught how to spot, enjoy, protect, and love nature. These are the people who love parks for being parks, the very people for whom our parks were created. It is true that they do not have a "club" with lots of money backed by a big corporation selling mountain bikes in order to establish "official" use. They are merely people enjoying a park they way a park is supposed to be enjoyed. Their idea of "for the children" is keeping nature alive and well and allowing everyone to learn to love and share it. Swamp's idea of "for the children" is a racing track for teens to ride bikes as fast as possible through nature, scattering it, scaring it, and making it impossible for those precious animals to eat, sleep and breed. I truly cannot understand why the twelve teen mountain bike racers mentioned in the proposal might take priority over the hundreds of children of every age who love nature and see these woods as a second home, especially in times of crisis.

The people in charge of Swamp are very personable; I like them. But their goals are not shared by the vast majority of the users of the park or the public in general. It is one thing to request a small area of the park for the use of a special interest. For example, the dog park. Perhaps we could find a small open spot for that race track they want that doesn't require damaging the natural, wildlife habitat areas. They could grow their own brush and trees the same way they claim they will plant in the phase 1 areas so that they are riding through nature. Also, the huge fenced off area on the west side of the park with the enormous hill of dirt from the building of the wetlands seems ideal for their trails, and the rangers tell me it is no longer being used. This would give Swamp what they want without killing off half or all of Walsingham Park's wildlife and without ruining it for the hundreds of birdwatchers, nature-lovers and families who already use the trails Swamp wants to take.

Swamp's website and actions are revealing and, unfortunately, contradict a lot of their claims. For example, they say they want to protect nature while taking away the animals' only access to food, water and spawning areas and scaring them with vehicles. Swamp claims it will police the natural areas by removing trash, removing "unauthorized users," planting natural flora and removing invasives. Yet, in the last couple of months, they have only contributed to the garbage (their flags), have not removed a single invasive plant, and have made no plans to plant anything. They claim that they will enhance the local economy in one breath and that the trails are not a destination site with the other. Currently, locals (including myself) spend hours picking up garbage on the trails and in the waterways and are acutely protective of the natural flora and fauna. If the park

board would like us to do more for the park, they need only ask us! They never have to rely on an outside group that is making a lot of promises but has the obvious ulterior motive of bringing huge numbers of vehicles racing through the only areas left to our precious wildlife.

I have seen the following in the Walsingham nature areas that are currently marked by Swamp as their designated mountain bike trails: gopher tortoises (juvenile and adult), fox squirrels (a beautiful, double-sized, jet black squirrel with white stripes), flying squirrels, nightjars (ground nesting birds that blend so well with the ground it is almost impossible to see them even right next to them), great horned owls, screech owls, osprey, sharp-shinned hawks, Cooper's hawks, rabbits, gray squirrels, box turtles, several species of water turtles laying eggs on and around the trails, shrikes, falcons, scrub jays, indigo snakes, ring-necked snakes, black racers, rattlesnakes, and more birds than I could possibly name. Most of these are rare and many exquisitely endangered, and a large proportion are protected. Nightjars trust their protective coloration to keep them safe, and they would be crushed to death even by low speed bicycles. The vast majority of these creatures are shy and would disappear entirely if bicycles were flowing through their areas. Many of these animals have nowhere to go and nowhere to hide. They would simply perish.

The proposed trails zigzag across the established paved trails. I have recently observed bicycles zipping across the multi-use trails at high speed and using these paved trails to gain momentum to hit the dirt hills (included in the proposed trails) at high speed on the opposite side. They come down those hills at 30-40 mph, and woe be to any animal (or human) on the blind side of any hill. If the trails are approved, that is going to become a safety hazard to humans and animals alike. Already, I have seen some near misses with elderly pedestrians.

I have fond memories of my bicycles, my children ride, and I have many friends of all ages who do. I do not have a problem with bicycles per se. Pinellas is already the most bicycle-friendly place in the state, quite probably, in the country. Bicycles (and e-bicycles) are permitted to use the entire lane on most of our roads, and nearly every place that human beings are allowed to walk. Even in the places bicycles are not allowed, like the Botanical Gardens, people ride anyway and pay no heed to signs or rangers. It is almost impossible to walk on the Pinellas Trail because bicycle riders chain across it at speeds exceeding 25 mph, particularly dangerous for the young, elderly and disabled, who are precisely the people who require extensive exercise for health reasons. I understand that mountain bikers want to ride in the natural areas because it is a "challenge." But why should their desire to have a "challenge" take precedence over the locals' right to use our park safely and view wildlife or, more importantly, the animals' rights to live in the one and only place they can live? There are innumerable places to bicycle inside and outside of Walsingham Park; there are only a handful of places to observe wildlife and little to no chance to create more.

Swamp claims these are "local" mountain bikers who want to take over Walsingham, but that is untrue according to their own website. They claim it will not be a destination for mountain bikers, but that is also untrue. People from all over Pasco, Hillsborough and other counties are chatting on the Swamp website about coming here and holding rallies and riding all over the park. The money that Swamp is offering comes directly from mountain bike companies, who are planning to sell their bicycles at these rallies and races, as Walsingham will have the only actual mountain bike race course in the area. These are adults, proving that the race course is not genuinely "for the children."

Our tax dollars (and the tax hike for the park we vote ourselves every year with Pennies for Pinellas) should count for much more than the money being shoved at the park board by mountain bike companies. Our park is not for sale. Our animals are not commodities. The whole point of having parks is to preserve nature and provide a safe place for the locals to recreate. Wildlife, birdwatchers, nature-lovers, families, children and pedestrians should not have the last area available to them sold to one special interest that already has access to every square inch of the park, including the nature areas. At a time when every other park in the world is trying to preserve nature and save disappearing wildlife, it is shocking to all of us that this proposal is even being considered. Please do the right thing for the wildlife, the children, and the locals.

Thank you so much for reading!!!!

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