



STEP Inc

Community-based Environmental Conservation since 1978

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Dear Sir/Madam

Objection to mountain bike trails in Berowra Valley, including the proposed link from the Quarry to Westleigh H2O

STEP Inc is a local community-based environmental group, with a membership of over 400 in the northern Sydney area. Our main objective is to preserve natural bushland in northern Sydney from alienation or degradation and ensuring proper management of this bushland. Our group has considerable experience in environmental issues and regenerating and preserving natural bushland and native vegetation.

Because of our long-term interest in bushland management we have a position paper on bushland tracks and trails dated 2010. Our position has not changed from that time.

<https://www.step.org.au/images/STEPimages/PDFdownloads/PositionPaperTrackTrail.pdf>

We believe that tracks and trails should be part of a system which protects the bushland, should be appropriately managed and should enhance the enjoyment of bushland by locals and visitors. Well-maintained tracks with good signage are helpful for conservation, education and management.

Cycling, including mountain biking, is an appropriate activity if confined to authorised tracks and trails. STEP's policy is that

- o separate cycling tracks should be near the bushland boundaries in degraded areas;
- o cycling should not be permitted on tracks designed specifically for walking; and
- o competitive cycling, non-competitive rallies, races and endurance events are not appropriate in local bushland

STEP has long held the opinion that in areas with threatened populations, ecological communities or species, existing tracks and trails should be reviewed and closed when they are causing damage and no new tracks or trails constructed except for essential management and conservation purposes.

Our policy of 2010 clearly states that in areas containing Aboriginal sites, culturally significant sites and areas of geoheritage, tracks must be reviewed and closed if they are causing damage and any new track must not cause damage and only be for interpretative purposes.

STEP's 2010 policy also gave priority to core bushland and riparian areas and stated that there must be no new tracks or trails except for essential management purposes.

While STEP is unsure of the proposed mountain biking route through bushland from Hornsby Quarry to Westleigh H2O it seems that it must at some stage pass through; core bushland, riparian areas, National Park, the critically endangered Blue Gum High Forest and/or the Biobanking site.

STEP is concerned about the construction of this proposed trail for the following reasons:

1. The trail will go through core bushland and riparian areas which is inconsistent with STEP's Position Paper
2. We object to a mountain bike link through Berowra Valley National Park due to its legal status, its conservation values, the needs of the broader community and because it contains core bushland and riparian areas
3. STEP objects to the trail traversing the Hornsby Diatreme site of the critically endangered Blue Gum High Forest which has been proposed as a priority management site by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) Saving Our Species program. Recommendations include "minimise impacts of recreational activities" and the possible restriction of access to the site. A mountain bike trail is hardly compatible with the critically endangered status of this site or proposed management actions.
4. We oppose any construction of a mountain bike trail in the Dog Pound Creek Biobank site. As Biobank sites are meant to be managed and secured in-perpetuity a mountain bike trail is hardly appropriate in this area either.

STEP has long considered the Quarry site to be of prime importance for the conservation of biodiversity, geological and other heritage, as well as fulfilling the recreational needs of the local community, not the needs of a specific sport. We therefore strongly oppose any extension of a mountain bike trail through this area and would like the area behind the Aquatic Centre/TAFE to revert to use by walkers, not mountain bikes.

STEP also opposes trail construction in Community land around the Quarry which carries Blackbutt Gully Forest, a Locally Significant Community

If a link is needed between the Quarry and H2O, STEP recommends the trail uses already disturbed areas such as, residential streets, management trails, asset protection zones and abandoned tracks.

Yours faithfully,



Jill Green
President