

FINAL
Special Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
GOLD COUNTRY TRAILS COUNCIL, INC.
Tuesday, March 11, 2021, 7:00 p.m.
Teleconference - E-bikes

Officers:

President: Bernie Molloy
Vice President: Jamie Canon
Secretary: Andi Duncan
Treasurer: Cathy Scott
Past President: Helen Harvey

Board Members

Helen Crawford McDermott
Karen Hayden
Greg Sherr

General Members:

Laura Duncan
Mary Johnson, Forest Service Liaison

The deadline for a written response to the Tahoe National Forest regarding e-bikes on the Pines to Mines Trail was extended until Friday, March 12. Laura Duncan and Helen Harvey drafted a response letter. A special meeting was called to discuss and approve the letter.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. on Thursday, March 11. The BOD met via teleconference to discuss specific wording in our letter of opposition written to Joshua White, Administrative Analyst for Nevada County regarding the possible inclusion of ebikes on the Pines to Mines Trail. The discussion centered around the words "reluctant to continue to support" in the first paragraph versus words to the effect that we are pulling out of the committee and the project. After much discussion the BOD agreed that reluctant is a better choice for the present. If the Forest Service pursues allowing ebikes on the trail, GCTC will determine next steps at that time. Everyone in attendance, including an absentee vote from Helen Crawford McDermott, voted to approve the word reluctant as written. Tomorrow, President, Bernie Molloy, will send the letter on GCTC stationery. Additionally, he will send an email to the membership explaining the possible changes to P2M as well a copy of the letter that was sent to Joshua White detailing our opposition.

See Letter Below:

GCTC Position

The Gold Country Trail Council (GCTC) is strongly opposed to changing the status of the Pines to Mines trail to allow motorized bikes. We want to emphasize that Pines to Mines was conceived and designed as a non-motorized trail and presented to community members as a non-motorized trail. GCTC is reluctant to continue to support a project that focuses on a motorized trail.

GCTC also opposes any change to the non-motorized status of the Pioneer Trail which will become part of the P2M trail. The new proposal by the Forest Service (FS) to make the P2M trail a motorized trail is counter to prior FS representations, will delay the process, introduce a hazard to current users of the trail and may cause current partners in this process to withdraw their participation and funding for the project.

Background

Gold Country Trails Council (GCTC) was founded in 1981 to develop and maintain non-motorized trails for public recreation. GCTC's cooperation with public and private partners is an important component of that mission. Last year, GCTC reported over 2000 volunteer hours to the Forest Service.

Creating a multi-use non-motorized trail linking Eastern and Western Nevada County is consistent with GCTC's mission statement. GCTC representatives have been members of the Pines to Mines (P2M) committee since 2015, from project conceptualization to realization of a proposed trail. The work to date on the P2M trail has been extensive and has resulted in significant achievements. P2M's written documentation since its inception has stated it is a non-motorized trail.

- GCTC committed resources to help ensure that the project would be completed. GCTC has also held fundraisers for the project. GCTC donations have been made with the expectation that the P2M trail is a non-motorized trail.
- The current non-motorized trail system includes limited mileage, with countless miles of motorized trails designed and available for motorized use in the same vicinity. Numerous discussions and environmental analyses have occurred between user groups and Forest Service officials to set up the existing balance of trails that allows for relatively equal access and safe use by all.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time the Forest Service has attempted to change the designation of a non-motorized trail in Nevada County. In 2019, the Forest Service tried to change status of the Pioneer Trail in Lone Grave area to allow to e-bikes. The status change resulted in public outcry and a lawsuit was filed against the Forest Service. As a result of the lawsuit, e-bikes are currently illegal on the Pioneer trail.

Project Delay Loss of Funding/Participation

- Expansion of the P2M environmental analysis to include changes proposing motorized use on currently designated non-motorized trails will trigger increased public involvement that will likely slow down the review process. It is likely that the motorized vs. non-motorized status of the trail will become a significant issue for environmental, social and/or health and safety reasons.
- Grant funding from the Stewardship Council was obtained for a new pedestrian bridge over the spillway below Lake Spaulding (for) based on project description as a non-motorized trail. The Stewardship Council has historically only funded non-motorized trails. Potentially changing the trail designation to motorized may place this funding and the bridge in jeopardy.
- The proposed trail route relies on a combination of public and private land. Private land trail easements, including PG&E divestiture lands, were included based on a non-motorized trail. Each private land access may need to be re-negotiated should the trail become motorized which would add considerable delay to the project.

Health and Safety Issues

There are both short- and long-term impacts to public health, safety and enjoyed social aspects should the P2M and the Pioneer Trail (as well as other trails) be changed to a motorized trail designation. These trails were designed, designated and are (or will be) used by hikers, including families with small children and/or dogs, non-motorized mountain bikers and equestrians. The addition of higher speed motorized users on these bi-directional mostly single track trails creates a serious safety and comfort issue for the present designated users.

In addition, the use of illegal class 1 and class 2 electric motor bicycles has already been observed, often at unsafe higher speeds, on the non-motorized Pioneer Trail, and on other trails in the Lone Grave Trail system. The Forest Service has indicated they have limited ability to monitor and manage e-bike use, including limited ability to manage trail use to restrict usage to any single class of e-bike. Allowing motorized bikes on the Pioneer Trail will most likely increase e-bike usage in the area which in turn increases safety concerns and decreases the enjoyment of other users. The risk of collision and personal injury resulting from

the inclusion of high speed motorized vehicles is extreme and the resulting negative outcomes may include serious injury and the disenfranchising of the original user groups of the trail.

Conclusion

The Pines to Mines Trail was envisioned and designed as a non-motorized trail. Private land easements are based on the trail being non-motorized. Grant funding is also written for a non-motorized trail. The change would jeopardize the funding from groups that participate financially based on it being non-motorized. In addition, there are issues with the safety of trail users, and potentially disenfranchising the traditional trail users. The Gold Country Trails Council strongly opposes changing designation and allowing motorized bicycles on this non-motorized, multi-use trail.

BERNARD MOLLOY
PRESIDENT
GOLD COUNTRY TRAILS COUNCIL

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Submitted by Andi Duncan