



Friends of Sausal Creek

PROMOTING WATERSHED AWARENESS

July 8, 2022

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*Friends of Sausal Creek is a
501(c)(3) non-profit organization*

ATTN: The Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission of the City of Oakland; and
Dana Riley, Interim Director, Oakland Parks, Recreation and & Youth Development

The Board of Directors of Friends of Sausal Creek (FOSC) urges the City of Oakland to
cancel the Enduro Race proposed for Saturday, August 6th in Joaquin Miller Park
(Park).

For the following reasons, we strongly object to the [Enduro Race](#) at the Park.

1. **DEGRADATION:** The redwood forest floor, top soil, and aquatic resources at the Park have already been seriously degraded by the intensive and unregulated use of mountain bikes both on designated trails, and across a sprawling network of unauthorized, rogue trails that crisscross the forest floor between the designated trail corridors ([PRAC – 14 July 2021 Item 7b](#)). This Park is the key green space at the headwaters of the Sausal Creek and as such, the degradation of the soil, water, and plant life jeopardize the complete ecosystem: the fragile understories, the habitat and natural resources that many species rely on including aquatic insects, rainbow trout, rare native plants, birds, and mammals.
2. **FLORA & FAUNA IMPACT:** Mountain biking and off-trail hiking are causing serious damage to flora and fauna at the Park, including rare plant communities and increasingly scarce wildlife populations that are dependent on complex, diverse, and undisturbed forest floor habitat. Twenty-two years ago, the City of Oakland contracted a natural resources firm to develop a [technical report](#) to determine the health of the redwood forest within the Park. The assessment included recommendations for specific trail improvement projects that, as far as we know, were never implemented by the City or other stakeholder groups. The report pointed to the pulverization of the top soil as a significant environmental problem, and without any action and increased use, conditions have only worsened over time.
3. **FAILED PLANNING PROCESS:** Without any planning or public involvement in the process, the Park has emerged as a *de facto*, regional mountain biking facility. It has become a sensation on social media that draws riders from throughout Northern California, and is favored for its steep descents, lack of rules, and non-existent speed and trail enforcement.
4. **PRECEDENT:** Staging a high-profile Enduro race at the Park will increase the number of mountain bikers seeking high speed riding and sets a precedent for more events such as this in the future. This event also promotes e-bike users, a problematic motorized addition to the park. Although not yet approved, pre-race practice runs for this Enduro race are already occurring

(see [Joaquin Miller Park Enduro Preview/Guide](#), June 4, 2022). An active social media presence both before and after the race will increase copy-cat, rogue Enduro races. Instead of supporting an Enduro race, the City should be pursuing the repair of the existing damage at the Park, and the formulation of rules governing mountain biking in a manner that ensures the protection of ecological and cultural resources, and equal access by all user groups. The sponsors of the race, have framed the agenda item for the next PRAC meeting as a decision about speed limits for mountain bikers during the race ([PRAC 13 July 2022 Item 6B](#)) however, this myopic concern misses the over-arching need to understand land-use issues at the Park. While many mountain bikers are responsible, the level of damage done by this user group must be addressed before new events are introduced.

5. NOT A FUNDRAISER FOR THE PARK: The BTCEB have fashioned their public relations campaign for the Enduro Race as a fundraiser for the Park, but it is actually a fundraiser for BTCEB. Their organization has emerged as the trail manager for the Park in the absence of City leadership on the trails, and the results do not take into account best practices which include users, alignment, soils and materials, and water management. At the June 16 meeting they did not present a plan for how the funding would be used, managed, and disbursed. Furthermore, they did not present a plan for the trail maintenance which should reference technical experts and state of the art practices. Their organization focuses on trail access for mountain bikers, and they have not adequately addressed the ongoing ecological damage being done to the Park by mountain bikers.
6. USER DISPLACEMENT: It appears that all other users of the Park will be displaced for an entire day if the City decides to allow the event to occur on August 6th. BTCEB has not submitted a race plan to the City, so it is unclear how other Park users will be allowed to access the trails during the race. If hikers, dog-walkers, and children are allowed on the trails that Saturday, the race will put these other users at risk of great bodily harm. In addition, it is evident through YouTube videos that the individuals who have registered for the race are already practicing on the identified race trails and others and no doubt, this will continue long afterwards.
7. PRIORITIES: In August 2021, conservationists raised to the PRAC serious concerns about ongoing degradation of the Park, and offered a package of specific recommendations to begin mitigating the damage ([PRAC – 08/11/2021-Item 7D](#)). We urge the PRAC to address these concerns and recommendations before considering any additional permit applications for events that will increase park degradation.
8. MASTER PLAN: The City's own General Plan ([OSCAR](#)) requires Park staff to prepare master plans for each Park in the City, and a number of these plans have been prepared, but the City has not prepared a master plan for our largest and most ecologically- and culturally-rich Park. The time is now to prepare such a plan.

We urgently request that the PRAC deny this permit request and commit to developing a long term master plan for Joaquin Miller Park that preserves and protects the headwaters of Sausal Creek and all of its plants and animals for the current and future residents of Oakland.

Sincerely,
Friends of Sausal Creek Board of Directors
Friends of Sausal Creek Executive Director