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What's going on with the Bike Park?

By Cathy Tyson

Although a site is being examined as a potential location for a bike park, planning for it and actually having it complete and open to the public can be two entirely different things. "For several years, local youths have been building unauthorized bike jumps along Las Tramps Creek and other sensitive areas in the Community Park. Following a request from an organized group of bike enthusiasts, the Parks, Trails and Recreation (PTR) Director and PTR Commission thought it was important to address this environmental harm and simultaneously enhance the recreation opportunities in the Park by providing an area for bike riders to enjoy their sport in a clearly designated area within the Community Park," said PTR Director Jennifer Russell in a statement.

Back in November of 2008, the PTR Commission passed a motion to approve going forward with Phase I of the Bike Park Project - this includes design of the park and submission of a recommendation for funds to start the design phase of the project.

In April of 2009, after input from the community and a design consultant, the PTR Commission approved a proposed design. In June of 2009 the proposed site was staked and a visual impact study was conducted, notices were posted in the park for three weeks and a consultant was hired to do an environmental habitat assessment of the area.

In October of 2009 there was a PTR Commission meeting to learn about the results of the habitat assessment. As it turns out, there is the potential presence of a special wildlife species. Biologists from Condor Country Consulting discussed the findings and possible mitigation measures.

"The bike park design is undergoing rigorous environmental review," said Russell. "That review has identified a documented sighting in 1994 in Las Trampas Creek of a California Red-legged Frog, a protected species under the Federal Endangered Species Act. As a result, additional environmental analysis is being conducted to ensure that the bike park's effects will be mitigated and special permits are being sought through the Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service and California Fish and Game before construction can be authorized. Mitigations are being developed so that special plant and wildlife species are protected."

A biological survey is scheduled for the coming spring, and an environmental consulting firm has been selected to review drainage changes in the creek that may affect permitting requirements with the Army Corps of Engineers. Parks Trails and Recreation Director Jennifer Russell invites questions or comments via her e-mail address: jrussell@ci.lafayette.ca.us or go to www.lafayettebikepark.com for more information.

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