



Rivanna Trails Foundation
Post Office Box 1786
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Board of Directors

December 1, 2016

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Charlottesville Area
Mountain Bike Club

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Fran Lawrence

Dear Mayor Signer and City Councilors,

The RTF Board of Directors represents a diverse group of trail users. When we take an advocacy position, we recognize that not all of our members may agree with our stance, and that is certainly the case with respect to shared use at Ragged Mountain Natural Area (RMNA). At the same time, we believe it is our duty to be observant of and responsive to the expressed interests of the trail-using community. It is clear that the majority of people who have expressed their views publicly support shared use trails at RMNA.

The majority of RTF Board members endorse shared use trails at RMNA, as we do on the 20+ miles of trails encircling our city, which bear the RTF name. Shared use means more people recreating outdoors, exploring and learning about the natural world, and working together to build and maintain trails. The RTF trail system continues to improve as we embrace the collaborative spirit between hikers, runners, and cyclists who share and value our local trails.

In November of 2014, The Charlottesville Area Mountain Bike Club (CAMBC), the Charlottesville Area Trail Runners (CAT), and the Rivanna Trails Foundation (RTF), collectively submitted a letter in support of shared pedestrian and bicycle use at the RMNA. In June of this year, we submitted a follow-up letter endorsing the draft "Option E" design plan.

The RTF now sends this letter of support for the attached amended trail plan presented to Council by Sam Lindblom on behalf of CAMBC, which includes minor revisions to trail use permissions which we believe would ultimately reduce user conflict and provide a better overall experience for all user groups.

Sincerely,

Todd Niemeier
President

Trails connecting our community

www.rivannatrails.org

City Councilors;

Throughout the Ragged Mountain Natural Area (RMNA) planning process, a large, diverse group of our citizens have advocated for an inclusive, shared use trail system that meets the mission statement of our Parks and Recreation Department. This trail system will protect our natural resources while encouraging a wide variety of our citizens to get outside and pursue healthy activities. We've dedicated countless hours of volunteer trail construction, planning, and outreach to get to where we are today. It's been a challenging process for sure, but we believe that a positive outcome is very close at hand, and we look forward to adding this treasure to the City's recreational amenities.

As we understand it, the map on the following page will be presented to you at the December 5 City Council Meeting. **We support this trail plan, but believe that with two small changes, it would dramatically improve the experience for RMNA visitors.** Both changes rely on the very simple but effective trail planning technique of dispersion; which gets faster moving visitors away from the trailhead quickly. This helps meet a primary goal of most visitors, which is to encounter fewer people.

These two changes we request are illustrated on the attached map, and are explained here:

1. *Central area just north of the parking area/trailhead.* Change the usage designation on this loop trail to Hiker Only. This trail at under a mile in length, is great for short hikes from the parking area. It is of little value to cyclists, and presents a great area for quick walks, a picnic, etc. It also encourages cyclist to continue on the primary shared-use trail, dispersing users.
2. *Southern area near the floating bridge.* Change use on the trail to "bikes permitted", considering the following:
 - Dispersing visitors minimizes trail user conflicts. It makes sense to allow cyclists to quickly move towards the west and south side trails where only a small percentage of walkers will venture to; as it is a long hike. Without a loop trail, users will be concentrated to the northeast corner. This is where there will be the greatest concentration of hikers as the majority of the trails are located here and it is the closest trail head to the parking lot.
 - Neighbors in Ednam Forest have been very vocal about excluding additional uses, citing privacy concerns among others. While we feel strongly that a County neighborhood shouldn't dictate City Parks management, nonetheless allowing a loop moves users away from these neighbors.
 - The lack of a loop trail will concentrate cyclists on the out and back shared use trail from the main parking lot. By definition, this increases the potential for trail use conflicts as it doubles the encounters a person would have with another.
 - The southern trail from the dam to the floating bridge will likely see the least use from hikers. First, users have to walk back down the steep gravel road to the dam, and then it is a maintenance road until the emergency spillway. Only then do you enter the trail next to the noisy interstate. We see no functional reason to limit this to hiking only.
 - At the Parks Advisory Board, the reason stated for excluding cycling access to the southern trail was the terrain is too steep and the trail too narrow. Both of these issues are regularly mitigated at our local trails with safe sustainable trail design. CAMBC, with specific expertise in trail design, pledges to partner with City Parks staff to design and build a safe sustainable trail that meets park objectives and provides quality experiences for everyone.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sam Lindblom

Charlottesville, VA



RAGGED MOUNTAIN DRAFT TRAIL USE PLAN

Hiking/Jogging permitted on all trails
Biking permitted on checkered trails
Dogs not permitted (except service pets)

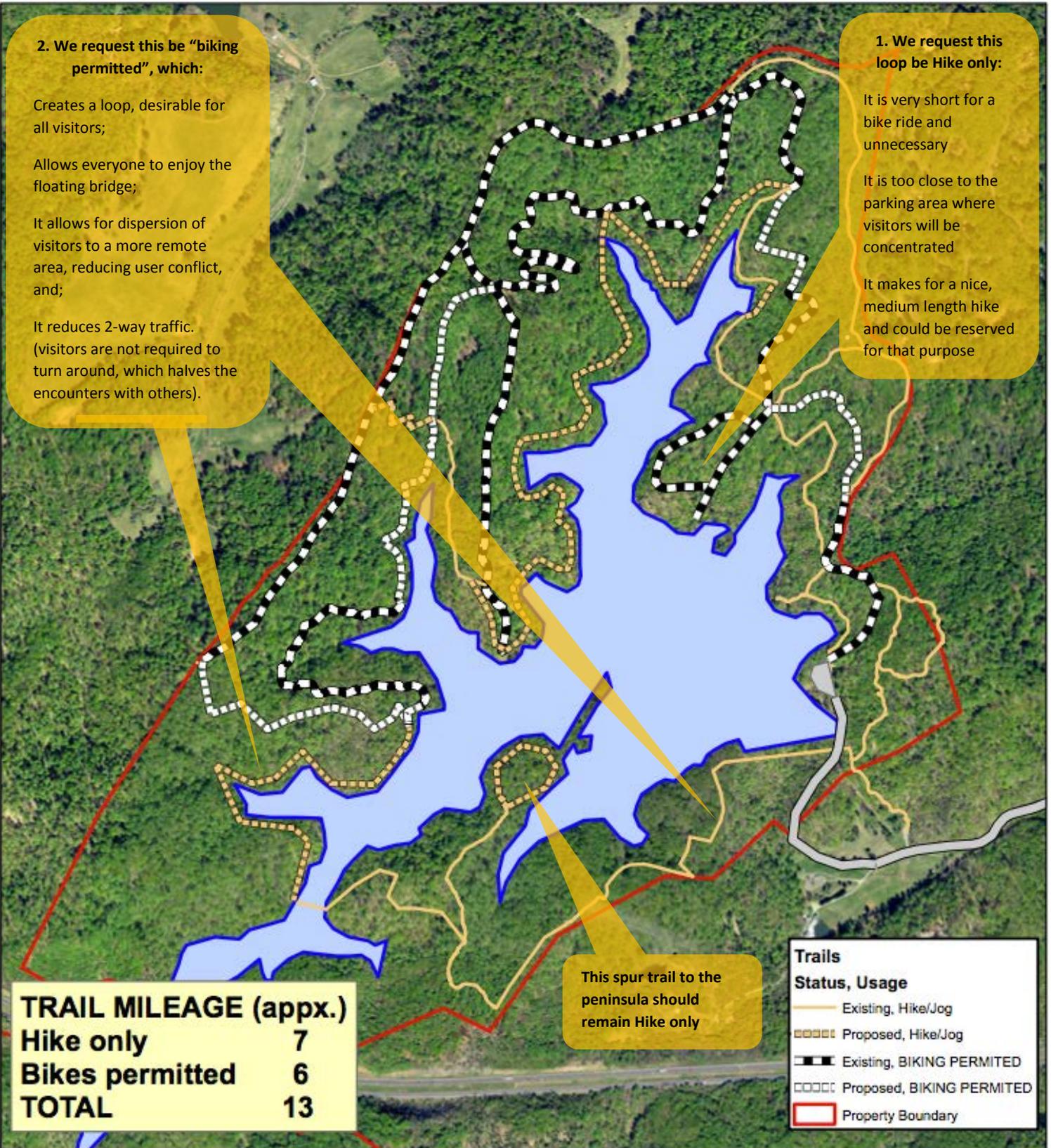
November 1, 2016

2. We request this be "biking permitted", which:

- Creates a loop, desirable for all visitors;
- Allows everyone to enjoy the floating bridge;
- It allows for dispersion of visitors to a more remote area, reducing user conflict, and;
- It reduces 2-way traffic. (visitors are not required to turn around, which halves the encounters with others).

1. We request this loop be Hike only:

- It is very short for a bike ride and unnecessary
- It is too close to the parking area where visitors will be concentrated
- It makes for a nice, medium length hike and could be reserved for that purpose



TRAIL MILEAGE (appx.)	
Hike only	7
Bikes permitted	6
TOTAL	13

This spur trail to the peninsula should remain Hike only

Trails Status, Usage	
	Existing, Hike/Jog
	Proposed, Hike/Jog
	Existing, BIKING PERMITTED
	Proposed, BIKING PERMITTED
	Property Boundary