

Board Brief: Shared-Use Trail Issues

"...To protect and preserve while looking to the future" - Genesee Mission Statement

"...A deep appreciation of the natural environment, responsible stewardship of our assets, promotion of community spirit" - Genesee Core Values

Trails. There are 25 trails in Genesee covering approximately 12 miles. All 25 trails were evaluated by the Trails Committee to determine suitability for shared use. The evaluation considered steepness of grades, sufficiency of sight lines to allow awareness of wildlife and other users, observed volume of use, and known trail sections on private property. Of these 25 trails, 10 were determined to have moderate or high suitability. Six of the 10 existing trails, along, with the potential Malachite Trail (which has not yet been approved or considered by the Board) were selected for this proposal. The 6 trails selected: The north and east parts of Wildflower Loop, The Hillrise Loop (Hillrise West, lower part of Hillrise East, Red Fox Way), and the Courtside and Canyon Creek Trails that connect across Daisy Lane. The total length of the 6 trails currently proposed is approximately 1.8 miles. The other 19 trails would remain hiker-only. If the proposed Malachite trail were to be constructed and designated for shared use, it would add 1.8 additional miles.

Safety and Experience. The current proposal is for alternate-day use for mountain biking on the selected trails. Hikers can still hike every day, on all trails. Mountain biking would be allowed on designated trails on odd-numbered calendar days only. The proposal also recommends one-way travel for mountain bikers on the Malachite Trail and Red Fox Way-Hillrise East. Other trails will be out-and-back routes and may see two-way traffic on odd-numbered calendar days.

Liability. The safety measures described above are intended to reduce bicycle-hiker conflicts and resultant potential liability. In addition, trails and trail use, are already included in the Genesee Foundation general liability coverage, subject to a \$10,000 deductible and policy limits.

Access to Trails for Bicycle Use in nearby parks and Open Space. Genesee is virtually surrounded by open space in Jefferson and Clear Creek counties, Denver Mountain Parks, Golden and Lakewood, many of which offer shared-use, biker-only and hiker-only trails. While these offer substantial opportunities, they can be very crowded, more difficult, and likely require vehicle transportation to reach. For these reasons, proponents of shared-use trails believe public trails are not a complete substitute for the proposed Genesee Trail System.

Wildlife. According to Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), the wildlife populations in Genesee are generally healthy and stable. The long-term effect of shared use on certain trails is not currently known. Some state and federal trail operators consider the effects of mountain biking on wildlife to be similar to hiking. However, other research has concluded that mountain bikers displace wildlife at a rate higher than hikers.

Environment. The environmental health of our community and Open Space is vitally important, and the threat of soil erosion. Through professional design and drainage management, the Open Space Manager, in conjunction with the Trails Committee and Trails Stewards, is committed to a strong focus

on this. The purpose of the Genesee Trails Committee is to assist the Open Space Manager with the maintenance and development of the Genesee Foundation's Open Space trail system.

Enforcement. The current plan proposes to use signage, education, and self-enforcement to monitor trails for compliance with rules and restrictions and to prevent use by non-Genesee residents.

Malachite Trail. The Malachite Trail has not been considered or approved by the Board. The questionnaire will indicate the level of support for building the Malachite Trail (1.8 miles), whether for shared-use or as hiker-only. If the community supports development of the Malachite Trail there will be a full analysis and communication of all related costs.

Use of our Trails by Cyclists outside Genesee. This has always been a concern expressed by residents. Other than road-bicycle use on the Jefferson County public roads that serve Genesee, there hasn't been a great deal of evidence of this occurring. Unlike the trails in nearby public open space, our trails have not been trampled and widened by overuse.

Planning and Construction. If the community decides to move forward with shared-use trails, there will be modifications made to existing trails (professional design and construction work by a professional trail designer/contractor with current experience in trail construction techniques), but we do not know the extent of the modifications or the cost at this time. The cost to construct the Malachite Trail is not currently known, but will be determined prior to final approval of the trail.