

**Forest Park Conservancy**  
**White Paper on Off-Road Cycling in Forest Park**  
**May 19, 2009**

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## **Executive Summary**

Working with a group of stakeholders, including Portland Parks & Recreation, over the past two years, the Forest Park Conservancy has developed a “white paper” that examines the current off-road cycling situation in Forest Park and considers the possibilities of meeting and balancing the needs to protect the ecological health of the forest, and of cyclists with those of other user groups in Forest Park.

## **Introduction**

The Forest Park Conservancy (formerly Friends of Forest Park) recognizes that off-road cyclists are a legitimate user group whose needs are not currently being met. Forest Park does have significant areas open to off-road cycling, including Leif Erikson Road and many firelanes but there have been repeated calls for increased access – particularly for single track trails. Also, reported incidents between users point to an increase in recreational user conflict within Forest Park. The Committee agree that it has become increasingly clear that the situation warrants greater attention, including a consideration of potential solutions.

The Forest Park Conservancy (Conservancy) works in collaboration with Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) to protect and enhance Forest Park. PP&R establishes policies, plans and implementation actions for the Park, and the Conservancy helps to implement these through coordinated actions. The Conservancy believes that recreational use of the park is best served by balancing the needs of the various user groups with careful planning that utilizes the best available information, while upholding the overarching stewardship of the irreplaceable resource that is Forest Park. It is in this spirit that this effort was initiated.

At the May 2007 Friends of Forest Park Board (now the Conservancy) meeting, the Board of Directors approved the formation of the Off-Road Cycling Ad Hoc Committee. This Committee, comprised of a range of stakeholders, was charged with developing a “white paper” that would evaluate the current off-road cycling situation in Forest Park and consider a range of potential actions that might help to ameliorate tensions and explore the possibilities of meeting and balancing the needs of cyclists with those of other user groups in Forest Park.

This White Paper recognizes PP&R’s management authority and vision for Forest Park as expressed in the existing *Forest Park Natural Resource Management Plan (Forest Park Management Plan)* drafted in 1995 as well as the PP&R’s 20/20 Vision Plan adopted in 2001. The recommendations build on PP&R’s current management goals and focus on the following four areas:

- Developing and leveraging new and existing partnerships for trail expansion, maintenance, education, enforcement and ecosystem enhancement.

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- Improving the long-term health and sustainability of Forest Park's natural resources and trail system, including long-term maintenance.
- Educating all Forest Park users to help minimize user conflicts and improve the visitor experience.
- Supporting PP&R in their enforcement of existing recreational regulations, to curtail unauthorized mountain bike use on restricted trails.
- Improving off-road cycling access in a manner that is sensitive to environmental conditions.

## **Background**

There are growing recreational pressures on Forest Park to accommodate increasing demand for off-road cycling in general and single track in particular. At the same time, limited resources exist to manage the conflicts between users and address the myriad pressures on Forest Park's unique natural resources. Off-road cycling as an outdoor activity has experienced significant growth since the *Forest Park Management Plan* was first adopted in 1995. Off-road cycling in Forest Park currently entails a variety of forms including cross-county mountain biking, cyclocross, and commuting.

Several national studies point to the rise in popularity of off-road cycling over the past 15 to 20 years. A 2006 study completed by the Outdoor Industry Association indicates that over 50 million mountain bikers and other off-road cyclists reside in the U.S., with western states having a higher percentage of participants. A study recently commissioned by the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) indicates that nearly 1 in 5 Americans rides a mountain bike.

It appears that user conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists are increasing within the Park. While there are no systematic counts of conflicts, the Forest Park Conservancy receives complaints about cyclists on trails designated pedestrian-only, as well as reports of conflict on the shared use trails, roads, and fire lanes which are open to bikes. With the growing popularity of off-road cycling, these problems will potentially worsen unless this issue is addressed in a comprehensive manner that addresses both conflicts with user groups and efforts to protect the Park's natural resources.

The City's *Forest Park Management Plan* outlines a number of approved future trail projects. However, at the time of its adoption, the *Management Plan* did not fully consider the growth of off-road cycling and the potential for user conflicts and environmental impacts – all of which are now becoming evident. Off-road cyclists seek more access to the Park while minimizing user conflicts and impacts to the Park's natural resources. However, such a system is not specifically called out in the Management Plan.

Through the formation of this committee, the Forest Park Conservancy has initiated and facilitated a process with the off-road cycling community and other stakeholders to work toward developing a sustainable approach to accommodating off-road cycling that will integrate and emphasize education, habitat restoration, and trail maintenance. The goal is to improve, and to consider potentially expanding off-road cycling opportunities while being sensitive to Forest Park's unique natural resources and other existing recreational activities.

## **Committee Process**

### **Committee Composition:**

**John Runyon**, Committee Chair and Forest Park Conservancy Board Member

**Stephen Hatfield**, Forest Park Conservancy Stewardship Director

**Jeff Hough**, Forest Park Conservancy Trails & Restoration Manager

**Jim Labbe**, Portland Audubon

**Tom Archer**, Northwest Trail Alliance (Formally Portland United Mountain Pedalers -- PUMP) Director of Advocacy

**Mark Pickett**, Northwest Trail Alliance, Forest Park Trail Care Coordinator, Owner Revolver Bikes

**Kirk Slack**, FPC member

**Bill Larson**, Owner Cyclepath

**David Prause**, Forest Park Conservancy Board Member

\*\*The following representatives of PP&R have been engaged in and/or contributed to various stages of the process, but were not part of the committee that approved the final draft of this white paper:

**Fred Nilsen**, Portland Parks & Recreation (Retired)

**Astrid Dragoy**, Portland Parks & Recreation

**Greg Hawley**, Portland Parks & Recreation

Through a series of meetings the Committee has considered each of the following topics:

- Current Forest Park mountain bike use and trends
- The 1995 *Forest Park Natural Resources Management Plan* and related trail development
- Portland Parks & Recreation 2020 Vision Plan
- Trail use conflicts
- Resource concerns related to bicycle use in the Park

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- Habitat restoration and/or enhancement needs
- Opportunities to enhance off-road cycling access within the Park
- Educational needs
- The City process for developing new trails within the park, including planning issues and permitting
- Other examples of accommodating off-road in multi-use parks
- Trail design issues
- Phasing and funding of trails and maintenance

## **How do Off-Road Cyclists use Forest Park?**

The primary off-road cycling activities in Forest Park are mountain and cyclocross bicycle riding. Cyclists in Forest Park currently use unimproved roadways and singletrack trails. Singletrack trail riding is usually performed on narrow trails that are just wide enough for riders to ride single file. Singletrack trail riding produces less physical impact to the environment than other types of off-road cycling activity and is most compatible with other current recreational use of the park. Singletrack riding in a natural environment is the type of experience that cyclists using Forest Park would like to see expanded within Forest Park.

## **Off-Road Cycling Access in Forest Park**

The majority of trails in Forest Park are built and managed for hiking and other non-bike activities such as viewing wildlife. Forest Park nevertheless offers the most opportunities for off-road cycling access within the city limits of Portland – over 28 miles of unimproved roads, firelanes and trails are currently accessible to cyclists in Forest Park. The potential exists to provide a richer experience, on a sustainable framework of singletrack trails.

Off-road cycling within Forest Park appears to be on the rise. Increasing use has also led to conflicts with other Park users; reports of cyclists riding on pedestrian designated trails (such as the Wildwood) along with physical evidence of tire tracks and soil displacement have been noted by Forest Park Conservancy and PP&R staff. These instances can be attributed to a lack of education and awareness on the part of cyclists or unauthorized trail use by cyclists, but they suggest an increased demand for off-road cycling trails.

Areas in Forest Park currently open to cyclists include unimproved roads (Leif Erikson, Saltzman Road, Springville Road, Newton Road) and a majority of the fire lanes. Two short sections of singletrack trail (lower Firelane 5 and lower Newton Road) are also open to cyclists. Anecdotal traffic counts for all user groups are high on Leif Erikson which has resulted in a large number of user conflicts. Fire lanes are generally fall line trails, which can be more susceptible to erosion, though experience fewer use conflicts.

In partnership with PP&R, the Conservancy has taken some steps to address the calls for singletrack access. The Conservancy spearheaded, fundraised, managed, and produced the Forest Park mountain bike project, which completed improvements to the lower section of Fire Lane 5 as identified in the *Forest Park Management Plan*. The Conservancy raised the funds and invested substantial staff time in securing the necessary permits from City agencies. The Conservancy also hired a project manager to oversee design and construction of the Fire Lane 5 mountain bike trail. Along with the Conservancy's AmeriCorps field crew, Portland's off-road cycling club Northwest Trail Alliance (formally PUMP) contributed extensive volunteer labor to assist in construction of the trail. The trail was completed in the fall of 2006. Since that time, Northwest Trail

Alliance volunteers, in cooperation with members of the Conservancy and PP&R, have been instrumental in maintaining and improving this coveted .3 mile section of singletrack, along with other trails. While the Fire Lane 5 project was significant as a connector trail, and a fine example of how different entities and user groups can work together toward shared goals, it added very little actual mileage to the bike accessible network.

## **Findings and Recommendations**

In regard to any potential improvement and/or expansion of off-road cycling access in Forest Park, the following criteria are seen as critical to any consideration:

- Developing and leveraging new and existing partnerships;
- Designing and building sustainable trails
- Enhancing the Park's habitats;
- Educating all recreational users, coupled with enforcement of existing rules and regulations; and
- Improving off-road cycling access that avoid or minimize impacts to wildlife and interior habitats within the Park.

## **Findings**

Reasons to consider improved off-road cycling access and education in Forest Park include:

- Off-road cycling is a healthy, environmentally friendly way for people to experience nature. There is a need to increase and improve off-road cycling access closer to where people live. In the absence of opportunities close to home, most off-road trails are at distant trailheads, usually requiring the use of an automobile. Forest Park could be a local resource to riders in the core Portland area. And though it probably will not meet all riders' needs it could be an important component of the larger network of trails in our city.
- The unimproved road and trail network within Forest Park is a part of the city's larger multi modal transportation network. The Westside Trail being evaluated by Metro and the City of Portland's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability's North Reach of the River Plan would tie directly into existing roads and trails within the Park.
- Portland's Bicycle Advisory Committee is in the process of updating the Bicycle Master Plan, to include a section on off-road cycling.

- The League of American Bicyclist has identified off-road cycling opportunities as a weakness for Portland. Additional singletrack may be required for Portland to retain its Platinum level status. This is an opportunity to create a sustainable network of trails, and to redirect users to other, less densely used areas of the Park without impacting the sensitive habitat in the north management unit. Bicycles can readily access the more central areas of the Park if given riding opportunities in those areas.
- There can be economic benefits to providing off-road singletrack experiences for cyclists. The bicycle industry has been targeted as an industry the Portland Development Commission (PDC) to attract and grow in Portland. Generally, people in the bicycle industry ride bikes, both on and off- road.

## **Recommendations**

### *Developing and leveraging partnerships*

**Goal:** Increase resources available for trail building, maintenance, restoration, and education through volunteer support and other donated services.

There are numerous opportunities to engage off-road cycling organizations and volunteers in trail planning, construction, maintenance, education, and natural resource restoration. Northwest Trail Alliance and the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA), for example, have expressed interest in developing future long-term agreements to assist with trail expansion, maintenance, and education.

As part of an integrated approach to managing off-road cycling access in Forest Park, the Conservancy, in partnership with PP&R will help:

- Identify partnerships for education, trail construction, trail maintenance, and ecosystem natural resource restoration.
- Support the development of agreements for ongoing support and volunteer commitment with appropriate partner organizations. It is envisioned that the agreements will focus on trail development, maintenance, and restoration actions, both for specific trail locations as well as other areas of the Park.
- Support the development of partnership agreements that will ensure that there are adequate resources to manage the trail system now and into the future.



## *Designing and building sustainable trails and enhancing the Park's habitats*

**Goal:** Accommodate recreational trail activities which avoid and minimize environmental impacts, require minimal maintenance and avoid user conflicts.

Sustainable trails balance many elements addressing both environmental and social impacts. A well designed off-road cycling trail has limited impact on the environment, resisting erosion through proper design, construction, and maintenance, and blends in with the surrounding area.

Trail development considerations will include:

- Landscape scale: Units within the Park (for example, avoiding expansion in the north unit of Forest Park).
- Providing access and commitment for weed control and other environmental enhancement actions.
- Site-specific scale: Trail construction and maintenance for sustainability by employing proven and environmentally sensitive construction techniques, designing for adequate erosion control, constructing appropriate stream crossings, and respecting sensitive natural resource areas.

The committee recommends that the following principals be followed when developing, designing, and maintaining the trail system:

- 1. Avoid the Highest Quality Habitat Areas in the North Unit:** Avoid new singletrack trail construction in the north management unit, to prevent degradation and/or fragmentation of high quality habitat. This is consistent with the *Forest Park Management Plan's* north unit management priorities calling for "continued monitoring and preservation of existing features."<sup>1</sup>
- 2. Avoid, Minimize, and Mitigate:** Ensure that trail alignment and construction avoids where possible and/or appropriately mitigates local impacts to water resources, wildlife and their habitat to the maximum extent possible. Wherever possible, select trail alignments that will improve access to high priority areas for environmental restoration and enhancement. Metro's publication *Green Trails: Guidelines for Environmentally Friendly Trails* provides design and construction guidance for avoiding and minimizing impacts on wildlife habitat and water resources.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Forest Park Natural Resources Management Plan pg. 97-98.

<sup>2</sup> Green Trails: Guidelines for Environmentally Friendly Trails, Metro Parks and Greenspaces, <http://www.metro-region.org/index.cfm/go/by.web/id=11897>

- 3. Improved and Increased Information, Education, and Enforcement:** Apart from the potential impacts specific to singletrack mountain biking, new trail facilities in Forest Park will increase the level of recreational activity and human presence in the park and associated impacts. Therefore, new resources to improve and increase information, education, and enforcement are necessary to manage the environmental impacts of the full range of increased recreational use in the park.
- 4. Learn by Doing, Practice Adaptive Management:** A recent review of the ecological impacts of mountain biking notes “opportunities to look at the effect of mountain biking before and after introduction to a given area are rare.”<sup>3</sup> New trail construction and use should take full advantage of opportunities to assess the impacts on water resources, wildlife and their habitat from expanding singletrack trail access in Forest Park and improve our technical knowledge. There may be opportunities to work with Portland State University’s Biology department, where Professor Michael Murphy’s students are already studying the impacts of trails on ground nesting birds. We also need more information on user conflicts and evolving public values with respect to Park use to inform future management.
- 5. Integrate habitat enhancement actions into trail design, building and maintenance:** Trails provide access into areas of the Park requiring habitat enhancement work such as weed control. There is potential to integrate habitat restoration and other stewardship activity into ongoing trail maintenance. Partnerships with the Conservancy and other organizations offer opportunities to engage volunteer labor for ongoing weed control and other habitat enhancement actions in areas adjacent to new and existing trails. Future trails should integrate natural resource enhancement actions into maintenance activities. Also, it is critical to recognize that any trail construction would come with an accompanying need for future trail and ecological maintenance and that any funding secured for trail construction would include a significant allocation for ongoing maintenance. The Conservancy and PP&R are working hard to maintain the existing trail system. Any plan to increase to the trail systems footprint in the form of additional mileage must also address the need for greater maintenance capacity.

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<sup>3</sup> Lathrop, J. 2003. Ecological Impacts of Mountain Biking: A Critical Literature Review. Prepared for Wildlands CPR through the University of Montana's Environmental Studies Scientific Approaches to Environmental Problems. Online at:

<http://www.wildlandscpr.org/ecological-impacts-mountain-biking-critical-literature-review>.

### *Educating recreational users*

**Goal:** Reduce unauthorized off-road cycling on singletrack in Forest Park by improving the dissemination information indicating where riding is allowed. Off-road cycling education will be integrated into other Forest Park educational activities.

Forest Park accommodates a variety of recreational activities. Education provides a framework to minimize conflicts between user groups and improve resource values. In order to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy the Park to the fullest extent, there is a need to inform and educate users. Development of a comprehensive education program is essential to the future of Forest Park as its use continues to grow.

In order to accomplish this goal, the City and the Conservancy would work cooperatively to increase investment in the necessary staffing to develop, disseminate, and maintain education materials and signage; coordinate volunteer trail patrols; and provide capacity for enforcement of rules and regulations. As part of this process, the City should strive to dedicate the necessary resources to support the Forest Park Ranger position that was identified as a high priority action in the 1995 *Forest Park Management Plan*.<sup>4</sup> A complementary approach should be to develop and fund a team of “Forest Park Ambassadors” or trail patrol. A citizen based patrol program would provide on-the-ground staffing to educate and inform trail users and could be developed by or in partnership with the Conservancy, Northwest Trail Alliance, or other non-profits.

The benefits of a comprehensive education program would far outweigh the costs. The following is a partial list of items that would likely be a part of the Forest Park Trail User Education and Management Program:

**The Internet:** Add detailed and well organized information on the Conservancy’s and PP&R’s websites, with links to this information on local hiking, running and mountain biking (i.e. Northwest Trail Alliance) websites. Also, links on the City of Portland website, along with other visitor information websites for Portland and Oregon. Sponsored search results on google that point to the Forest Park Conservancy website when phrases such as “hiking in Portland” and “mountain biking in Portland” are searched.

**Trailhead Kiosks:** New kiosks with better information at the busiest access points. Some examples include the NW Thurman Gate, the top and bottom of Saltzman Road, Germantown Road (both Leif Erikson and Wildwood Trailheads), and Newberry Road. Information would include maps, trail etiquette, and a trail marker legend.

**Volunteer Trail Patrol:** There is an established National Mountain Bike Patrol that is administered by the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA). The mission of the mountain bike patrol is to assist, educate and inform users. There is no enforcement

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<sup>4</sup> *Forest Park Natural Resources Management Plan* pg. 102-103, 206.

portion, nor should there be, and the patrols are completely run and staffed by volunteers. This same concept could be expanded to other users.

Trail Signage: Work with PP&R to develop a set of standard trail signs that are simple, inexpensive and aesthetically unobtrusive when placed in the Park. These trail signs should guide users, allow them to pinpoint their location and indicate which users are allowed on the trail. User guides would be situated strategically at major trail intersection. Trail names should be located at all trailheads and all trail intersections. User type allowed signs should be located all trailheads and all intersections. This can be achieved using a combination of colors and simple symbols.

Local Groups: Partner with local user groups and encourage them to contribute to and spread the contents of the education program.

Featured Routes: Create a section on the Conservancy's and PP&R websites where users can go to see a range of recommended off-road cycling trails and loops. The recommended trails can be changed often to encourage users to explore different parts of the park and therefore spread use throughout the Park. These loops can be rated by an easily understood rating system to give users a better idea of the difficulty.

### ***Improving off-road cycling access***

**Goal:** Improve off-road cycling access within Forest Park by connecting and repurposing existing trails, roads and corridors and developing new trails, where they can meet the thresholds set forth in this document.

Improving off-road cycling access within the Park will focus on actions within existing areas of current off-road cycling use (for example, the fire lanes) and other areas where there are opportunities to improve trails and resource values through habitat enhancement (for example, utility easements, abandoned roadways and cat grades).

### **Possible focus areas for improving mountain bike access**

The current network of off-road cycling accessible trails can serve as a backbone for an expanded system. The system can be designed to reduce user conflicts, reduce bike trips through the Thurman gate and spread out users more evenly throughout the Park. In addition, trail expansion in these areas can be compatible with other resource values including habitat enhancement. The recent Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) fire study, for example, identified areas for reducing fuel hazards. Some of the identified project areas (for example under power lines) are suitable for off-road trails combined with fuel reduction and habitat enhancement.

The committee has identified a number of areas that might be suitable, with application of the criteria cited above, for enhancing and/or expanding off-road cycling access including:

- Saltzman Rd./Power Line Area
- Fire Lane 7 and Fire Lane 5
- Camp Tolinda vicinity
- Bottom of BPA Power Line and Newton Road
- Access from new parking lot on NW Yeon Ave, as identified in the Forest Park Master Plan.

There may be other corridors in the Park suitable for expansion of the off-road bicycling trail network that have not yet been identified.

#### *Potential expansion of shared use trails in Forest Park*

##### *Description*

All trails open to off- road cycling in Forest Park are shared use trails. This means that other user groups, such as hikers, runners and equestrians, share the use of the trail with off- road cyclists. A shared use trail can be a very efficient use of resources if properly implemented. A shared use trail must consider the needs of all potential users and must be constructed to ensure safe user interaction and minimal maintenance.

##### *Criteria and considerations*

The committee considered several existing alignments in Forest Park that are currently open to only pedestrians and/or equestrians. The majority of those on the committee agreed that certain trails in Forest Park, including the Wildwood trail, would not be appropriate to open up access to off-road cycling. A minority of the committee members proposed that there was insufficient information to make a determination regarding any trail exclusions.

The following are some of the considerations that we established in order to evaluate the possibility of expanded shared use on an existing limited use trail:

- Would the trail provide a new access point to the park for off -road cyclists?
- Is the existing alignment appropriate for off-road cycling, considering sight lines, trail grade, trail condition, trail width or can it be improved with minimal impact?
- Is the current pedestrian use level too high for off- road cycling to be safe and

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enjoyable?

- Could trail improvement and increased access provide better access for invasive plant eradication?
- Will the off- road cycling experience be a good experience while maintaining or improving the current use experience?
- Is it appropriate to close the trail to cycling during the wet season, ground nesting bird season or for other ecological goals?

#### *Advantages*

A shared use trail that successfully accommodates all targeted user groups can help reduce maintenance costs, encourage positive interaction among different user groups and lessen the overall environmental impact by reducing the need for exclusive user type trails.

#### *Existing examples*

Firelane 5 – Firelane 5 is a shared use trail that is open to pedestrian and off- road cycling. The trail's total length is 1.5 mile that includes 1 mile of double track and 0.5 miles of single track. This trail was changed from pedestrian only use to pedestrian and bike use in the fall of 2006. To make this possible, the section of single track was realigned to improve trail drainage, control speed and improve site lines. With these improvements complete, Firelane 5 became, and is still functioning as, an example of a previously limited use trail that now successfully accommodates multiple user groups.

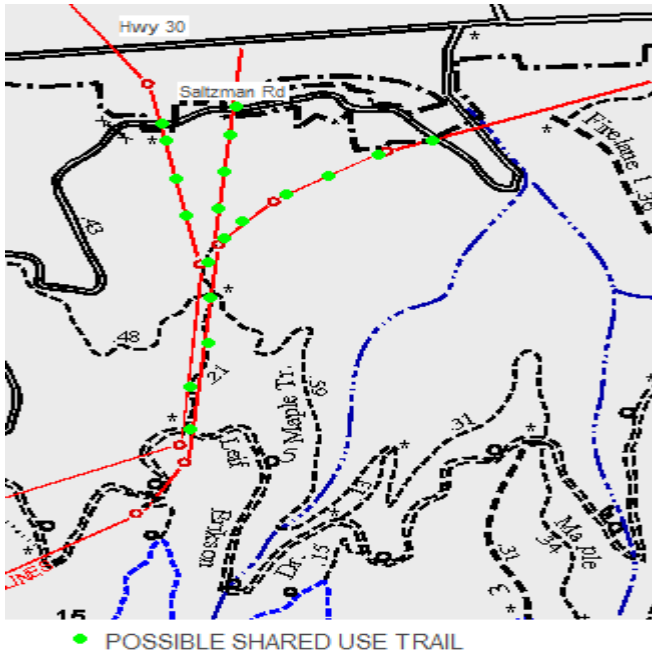
Newton Road – Newton Road is a shared use trail open to pedestrian, equestrian and off-road cycling use. The Newton Road is 2 miles long including 1.4 miles of double track trail and 0.6 miles of singletrack trail. The trail provides access to the north part of Forest Park to all user groups. It also provides a relatively close connection to Firelanes 12 and 15, although this requires users to travel on Hwy 30 for approximately 0.25 miles.

*The following is one potential option for expansion of off-road cycling access*

#### **Firelane 4 (From Leif Erikson @ MP 5.15 to the lower gate on Saltzman Rd)**

Firelane 4 is an overhead, high voltage transmission corridor that ranges in width from 50' to over 160'. The vegetation in the corridor must be kept low (less than 30') due to the overhead high voltage electricity transmission lines. The maintenance of the corridor is performed by the utility owner and consists of brush hogging and herbicide. There is an existing access road that runs through the corridor and must be maintained for the utility company. This road is currently open to pedestrian use only.

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*Advantages of this proposed trail alignment:*

- The wide, open corridor could accommodate a trail that winds back and forth providing an enjoyable user experience and improved sight distance;
- The needed vegetation maintenance of the corridor would be drastically reduced;
- The trail would provide better access to an area with a high concentration of invasive vegetation;
- The current ecological condition of the corridor already compromised compared to the surrounding area.

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## Next Steps

The Conservancy and members of this committee are prepared to engage with PP&R as appropriate to support the citywide evaluation of off-road cycling. It should be made clear that the recommendations contained in this report are merely a starting point. At some point there will be need for a broad public process, which must entail reaching out to other Forest Park stakeholders, both to communicate the need to improve off-road cycling in the Park and to solicit input on any proposals. This will require a dialogue with other Park trail recreational users, including wildlife watchers, researchers, hikers and runners.

Committee members believe that they have carefully and thoughtfully evaluated the current situation in the Park and that there are a number of items that could improve the off-road cycling network and reduce or at least some of the existing conflicts among Park users. Some of these elements can be implemented in the short-term while other actions will require a long-term commitment to securing additional funding or dedicated resources for implementation. Nevertheless, the committee feels that steps should be taken to implement certain measures as soon as practicable.

The following is a list of recommendations that have been agreed upon by the committee. All of the committee's recommendations will be refined and implemented in coordination with PP&R and other park users, and will of course be considered within the context of budget and personnel implications for the Conservancy and PP&R.

- Provide support for and cooperate with PP&R's citywide evaluation of off-road cycling opportunities – this process is currently scheduled to begin on July 1, 2009.
- Implement the Stewardship Agreement for Forest Park trails and Trail Education. This recently formalized document is a trail care agreement between PP&R, Forest Park Conservancy, and the Portland United Mountain Pedalers which outlines each group's expectations and obligations for care. This document lays out a schedule for regular maintenance of existing off- road cycling routes, and other trails, along with coordinated education and outreach events.
- Implement a Forest Park Ambassador or Trail Patrol Program that would assist in on the ground outreach and education in the Park. Northwest Trail Alliance is currently working on the development of such a program and will work with PP&R and the Conservancy in implementing the program.
- Implement a "Slow Zone" on Leif Erickson Road within one mile of the Thurman Gate. The concept would be to limit travel speeds to 10 mph within this designated area. This would reduce the speed differentials among users in this high use corridor. This would require a minimal amount of signage and would be

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coupled with outreach and education to off-road cyclists and other users. This should be accompanied by education and outreach to others users to reduce conflicts from off-leash dogs, etc.

- Work with Northwest Trail Alliance and other stakeholders to establish an outreach and education program to off-road cyclists. This could include adding relevant information to the Northwest Trail Alliance website (which is currently being redeveloped). It could also include additional outreach components directed at the larger cycling community. Northwest Trail Alliance is willing to engage directly with PP&R and the Conservancy on this effort.
- Explore options for improving signage in the Park in the near-term. There may be opportunities for grants or private funding sources that could be leveraged in the near-term.

## **Conclusion**

The committee recognizes and supports PP&R's effort to develop and implement a citywide evaluation of off-road cycling opportunities including singletrack access. It is clear that Forest Park cannot be the only significant area for off-road cycling in Portland in part because there are limits to the recreational opportunities it can provide while sustaining natural resource values for wildlife and clean water. Forest Park is an already heavily used natural area. Portland has a 100-year history of investment in the conservation and stewardship of Forest Park. As a consequence, expansion of recreational use in Forest Park, including off-road cycling, must be done in the right places, in the right way, and in a manner that considers the various user groups and the importance of the natural resources in the Park.

Improvements, enhancements and expansion to Forest Park's existing road and trail infrastructure will increase the need for funding and other resources to support sustainable trail construction, long-term maintenance, localized habitat restoration, ongoing education, and enforcement of park regulations. Forest Park is an unparalleled natural resource and the bar must be set high for any expanded access. This committee believes that improvement and/or expansion of off-road cycling opportunities is a worthy consideration if these criteria can be met.

This White Paper provides a starting point for Portland Parks & Recreation's own city-wide exploration of off-road cycling challenges and opportunities that will be initiated July 2009. Although focused largely on Forest Park as an area of potentially the greatest opportunity for additional off-road cycling, by no means does the Conservancy or members of the Off-Road Cycling Ad Hoc Committee believe that Forest Park represents the only locale in the city with potential to address the range of off-road cycling desires.