

Emilee Panunzi

Mrs. Hartman

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Fading Away...

Have you ever gone walking on quiet and serene trails filled with plants and wild animals are far as you can see? Isn't it just so peaceful and relaxing? Well what happens when you go walking on those trails again and instead of the beautiful scenery of plants and wild animals, there is just concrete buildings and roads? Trails all over the country are disappearing, but California is being hit the hardest. Local equestrian, walking, and biking trails are disappearing due to the construction of new buildings and roads.

Trails are fading left and right and it's very disappointing. Many local trail lovers are realizing this news and they do not seem too happy. Officials in Orange County announced in February 2009 that they might turn the county's Fairgrounds Equestrian Center and the trails around it into a parking lot -- the latest of many Orange County casualties and people started to speak up (Barnett). "There used to be stables all up and down the Santa Ana River, more than 20," said Jim Meyer of the advocacy group Trails4All (Barnett). "Now there are two left ... and one of them is up for sale"(Barnett). As the horse named Sombrero strained up a hill above Hansen Dam, Mary Benson leaned forward over his neck and surveyed the stunning landscape of sun-dappled oaks and trickling mountain streams(Garrison). But the view broke her heart: A subdivision where horse trails used to be. Condos and houses that used to have stables behind

them (Garrison). One sign after another of the disappearing horse culture in her neighborhood (Garrison). Dot Moyer explained her personal experience with losing the trails around her. “In 2001 my quest was to find horse paradise. I moved myself and my horses south, to an equestrian area, tempted with miles of trails advertised by realtors. What the realtors failed to mention was that there used to be many more miles of trails, and these trails were disappearing rapidly” (Moyer). And it is not just equestrians; hikers are very disappointed as well! “Trails ARE more than a just a physical entity. We have proof that long hikes have brightened the horizons of a lot of people - even healed them - from war veterans to burned out office workers. We have proof that *millions* of people use the trails for short-term recreation (day or overnight use) every year. We have proof that trails also restore and protect many other living creatures, from owls to lilies” says a local hiker named Norcona (“Pacific Coast National Scenic Trail”). Many citizens are just outraged that their favorite trails are slowly fading away. How long will it be until most of the trails are gone?

Even the government has abandoned the effort to try and save the trails, instead they just build. The Bush administration was trying its best to utilize our countries’ natural wealth to gain the favor of large corporations that give significant support to perpetuate any government that helps them. Business has one true goal: to make money. It’s not an evil goal. In fact, most people agree that it is the definition of business. But it is a problem when business controls government to the degree that policy decisions are made with only a business mindset and without regard to our collective interests or our long-term future. For instance, funding for Land and Water Conservation, including trail easements, was drastically cut last year by our government. Meanwhile, that same government is providing more money to establish logging roads into the appallingly small amount of remaining road less areas. They did not build trails, but they did

build roads. Roads cost a lot more than trails, even rutted dirt roads ("Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail")! The state government is even "letting go of" many people who work on trying to save trails, such as some Californian trail managers (Wayne 26). It seems as though the government is more worried about expanding to boost the economy but how does this affect you personally? The building of new roads mean that somebody has to pay for it and that somebody is going to be you! Taxpayers paid seven hundred fifty million dollars over the last ten years just to build a bridge in a city near Los Angeles (caltax.org)! It's ridiculous!

How do we stop this devastating construction? The author of Everyday Trail Riding, Eliza McGraw, says "one of the best things people can do is go to meetings" (92)! "Is it too hard to complain when you try to go for a ride one day and find your favorite trail barricaded" ? "You can host a petition or fundraiser". "Hosting an event means extra work for everyone, but the payoffs can be tremendous" (93). For example, in San Marcos, Ca, there is a horse park called Walnut Grove Park. Around the park there are many fun trails that everyone can enjoy and they are often used. Every year a group called Twin Oaks Valley Equestrian Association, or TOVEA, host a poker ride which is a trail ride around the park where you stop at certain points to get a card and whoever has the best hand wins. This year they raised grand total of \$8,440! This money will go to helping to keep the trails open for bikers, walkers, and horseback riders (Morton). It is amazing how even local people can raise this much money and make a difference! Another example of a group that helps support trails and is actually national is the Equine Land Conservation Resource or ELCR. Their slogan is "ELCR advances the conservation of land for horse-related activity" (Moyer). Dot Moyer, author of "Support Your Trail System by Developing a Trail Organization: A Case Study", says that to build a successful trail system you will need many things. You should have "Strong Leaders", a "Clear Vision", "Legal Savvy", and

“Insurance” . Strong leaders mean someone committed, talented, and very positive. A clear vision means that you know what you want to do before you actually start your effort to save a trail . You have to find that vision and “stick to it” . Legal Savvy means that you must “know your stuff” when it comes down to everything legal. You should have the assistance of a qualified lawyer. Having insurance is vital! This just helps when it comes down to all of the legal aspects of hosting a fundraiser. Moyer explains that “the final word is that building a trail system and organization takes a team of committed individuals who are passionate about their work and driven in their commitment to a successful venture. You, too, can be successful at it” (Moyer).

Trails in California have been fading away. New concrete buildings and asphalt roads are replacing the beautiful scenery that once used to be there. Most people do not really notice or think that the new construction is good for the economy. The ones that do notice however are so disappointed. So take action and notice! A plan is just words on paper, but a completed plan is an action. Take that action and try to help save a part of California. California has lost more trails than any other state! It is so sad to know this is true. California is definitely being hit the hardest when it comes to losing trails and it is all due to the construction of roads and buildings.

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