

Ragged mountain comments beginning January 2017

Hello,

I have been adamantly against destroying the natural beauty of Ragged Mountain by allowing mixed use from day one. It seems many of our comments have fallen on deaf ears... ears simply determined to give yet another Albemarle park over to bikers, the vast majority of which already accomodate bikes.

Upon reviewing your proposed plan, I cannot help but notice there is no possible loop hike one can take to avoid mixed use trails. There is, however, a wonderful bike loop... A couple, actually. This shows what your true motivations have been from day one. Maybe you have never seen a bike trail after it rains or been forced into bushes by careless riders - I have on several occasions. It's the reason why I already avoid parks like Ann Byron, and now will avoid RMR.

Consider all my support of Albemarle County parks finished at this point. Let the bikers volunteer to educate children, make finacial contributions, and physically show up to improve the trail systems. I know I sure won't anymore.

Severely disappointed in you,

Thanks to you and staff for all the work you put into this project, for deleting "Natural Area" from Ragged Mountain's name, and for not permitting dogs.

I took a short walk with my son on the trails yesterday. We live in Ednam Forest so we entered near the water tower. We took a right immediately behind the water tower and then took a right at the bear carving and another right down towards the Boy Scout Bridge and Eagle carving.

That stretch was all tagged with white ribbons. I am strongly opposed to bikes on that portion of the trails. Why aren't the bikes being restricted to the maintenance road? The maintenance roads are wide enough for bikes and the land is already primed for bikes. The areas you have marked with white ribbons, are very narrow trails and I can't imagine very safe for biking unless work is done damaging the natural beauty. I cringe at the prospect of bikes coming up quickly from behind without any warning. In many places visibility is not great. I also hate to think of the bikes scarring the land and scaring away the animals. They will ruin the serene calm that the area offers now. The area was already disputed and torn up for the reservoir capacity increase. Don't further stress this area.

Please realize I am a fan of bicycling. I cycled from Connecticut to Minnesota upon my college graduation. One of the first gifts we gave each of our children was a bike. Cycling is on of the first things we do on vacation. My husband is an avid cyclist as is my son. But trail riding on those trails I enjoyed yesterday shouldn't be.

I appreciate your consideration.

Just putting in a general comment here: I think it would be great to have a bike path, and hiking trail that completes a circuit around the entire reservoir! That might already be a decided point, just wanted to voice my support.

It's such a beautiful area. Thanks for the excellent dam park created so far (sorry, had to throw in one dam joke...or two.)

I hiked the new proposed shared-use trails at RMNA on Saturday. For the most part they are fantastic!

I want to suggest a few tweaks and one trail change but I think the best way to make my suggestion clear will be to provide you with a topo map with suggestions shown on the topo map. I am working with Matt Bartley, who works in Facilities at UVA, to plot out such a map but he has no data on the existing trails or your proposed trails at RMNA. Do you have any "shapefiles" you can share that show the existing and proposed trails, or any data files that we can use to place trails on a topo map?

My intention is to put my suggested tweaks and ideas on a topo map and then meet with you to discuss the merits. Please let me know if you can share datafiles for your proposed RMNA plan.

I would like to express my enthusiastic support for the planned mixed bike/hiking use of the trails at Ragged Mountain. I am a resident of Charlottesville, a lifelong hiker, a regular user of Ragged Mountain. I am an attorney by training and politically active. I am not a cyclist.

Mixed Use Will Benefit the Changing Nature of the Community and Support the Development of Business. The use of public land should reflect the needs of the community. Charlottesville prides itself on the developing startup and tech industries which in turn relies on young professionals. One of the reasons that they come here is because it is - to use the simplest term - a cool place to live. These are the people living in lofts and tiny houses in Belmont because they want nothing to do with the suburbs. This demographic is attracted by craft breweries, live music and alternative sports like rock climbing or mountain biking. Having a good place to ride near town is going to be a selling point for the city.

Cyclist are Not a Bunch of Naughty Hooligans. Seriously, in the hiking community to which I belong there is a sense that cyclists are a bunch of disrespectful naughty kids who want to tear up the trails.

Nonsense. The type of riding they do takes skill and discipline and they cherish the locations where they are permitted to ride. Cyclists just move faster than hikers. I am happy to share the trails.

We Are Surrounded by Vast Tracts of Non-cycling Back Country. Ragged Mountain is not where you go if you need back country solitude. That is the Appalachian Trail, West Virginia or any of the thousands of square miles of back country accessible to Charlottesville.

Little Impact on Hiking/Walking: If specialized features like jumps and obstacles were placed on the far side of the lake, that type of riding would have almost no impact on casual visitors. At present, a complete walk around the lake takes at least 90 minutes. The side opposite from the parking is a 45 minute walk over steep terrain. Casual walkers are not going to go that far. There are very few people who would even be aware the cyclist are there.

Thank you,

Good afternoon. I am writing a book about hiking in the Central Virginia region (a revision of 60 Hikes Within 60 Miles of Richmond). Ragged Mountain is one of the parks I intend to write about, but I'm curious if the trail will reopened as a loop in the next calendar year. My deadline is in December and if the trail will be open by the fall, I'd love to include it.

I saw this article from yesterday about the trail and a March 4 meeting. I will likely not make that, but hope that a decision about the trails will be made soon.

I saw the press release and looked at the map for the march 4 hike. I agree that the strategy of "rimming the tub" with the ped trail makes sense because that was the design perimeter that you all were told to focus on... however I didn't pick up on that fact within the press release. Perhaps you all can find a way to more strongly emphasize that fact (and shift the blame). because it is probably not helpful if you all are seen as blindly laying out trails across such setup terrain...

I'm writing to provide feedback on the proposed trails at Ragged Mountain.

My husband and I, following the news that Ragged Mountain has now been marked with proposed trail flags, headed to Ragged Mountain today.

We downloaded the map on the Ragged Mountain site and used that to guide our exploration.

We found the new vistas to be exceptional, truly improved from what they were years ago, and we enjoyed our "around the lake" experience.

We are 65+ year-old hikers, and we prefer to spend our time on hiking, not mixed use, trails, so we are very appreciative that efforts have been made to accommodate our particular needs.

We had trouble following the orange-flagged proposed trails today; in contrast, we found it much easier to follow the white-flagged proposed trails. (For example, one of the trees with an orange flag had fallen down, and we were only able to see that flag after we passed it. In other places, we would follow a line of orange flags only to have them disappear abruptly).

I mention this orange path difficulty tonight as I think there will be more hikers exploring the new trails this weekend.

Perhaps more orange flags might be added to make following the proposed path easier.

Also, after hiking for several hours to get around the lake, we arrived finally at the floating bridge. It still has its “bridge closed” signs, so again, thinking about those who may be following the paths this weekend, it might be a good idea to remove those signs.

Additionally, the downloadable map might be made more useful by including the carved figures – the woodsman, the turtle, the eagle, the bears, etc.

We are truly grateful to have this wonderful recreation area so accessible to Charlottesville, and we thank those who have spent their time creating these wonderful new paths for us.

Thank you for meeting with me today. This email reiterates points I made while visiting in your office. These comments represent CAMBC’s Board of Directors and some of our constituents who are passionate about trails at RMNA. See also the attached trail map which includes our suggestions for improving the proposed trail plan at RMNA.

Generally we view the shared use trail system (per the most recent map you distributed) very favorably, feeling it will provide a quality experience for shared use at RMNA. We do however have concerns about the proposed shared use segment in the Southeast corner between the dam and the floating bridge. We note the following negative points regarding the proposed shared use trail, which is existing, in this Southeast corner of RMNA:

- Contains several sections of very steep fall-line trail that will be very difficult or impossible for many cyclists to negotiate. Thus not suitable for shared use.
- These sections of fall-line trail are already denuded and eroded in sections. These sections of erosion can be expected to increase in size and severity with increased use. Water bars are installed on these sections of trail to mitigate water runoff. Water bars are not effective at addressing these issues as they will require constant maintenance and will not prevent increased erosion. In fact water bars can cause

additional erosion (the waterfall effect) and can also cause trail users to widen the trail in an attempt to avoid ankle-twisting on the water bars.

- Segments of the existing shared use trail that are closer to the dam are very narrow and contain steep muddy switchbacks. These switchbacks are not navigable for bikes. Two way traffic, including bicycles, on this existing trail segment is not practical or realistic.

We suggest the existing trail be designated as hiker-only and a new contour trail be constructed to serve shared use from the dam to the floating bridge. Please see the attached map which includes our suggested conceptual route for this new shared use trail. Our suggested route is highlighted in yellow on the attached map. We note the following positive points regarding our suggested shared use trail:

- Follows the natural contour, uses grades proven sustainable and friendly for shared use including bicycles. Provides a trail corridor that will not promote erosion or require constant maintenance.
- Eliminates fall line trails and steep sections of trail that are difficult for trail users to negotiate.
- Provides an alternate route that allows existing and proposed hiker-only trails to remain for a net increase in hiker-only trails.
- Provides a pleasant experience for all trail users with grades that are friendly for hikers and cyclists. Provides a short section of lakefront trail for shared use. This is the only section of shared use trail where shared-use enthusiasts can enjoy views across the broad sections of the lake.

CAMBC is ready and willing to assist in flagging and constructing this proposed shared use trail segment. Thanks for the opportunity to offer input toward developing a great trail system at RMNA.

Hello,

I am a long time Charlottesville resident. I am also a long distance runner and have covered every inch of Charlottesville.

I am a fervid supporter as Ragged Mountain as multi-use. Let me begin by saying that, in all my times at Ragged Mountain, I hardly see anyone else out there. The rule of keeping RM for hikers only has caused the area to be severely under-used.

The only way for a natural area to be preserved and to flourish is with use. Limited use only causes abandonment and, possibly, the loss of the area to development.

I just wanted to voice my support for a multi-use trail system. In addition, I would like to point out that runners are much more quiet and silent than hikers. The thought that one runner disturbs wildlife more than a screaming group of kids is simply ludicrous.

I feel very much the same about the Ivy Creek Natural Area where runners have been discriminated against for way too long. The area has in fact become a shady hangout exactly for this reason.

There's no good reason to build any mountain biking trail or allow bikes on hiking trails. All mountain bikers are capable of walking - just like everyone else!

There's no good reason to build any new trails. Trail-building destroys wildlife habitat, and not just in the trail bed! The presence of people prevents animals up to a mile away from the trail from using their habitat. You need a course on conservation biology!

Please share my comments with all the appropriate parties.

Looks great - Thanks for all your hard work and patience.

You and others have put much thought into the Trail Systems which serve both Charlottesville and Albemarle County.

Personally, I am very pleased by the outreach coming from Albemarle County which requests that there be NO BIKES on the trails near to the reservoir which actually sits in Albemarle County, so it would seem that they have a stronger vote on this than the City of Charlottesville.

For years we heard that this area was going to honor the age old promise to have a totally natural area.....not to be disturbed by bikes and certainly no pets, either. Only footprints on the walking trails and photos taken.

In our shared communities on every given day many of the riders of bicycles do not honor the traffic lawsnor are they held accountable with the traffic laws being enforced when they do not

come to a full and complete STOP at STOP signs, when they do not slow for YELLOW and come to FULL and complete STOPS at traffic lights, and when they do not come to full and complete STOPS at Pedestrian Crosswalks. Thus, we mentor our young people.....following rules and laws are not important....and so the daily problem continues. Now, put those bicyclists out in a pedestrian area....how do you think they will transfer the current expectations? Merely putting up signage will not do it.....the daily enforcement will be needed. Giving these things sound bites will not do it. How will the bikes disrupt what is good about having a natural area for everyone for the ages?

Special thanks, Chris, for putting the plan out for additional input. You are highly respected in this area. Thank you for the consideration to support the position of Albemarle County.

- nice job on your Ragged Mountain trail plans. My comments:

*In terms of user experience the hikers have access to 13.75 miles of trail - which is 7 hours of trail user experience bases on 2 mph. The mountain bikers have 6.5 miles of trail which is a 1 hour user experience based on 6 mph. The hikers/joggers get Round Top (the highest elevation), the northern peninsula and the souther peninsula (the best views of the reservoir). A big chunk of the mountain bike trail is on an old road bed ("F"). This seems out of balance to me. Is there anything you can think of to make the user experience more balanced? My suggestion: "G", "I" and "L" could all be shared use single track. I am not sure why these trails need to be exclusive use? Sharing single track works on the RT and in every County Park - why not at Ragged?

*Can we think of trail "F" as a trail corridor and not confine the trail to the existing road bed. It would be great if we could build single track trail using the old road bed corridor, say within 30 feet of the road? Riding on old road beds is nice but single track is a way more fun user experience for the mountain biker. I reckon trail "F" will see very minimal hikers given the location and the terrain is rolling so user conflict on single track should be minimal.

*There are several references which seems to suggest that "shared use" trails need to be wider than typical single track and that the hiking/jogging trails can be single track. Is this a policy? What is the rational behind this?

*The mountain bikers do not have any trail along the shore line or any trails the have a view shed of the reservoir (except for an out and back on the old road bed

“H”). Any chance we could work in some mountain bike trails with views of the reservoir?

My name is Greg Anderson. I’m a member of the Kingfisher’s Club at the Senior Center. Last year you did a presentation for the Club, and discussed the potential for a boat ramp at the Ragged Mountain Reservoir.

I know that there were numerous public meetings regarding trails and utilization of the Ragged Mountain Reservoir. Has there been any progress regarding the boat ramp?

Are there local officials that members of the Kingfisher’s Club can effectively lobby to express our interest in these and other public access to local waterways/

I did a preview loop of the trail last week with a friend and tried out the new stretches of the pedestrian path. Have a little poison ivy to prove it.

Only comments are about the bridge area - going counterclockwise the sign at the bridge says it's closed. And the stretch just above the bridge seems WAY too steep for mountain bikes.

This morning’s Daily Progress had an article that may have muddied the waters regarding use of the Ragged Mountain Reservoir for fishing from a boat.

While the article was dealing with the question of “cycling” in the Ragged Mountain Natural Area, it points out a conflict between the City’s position and the “County Code 11-303. The code explicitly permits a few activities at the Ragged Mountain Natural Area, including fishing, hiking and bird watching, but ‘any activity not expressly permitted’ is prohibited.”

Is “boating” in a canoe or small johnboat, including when powered by an electric motor (not gasoline) expressly permitted? Or is that currently a prohibited activity?

After all that debating and planning comes this sucker punch from he county.

RIDE THE DAMN BIKES
the city has bigger issues!!!!!!
and the horse aint one either

I am requesting information about whether the currently proposed trails will impact (1) regulated wetlands and/or (2) any flora and fauna that are on Virginia's lists of threatened, endangered, and species of special concern or the federal lists of threatened and endangered species.

If available, my request can be satisfied by sending a copy of a documented determination that a permit or permits are (or are not) required because of impacts to one or both resources, which may have been issued by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, provided those determinations are based on the currently proposed trail layout.

Please let me know if documentation from the regulatory agencies is not available, in which case I may prefer a phone call or brief meeting rather than request what could be a large volume of documents.

Last spring I said it would be almost impossible, or perhaps literally impossible, to create a trail system that would be satisfactory to all, if biking is permitted. I was right. Now Council has charged you with exactly that - do the impossible. You made an excellent effort but unfortunately there are legitimate concerns.

The Council resolution states

"Council heard clearly the importance to the public of having some pedestrian-only trails where users do not have to share right-of-way with bicycles or runners."

In my judgement, the current trail proposal, which includes only 1 mile of hiker only trails out of almost 14 miles of trails, does not live up to that directive. The resolution does not require specific trail mileage, but the spirit of resolution, as evidenced above, would lead one to believe there should be more than merely 1 mile of hiker only trails.

Assuming I understand the map correctly, here are a couple of suggestions:

-- Expand the hiker only trails in the peninsulas, to areas greater than what you have now. For example, at point D, have the hiker only trail expand to part of the B area.

-- The same could be done at point P.

-- There are potential hiker only trails in other spots. For example, it seems to me there is no need for a biker trail at area H.

I recognize changes might require joggers to use biker trails in some places, as I believe they do now in some areas of the proposal. Hikers will also have to use biker trails in some spots.

That brings up another point - could not the joggers be on the biker trails most of the time? That would go a long way to satisfying the Council directive above. This should be seriously considered.

As a result of the Council decision, there is an enormous expansion of biker and jogger trails in the Cville/Albemarle area. Cutting the hiker only trails to only 1 mile is unnecessary, inappropriate, unfair, and shows little regard for hikers/walkers.

Chris, I want to emphasize that I know you have an impossible task. But there is no doubt that the hikers/walkers should be given much greater consideration.

I agree with keeping trail bikes off of many trails to avoid damage. As you know, I maintain trails (for many years) and rough tired trail bikes really tear into the trail, especially on uphill climbs. The pedaler is leaning way forward for balance and the back wheel does not have much weight on it, it therefore spins (tearing the turf or the mulch.) This encourages erosion by surface water.

I believe I neglected to copy you on my comments to Chris below.

One other point comes to mind. I'm almost sure that

the issue of family biking vs. adventure biking was not discussed at Council. It certainly is not referred to in the resolution.

As you may recall, that was an important issue to those who voted to permit biking.

In the hallway after the final decision a friend overheard a conversation between bikers which made it clear that the terrain's suitability for adventure biking was an important feature of RMNA for them. That, coupled with the large number of steep areas (perfect for adventure biking), is very likely to cause even more damage to Ragged Mountain's natural habitat than most of us anticipated.

I have no idea how to address that at this point, except perhaps via the signage that will be installed. That will be inadequate but might have some small effect.

As it turns out I will not be there this morning but hope to go early next week.

May you have safe travels on your trip this afternoon.

QUESTIONS ASKED DURING TOUR

Will trails need to be widened to become shared use?

Do we plan to fence off the ecologically special areas?

Chris:

Your leading the hike today was informative, but unfortunately I had another commitment and had to turn back after we did the switchback uphill at location K. Among the parts that I saw, the section close to the lake that is immediately south of location R would be of most concern to me with respect to use by bikes. That section is close to the lake, and is cut by several topographic swales that will concentrate runoff toward the lake. Sediment kicked up by use will easily reach the lake in that area, especially when the trail becomes rutted during muddy conditions.

I would also ask, what plans are in place to monitor any potential erosion? Techniques like repeat photography at the same location, simple transects with erosion pins (see image below), or with fixed pins, can be used to get valuable management data easily and at low cost. It would seem that given all the concerns about bike usage that some monitoring would be appropriate.

Greetings fellow Advisory Board members. I was able to attend part of the RMNA trail walk-around on March 4, but will not be able to attend next week's meeting due to work travel. Here are a few thoughts that I'd like to share:

- HUGE Kudos to Chris and Parks staff. Chris led this expedition with perfect aplomb. He was diplomatic, informative, and engaged the group in discussion. Nice job! Others Parks staff was there in force to support Chris, and this showed their continued commitment to this issue.
- As for trails, I continue to be concerned some of the tricky areas where we are trying to separate uses. At the north end, Chris pointed out some proposed hiking/running trails down by the lake's edge. We did not actually walk along these trails, as they are difficult to navigate. I did not stay for the part between the dam and the pontoon bridge, but I believe it would be similar, with very steep terrain in some sections.
- My opinion: be honest with Council about the practical challenges. In several tricky areas, perhaps start with shared use on the "good" existing trails and see how it goes. Maybe hiking/jogging only trails can be added as a future phase if user data indicates the need (e.g. conflicts, overuse). Why? It may not be worth the effort to build these trails and it is only a few sections along the perimeter. As you all know, I would certainly prefer the trail from the dam to the pontoon bridge and around the SW corner to be hiking/jogging only, but Council came to a different conclusion. Given that, I would rather see fewer good shared use trails than forcing the separation where it doesn't make sense.

Thank you for your work on this project, and I'm sorry I missed the trail walk a few weeks ago. However, as I review my notes and walks, I still believe it important that the ecological hot spots be avoided in trail design.

As you seek to refine the mapping for bike and hiking trails, I would urge you to do an overlay map showing the trails with the hot spots ecosystem map. The City's Neighborhood Development Services (NDS) has good mapping abilities and this should not be difficult. Still it is important because it appears that many of the trails are currently running through "hot spots" as identified in the study.

Please ask NDS about producing this important piece of information as it may assist in design that will avoid the most critical spots. Even though P&R, rather than a professional planning service, is doing the design, I believe the City has a duty to produce accurate information for the public and make decisions accordingly.

You are likely aware of this, but Albemarle County has posted a large sign at entry to the Ragged Mountain trails spelling out their rules for usage. I thought the City was in charge of this (?).

Along similar lines, I went hiking there a couple of weeks ago and was struck by the strange sign telling all to hike "quietly", it is insulting and (I think) inappropriate. I was also struck by the wooden statues placed on the trail as guides. They don't fit into a wooded environment at all and really are not informative for a hiker. I think simpler AT_style posts would blend in a lot better, not be so jarring, and probably a lot simpler to implement.

I am fine with all uses of the trails. Trails don't pass through pristine virgin forest and the noise of jets and Rt 64 is never far way.

I support the multi-use plan that I think has emerged.

I have to ask, are you just thumbing your nose at the County? I am shocked to see the city move forward with this and very disappointed. Those trails should not be invaded by bikes. It is a special area and will be torn up by bikes and the increased traffic. I have walked around the reservoir twice and am shocked to see what areas you have marked for bikes.
