

Collins View Article for SWNI News March 2016

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On January 14, 2016, the Portland City Council voted unanimously to adopt the River View Natural Area (RVNA) Management Plan. City Council will make a final decision about whether mountain biking will be an allowed use in RVNA after the off road cycling master plan process is complete. Over the last four years, CVNA has had a continuing interest in RVNA, which is immediately adjacent to our neighborhood.

I am a scientist, a physical chemist at Linfield College in McMinnville. Although I am not an ecologist, I do teach my students about that impacts of global warming, so I have had to learn quite a bit of ecology and sciences related to it. I am also quite used to searching the scientific literature. I am also chair of the Collins View Neighborhood Association. I did my own literature survey on the impact of human activity on natural areas for the benefit of our interested neighbors.

The scientific literature on this subject is sparse, but I recently found **a biking-specific literature survey** done on behalf of the Canadian National Parks by the Miistakis Institute of the Rockies (Mountain Biking: A Review of the Ecological Effects). This is a very thorough literature study through 2010, and I thought its results would be of interest to many hikers, bikers, and others in SW Portland.

Mountain Biking: A Review of the Ecological Effects

[http://www.rockies.ca/files/reports/Mountain Biking A Review of the Ecological Effects.pdf](http://www.rockies.ca/files/reports/Mountain%20Biking%20A%20Review%20of%20the%20Ecological%20Effects.pdf)

Here are some of their principle conclusions (all emphasis mine):

1. **“very low levels of activity are responsible for creating a great deal of environmental degradation”** (Page 16)
2. **“The linkage between vegetation removal and soil compaction/erosion is so strong that the two phenomena are often studied in tandem...** For example, Thurston & Reader (2001) reported vegetation loss of up to 100% within two weeks of introduction of cycling (and hiking) activities on previously undisturbed sample plots. The majority of the deleterious effects is shown to occur during the first stages of trail development, and effects appear to be the same or similar regardless of the type(s) of recreational activity that are present.” (Page 19)
3. **“This review discovered no published research related to the effects of mountain biking on water resources.”** (Page 23)

The lack of water quality impact studies is disconcerting. Given the language of the RVNA conservation easement, this is exactly the sort of impact one would like to assess. There is much more to the study, so please read it if you have the time and interest. I am sure it will play a role in the development of City of Portland’s Off-Road Cycling Master Plan.

Jim Diamond, CVNA