

Board of Park Commissioners

Topic: To allow bike use once again on the Fitzpatrick Tract adjacent to Upper Hixon Park

Based on a recent meeting between The City of La Crosse Officials, WI DNR Staff, representatives of the Mississippi Valley Conservancy (MVC) and representatives of the Outdoor Recreation Alliance (ORA) a new policy has been put in place regarding the approval of Multi Use Trails on City Owned / MVC Easement Properties on a case by case basis. The first step in this policy is for approval from the Board of Park Commissioners. If approved, this would then go to the Mississippi Valley Conservancy for Approval. If the MVC approves then the trail(s) in question would be granted Multi Use Status. Let it be known that the WI DNR is not opposed to Multi Use Trails on the properties in question but would rather the local unit of government and the easement holder (MVC) be allowed to make the decision on uses on the properties.

The Outdoor Recreation Alliance would like to obtain approval from the Board of Park Commissioners to grant access for bicycle use on existing trails on the city owned parcels known as the Fitzpatrick Tract adjacent to Upper Hixon Park.

Brief History:

In the 2002 – 2003 time frame The Outdoor Recreation Alliance (formerly known as Human Powered Trails) was granted permission to build multi use single track trails on the Fitzpatrick Tract. During the timeframe of 2002 – 2003 Human Powered Trails hosted an International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) Trail School where it was published to the city and city officials were invited to attend. Building portions of trail on the Fitzpatrick Tract were started in 2002. In 2003 it was determined that a bridge would be needed to continue the trail, which was constructed in fall of 2003. Trail construction was complete by the end of 2003. Prior to 2011 bicycles were allowed on this property. In March of 2011 based on a decision by the WI DNR bikes were then prohibited on this property and have been ever since. In an email dated March 24th, 2011 from Tim Jacobson who is the former Executive Director of the MVC it was noted that the MVC Board voted “Last night” to approve an amendment of the conservation easement on the Fitzpatrick Tract to allow recreational bike use on approved trails. Since this time no action has been taken to actually allow the use of bicycles on the Fitzpatrick Tract. In spring of 2017 during a review by the MVC and City Parks Department Staff it was found that the bridge constructed on the trail known as “French Connection” may also be located on the Fitzpatrick Tract as well. Since this time the Parks Department had the property boundaries in question surveyed to determine their exact location. This survey showed that the Bridge and a short segment of the French Connection Trail is located just within the boundary of the Fitzpatrick Tract.

Benefits of the request:

Maintaining the existing trails in a sustainable manner adds value to the conservation benefits of the lands and connects more people to the natural resources. This is in the spirit of the conservation easement held by MCV. Well designed trail systems enhance users experience, prevent rogue trails and protection the impact to high value resources.

Request:

Approval of Multi Use trails, including biking, on the existing trails on the Fitzpatrick parcel. These are the “green trail” designed for beginner users and the “blue trail” with the bridge designed for intermediate user groups. Parks Department to request of MVC to modify and take all necessary steps to amend the conservation easement as necessary to allow, as originally planned, to allow for shared use trails, that includes biking.