

Rilee Park Discussion

I am disappointed that we are rehashing this issue and recreating controversy where none should exist. I support maintaining the District's current position regarding BCRP for the following reasons:

1. Donor Intent and Historical Use

The historical use of this property — and the clear intent of the donors — was to preserve an agrarian, historical, educational rural farm setting. That vision always included hiking and equestrian trails.

a. The Rilee/Parrett family built the trails decades ago and encouraged neighbors to use and help maintain them.

b. After Crystal's passing, the Foundation managed the trails exclusively for equestrian use.

c. When the Foundation donated the land to CPRD, they were assured this intent would continue. This was evident to Foundation Board members at the time — many of whom have testified — and also to CPRD staff. While many assurances were verbal and based on trust, CPRD's own press release dated October 24, 2013 stated:

- “The Foundation donated over \$6 million worth of land in exchange for \$280,000.” (The \$280,000 was used to clear a loan on the house and cover attorney fees; the transaction was effectively a donation so CPRD would own the property unencumbered.)
- “Not only will the equestrian community return to the trails it has previously enjoyed... Bob and Crystal Rilee Park will be a scenic nature park with trails, including equestrian trails.”

d. Misleading Arguments Have Been Raised

i. Claim that this was not a donation.

If the family or Foundation intended to sell, they could have done so for more than \$6 million. CPRD itself acknowledged the value. The donation was made specifically to preserve the land for farm, equestrian, and historical education purposes.

ii. Claim that CPRD can “do whatever it wants” because it purchased the land.

While that may be legally true, it is not morally defensible. Our integrity as a District depends on honoring donor intent.

iii. Claim that bikes were not explicitly prohibited in writing.

Every park has restricted uses. For example:

- You cannot use radio-controlled boats in the aquatic center pool.
- You cannot ride dirt bikes on trails at other parks like Ewing Young for example.
- You cannot land aircraft in open park fields, such as the field near the golf course.

These restrictions may not be explicitly itemized in every document, yet their prohibition is obvious. It would be equally unreasonable to convert Rilee Park into a golf course, or an ATV trail system, sports complex, or shooting range simply because those uses were not expressly prohibited in writing.

e. District Integrity Matters

As Board members, maintaining the integrity of our District is paramount. Trust with our community and donors is essential. If we disregard donor intent, why would anyone ever donate land, funds, or labor to this District again?

2. Safety of Park Users

a. It is well known that the park was used for downhill mountain bike racing between 2020-2023. The terrain — narrow trails, switchbacks, blind corners, hills, and soft soil — creates inherent risks when high-speed bikes interacting with other user groups.

b. This creates a safety hazard for hikers, dog walkers, and equestrians. The primary user group at the park is hikers, and the overwhelming majority prefer trails that are safe from high-speed bicycle traffic.

c. While collisions with hikers and dogs present injury risks, the interaction between bikes and horses poses potential for serious or even fatal injuries.

3. Current State of the Park

a. Since bikes were removed, the park has flourished. Usage is higher than ever. Hiker attendance has significantly increased, and equestrian use has also grown. A heavily used and safe park is a success.

b. All-weather footing has been installed through equestrian and neighborhoods donations, making the park accessible year-round. This improvement benefits both equestrians and hikers. The footing is not compatible with bikes and would be damaged by rutting — a problem clearly observed in 2022–2023 due to bike use. Previously, trails were frequently closed in winter and spring due to mud and erosion.

Given that hikers are the majority user group, we should prioritize their access and safety.

c. The attempt in 2022–2023 to separate east/west park usage proved ineffective. Without constant enforcement, bikes would use both sides. Trailer parking would be constrained. Equestrians would fear dangerous encounters and ultimately avoid the park.

d. Proper management of mixed use would require:

- A full-time park ranger (estimated cost exceeding \$100,000 annually)
- Increased maintenance labor (approximately 0.5 FTE, or \$50,000 annually) to repair rutting and erosion

e. Equestrians and neighbors have invested money, labor, and time to winterize the park. They are prepared to continue improving the entire property. The park is safe, thriving, and heavily used year-round. There is no policy reason to disrupt this success.

f. With continued community partnership, we can:

- Build a fenced dog park
- Install all-weather footing throughout
- Reduce long-term maintenance costs
- Generate revenue through facility rentals (covered arena, obstacle course, clinics, and events)

4. Better Locations for Bike Infrastructure

a. The District currently has one riverfront park. In the next 1–5 years, additional riverfront properties and the Newberg-Dundee Bypass Trail are expected to connect multiple parks (perhaps 3 or more). This creates an ideal opportunity for a riverfront trail system with carried technical difficulty, and with separated hiking and biking trails to minimize user conflict.

b. Trails within Dundee and Newberg city limits would be directly accessible by bicycle from residents' homes — aligning with our mission to serve district residents.

c. The downhill racing previously occurring at BCRP required a 25-minute drive, specialized equipment (such as roof racks), and vehicle transport. Many users were from outside the District, including organized groups from neighboring communities such as the Sherwood, Lake Oswego, and Wilsonville bike clubs. Some had previously lost access to other parks in their own cities due to safety and trail damage concerns caused by bikes.

d. Bikes have dozens of places to ride in the area from parks to trail systems, and also have access to roads. Equestrians have almost no safe options to ride. If we create bike trails they should be unique and designed to be accessible to district residents and free of problematic user conflicts.

e. It is poor policy to create conflict at Rilee Park when better, more accessible, and more sustainable alternatives are available and forthcoming.

Conclusion

Good public policy requires acting on principle, not reacting to the most vocal constituency. It requires:

- Honoring donor intent
- Maintaining District integrity
- Protecting public safety
- Managing our budget responsibly
- Respecting neighborhood impacts
- Serving the greatest number of District residents

This controversy is unnecessary. We can maintain our promises for Rilee Park while pursuing more appropriate and accessible bike infrastructure elsewhere that better serves our own District.

Maintaining the District's current position on Rilee Park is the only tenable and principled option.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Smith", is written below a horizontal line.