



BLACK FOREST TRAILS ASSOCIATION NEWS

President's Corner

Community Service – It's What Makes America Great!

President's Corner Winter 2023



Greetings Black Forest trails users and another Happy New Year to you! New York Yankees great Mickey Mantle says if he knew he was going to live this long, he would have taken better care of himself. I trust you are all taking better care of yourself by getting out on the many beautiful trails we have in the forest.

And we have another great newsletter for you with a Section 16 update from the Potato Doc, John Wallace, who is now a member of the El Paso County Parks Advisory Board and our treasurer and membership lead. Thanks John! Departing board member, Larry Fariss, tells us what's going on with the Northern Nature Center planned for Fox Run Regional Park. And new At-Large board member, Gary Sherwood, provides another look at trail

etiquette. You can never be too polite on the trail. Gary is an accomplished motorcycle rider and eBike enthusiast. We're going to see a big increase in eBike use throughout the forest and Gary will provide expert advice.

What I want to talk about in this newsletter is Community Service. It's what makes Black Forest a great place to live. The Black Forest Community Club recognizes the 'Keeper of the Keys' each year to recognize those that serve our community. Our current secretary, Judy von Ahlefeldt, is a well-deserved former Keeper. Maybe you've read her book about the history of Black Forest. Terry Stokka, who leads the Friends of Black Forest, and has been in the news recently as a staunch defender of our Black Forest lifestyle is another former Keeper. They even recognized me at the last Keeper induction. I've attached a photo from the August induction ceremony at BFCC and encourage you to attend next year.

This year we'll be losing three board members who have provided outstanding service to BFTA. So now it's time for you to step up. If you've read any of my previous articles, you know this is a theme for me. I even used Uncle Sam to get you involved. Anyways if you have an inkling of interest, please contact me at president.bfta@gmail.com.

We have bi-monthly board meetings that are held at the historic Black Forest Community Club, the log cabin at Black Forest and Shoup Roads. At our next board meeting on March 8th, we've asked El Paso County Parks & Recreation Executive Director, Todd Marts, to provide an update on Section 16. John

Wallace's article states that the county has swallowed the bitter price increase pill for this year. But what about the future? Todd will provide an update and be available for questions on eBikes, connector trails and whatever else you may be curious about. Todd recently took over from El Paso County parks legend, Tim Wolken, and is putting his mark on our trails, so to speak. I really admire our county parks employees as a great example of community service. If you see a county parks employee on your hikes be sure to thank them.

Our annual members meeting will be held Tues, Jul 11 at the Black Forest Brewing Company at the shopping center at Black Forest and Burgess, across from the infamous Chicken Coop. The owners, Donovan and Tara, have been great supporters of BFTA besides serving great beer and food. First beer is on BFTA if you attend. I've asked another county parks employee, Theresa Odello, to update us on the Northern Nature Center. We hold our annual elections at this meeting so here's your chance to step up – Please!

Oh and once again BFTA will be working with the county on the Great American Cleanup to be held Saturday 15 April, at 9 AM. I'll be leading the Palmer Divide group, John Wallace will lead Black Forest Regional Park and an unnamed BFTA member will lead Section 16. We're also looking for someone to take on the Pineries Open Space as there's not yet a friends group established. Please let me know if you're interested. Well that's enough from me. Hope to see you on the trails and at the BFTA meetings.

All the best in 2023!

Sincerely, Rich Mock
President BFTA

Ten Percent

By Baxter Black

Ten percent of the people do 90 percent of the work
 And they get to do it for nuthin'! And that's not the only perk,
 They're asked to donate to causes, contribute their cash and their time,
 Get up early, usually stay late, and always claim they don't mind.
 They serve on boards and commissions, participate in the potluck,
 Bring snacks for the kindergartners, for hayrides they furnish the truck
 They take their turn on the fair board, as deacons or soccer moms
 Jury duty or Salvation Army, ringing bells and gathering alms.
 Raise funds for endless projects, the Food Bank, the FFA
 Missions in far away countries, Girl Scouts and the PTA
 Call on the shut-ins, fight cancer, or maybe teach others to read,
 Through Rotary, Lions or Kiwanis, they work to fulfill a need.
 The ten percent you can count on to sign up, to help and belong
 Always ready and willing, they make our communities strong.
 They often don't get the glory or noticed by everyone
 But, they're easy to find at a party, cleanin' up after it's done.
 What causes man to serve his fellow man? At best, I discern
 Not money. Sometimes a 'thanks' is all that they'll earn.
 And it can't be Evolution, where only the toughest survive,
 Or lessons learned in a classroom... "Compassion, see page 25".
 But it's there in certain people, giving satisfies their needs

You can't find it in a brain scan, but you can see it in their deeds
No physical exam can spot it, it won't show up on the chart
But if I had to guess what IT is, I'd say it comes from the heart.
So I'll just admit that we're lucky the ten percent are right here
'Cause without them nothing would happen, and they do it all volunteer.
VOL from the Greek meaning: work like a horse
UNTEER meaning: without pay.
<http://www.baxterblack.com>

Gary Sherwood

Member at Large

As a new Member at Large, I thought I would take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Gary Sherwood and I have been a resident of the Black Forest since 2003 when I was assigned to the Air Force (AF) Academy as Flight Commander of the Physical Medicine (PM) Flight. I am now a retired physical therapist enjoying life in Colorado. My wife is also a retired Air Force officer and we have beautiful twin daughters, all who are happy to have settled in the Black Forest.

To back up in time, I was born and raised in Orlando, Florida but spending 30 years in the military has afforded me the opportunity to live and work in many locations around the United States and overseas. My wife and I were first stationed in Colorado Springs from 1996 to 2000 when I was at Peterson AFB and she was at the Air Force Academy and this is where our twins were born. It was during that assignment that we decided Colorado Springs was where we wanted to retire. After an assignment to San Antonio we were lucky enough to be assigned back to Colorado Springs in 2003. I then retired in 2008 from the AF Academy after a tour in Balad, Iraq, supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom/Enduring Freedom.

My entire adult life I've been involved in riding dirt motorcycles and have competed at various levels all the way up to the National Championships. I still occasionally compete in the "old mans" class. In recent years trail access to motorcycles have begun to be restricted so I transitioned to mountain bikes for my recreation. At first I was riding standard (non-power assisted) mountain bikes but due to my age (70 this year), the elevation encountered on many Colorado trails and the fact that I've had many, many orthopedic surgeries over the years, I found it difficult to ride some of the trails. My main motorcycle riding buddy faced the same situation so he introduced me to e-mountain bikes. I was immediately hooked. I now ride my e-bike about 90% of the time vs 10% on my dirt motorcycle. I soon bought my wife an e-bike and she became hooked as well. We primarily ride The Pineries, Black Forest Park, S16 and Lincoln Mountain trails. I've also ridden trails in other parts of Colorado, in Moab and Cedar City, Utah. In addition to mountain bike riding our family also enjoys snow skiing, hiking, camping and just sight-seeing all around Colorado and the United States. We also enjoy traveling internationally.

There is a lot of misinformation about e-bikes and I joined the Black Forest Trails Association in hopes of educating others about e-bikes and to protect the right to use e-bikes on local trails. Because of my e-bike experience I have been asked to serve as "E-bike Champion" for the BFTA which I'm very proud to accept. I also belong to the Monument Mountain Bike club and we do group rides on many of the local trails. At the current time I believe my riding buddy and I are the only ones in that club who ride e-bikes. We both get asked a lot of questions about e-bikes and have gained acceptance by the "non-assist" riders.

In addition to the two organizations above I am also a member of Team Rubicon which is a volunteer disaster relief organization made up primarily of military veterans. Team Rubicon (TR) responds to natural disasters like floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, fires and earthquakes. TR works closely with FEMA, the Red Cross and other agencies to assist individuals with disaster clean up, debris removal, and even acute medical assistance when needed. In addition to disaster relief we do quite a lot of volunteer work to prevent or lessen the effects of disasters like building sandbags, removing junk from streams and rivers, removing dead trees and underbrush and other remediation work. I have served in operations in Manitou Springs, Colorado Springs, Estes Park, Larkspur and also deployed for a week serving in the Florida panhandle after Hurricane Michael nearly demolished Mexico Beach and Panama City Florida in October, 2018.

I look forward to working with the BFTA to ensure our trail system continues to be enjoyed by all.



Etiquette on the Trails

by Gary Sherwood

BF Trails Assn, Member at Large

As a two-decade resident of the Black Forest and avid outdoors person I wanted to write this article in hopes of explaining some rules and common courtesies of trail use within our park system and also cover a few common misconceptions. I am an avid hiker, bicyclist and dog owner and I have hiked most all of the trails in the Black Forest and surrounding areas.

Bikers -

- Did you know there is a 20mph speed limit on trails? I know a skilled rider on a downhill section can easily exceed 20mph. Certainly there are no park rangers on the trails with radar guns but still, please be aware of the law and try to keep your speed under 20mph, especially if others are on the trail!
- Bikers are required to yield to hikers and equestrians! In my experience when approaching riders on horses they often move off the trail anyway since they don't want their horses spooked by the bicycles. Equestrians do have the right-of-way though so please be cognizant of this.
- Bikers are required to yield to hikers as well but I often see hikers stepping to the side to allow bikers to pass. This makes sense to me because a hiker can step off the trail onto uneven ground temporarily more easily than a biker going off the side of the trail to allow a hiker or runner to pass. It's especially important to pass slowly if they are hiking with a dog as dogs can get scared and spooked by bikers passing too fast or too close! Good communication and common courtesy is important in these situations.
- If equestrians, hikers or runners step off the trail to allow you to pass please do so in a slow, controlled manner. They are being considerate to you by allowing you to pass so please be courteous to them by passing slowly.
- Bikers should also yield to bikers who are going uphill as it's easier to start moving again when proceeding downhill.

- Control your speed when approaching corners. Sliding the rear tire into a corner may be fun but it does damage to the trail. Inconsiderate actions like these jeopardizes our future use of trails. Please avoid sliding!
- DO NOT CUT new trails! The persons who laid out the trails did so by making the trails interesting by designing curves, switchbacks, S-turns and corners on the trail. A long straight trail is boring so they incorporate turns into the trails to not only making it more interesting/challenging but frankly to limit speeds a bit. At Pineries, in particular, I see where bicyclists have made a straight path right through the middle of a couple of S-turns! Not only does this destroy the natural beauty of the trail but it changes the intent of the trail and sadly, others will follow this straight path and make it worse! Yes, bikers, you can go faster by going straight but please follow the intent of the original trail!

Hikers/Runners -

- Hikers are also required to yield to equestrians although I have seen many equestrians yield to runners/hikers. Perhaps they are being nice or maybe they are just preventing their horses of becoming spooked but in either case please pass slowly and thank them to letting you pass.
- Be alert to your surroundings. If you are listening to music consider using just one ear bud so you can still hear others approaching. I've ridden my bike up behind hikers wearing earbuds. I always approach slowly and have rang my bell on my bike but they still don't hear me. When they do finally see me they are usually quite startled and some even appear agitated but it's not the fault of the biker if they cannot hear others approaching.
- If you are hiking with your dog please pick up any waste they may drop. Because dogs eat protein products their waste is more likely to contain or attract bacteria. Dog poop also takes a long time to decompose so please bag it and dispose of it in a proper receptacle.
- Please keep your dog under good control, not only on a leash, but try to keep your dog from barking at horses as they may spook the horse!

Equestrians -

- As equestrians you do have the right-of-way over all other trail users, but as I mentioned above, sometimes it's easier for you to guide your horse off the path a bit to allow hikers/runners or bikers to pass. I've had equestrians tell me "my horse is fine with bikes" but it's still important to pass horses slowly and to give them as much berth as possible.
- Hopefully as equestrians you can train your horse to be less frightened of hikers/runner and bikers.
- If you can guide your horse slightly off the trail at times during the ride in order for them to poop that would be VERY appreciated by hikers/runner and bikes. We know horse poop is plant based and far less likely to contain harmful bacteria but it can be quite messy if you happen to step in it as a hiker or to ride through it on a bicycle! There have even been accidents on bikes because the rider suddenly came upon a large pile of horse poop and swerved to try to miss it.
- On our last bike ride we got back to the car and as I was loading my wife's bike I saw she had not "missed" a pile. The tire had then tossed the poop onto the rear of her bike, onto her seat tube, under her seat and had actually flung up onto the back of her shirt! Then after we got home I realized that somehow I had stepped in some of it with my right foot which means I then accidentally transferred it to my accelerator and brake pedal of my car. Needless to say I had a lot of cleaning to do on her bike and my car pedals! I know you can't control when your horse may drop something but if you give it a little time off of the trail a bit to do their business perhaps it would lessen the piles on the trail itself.

Mountain Bike/e-bike updates

I contacted several local bike shops asking about both strategies to educate/improve bike etiquette on the trails as well asking general questions about e-bike demographics.

E-bike terminology

- Class 1: pedal-assist only with governor limiting motor to 20mph, 750W motors (equals 1HP)
- Class 2: pedal-assist and/or throttle, also limited to 20mph
- Class 3: pedal-assist and/or throttle, limited to 28mph (these are mostly used on urban trails/streets because most places ban these on natural surface trails)

Pros: The mild to moderate assist really helps those with physical limitations, age, and fitness limitations. This is especially true around here due to altitude and elevation challenges

Cons: They are 15-25lbs heavier than non-assist bikes, they are expensive. There is some resentment from “traditional” bike riders really due to misconceptions and ego.

General misconceptions -

- They are really fast. Actually only faster when going uphill, limited to 20mph
- They are noisy - actually almost silent except for a faint electric whirl sound
- They are so powerful they can “roost” (spin the rear tire and tear up the trail)
- They are closer to motorcycles than to bicycles
- Ebikes weight 35-55lbs, m/c dirt bikes weight 235-500lbs
- Ebikes 1HP, dirt bikes 20-80HP
- Ebikes same brakes, shifters, handlebars, gearing as standard non-assist bikes, totally different than motorcycles, no similarity at all

E-bike demographics -

- e-bikes (off-road versions) are expensive, \$3,000-\$16,000
- Most buyers appear to be middle to older age individuals who need a little assist or maybe younger riders who have some sort of physical limitations
- Not real popular with the go-fast young riders due to cost, peer-pressure (perceived as cheating), generally slower except when climbing

When asked about trying to improve bike riders etiquette that was much more difficult. They said there are bike clubs in town and they all stress trail etiquette and trail rules. They feel that most “bad encounters” on the trail are by individuals who don’t participate in organized group rides. Essentially it seems to come down to some riders are just jerks, the same as there are equestrians, hikers, dog-owners who are jerks. The shops guess is that most of the rude riders are on non-assisted bikes because the E-bike riders tend to be older, therefor perhaps more mature and polite

Nature Center on Tap for Fox Run

By Larry Fariss, BFTA Vice President

The design of a long awaited nature center for Northern El Paso County could be completed by next year. This is an important step in long awaited plans to bring community based nature programing to the



greater Black Forest region. The new center will serve the northern El Paso County just as two other nature centers – Bear Creek and Fountain Creek- have served communities in the southern portion of the county for over 30 years.

Population growth and community interest first spurred the idea to develop the new nature center in 2013. The county then adopted the project as one of its objectives in the 2017-21 Strategic Plan. A feasibility study completed in 2019 recommended Fox Run Regional Park as the best location for the future northern nature center. The area “is rapidly growing and I think parks like Fox Run and the nature center will really be a treasure to the community” said Todd Marts El Paso County Community Services Executive Director.

Exact program format for the northern nature center is not yet known but officials will develop it using the very successful programming models in place at Bear Creek and Fountain nature centers. When completed it is hoped schools will take field trips to the new facility and a series of outdoor events will be put on throughout the year that will serve the entire community.

Architects are working on a comprehensive plan they hope to finish in 2023. After that El Paso County will engage in a public process so residents can provide feedback on the design plans. “It is just not the building but we are looking at how it fits into the location, how the exhibits fit in, and how it can serve a wide community” Marts said.

Public engagement will not only be key for design and construction, but to insure the programming results in a nature center that is for every one! Marts said “We are looking for innovative and unique ideas but we also want to be a good neighbor and fit into the surroundings. We know the new nature center is going to be in a well-loved park and we want to minimize the impact” on Fox Run itself.

Finances for the new center will likely be a combination of tax revenues, nonprofit fund raisers and private donors. With 1 million dollars raised and another million committed by EPC Commissioners from the 2023 general fund, the goal of funding the \$3.5 million project is closer to becoming real. Those who wish to support this project financially are encouraged to contact Todd Marts at 719-520-6399 or toddmarts@elpasoco.com.

Section 16 Lease Update

By John Wallace, BFTA Treasurer

The Section 16 trail is located on 90 acres of land leased to El Paso County (EPC) by the Colorado State Land Board (SLB). From 1998 to 2022 the annual lease was \$452. Beginning on December 8, 2022 the new 10 year lease is \$21,825 in the first year with 2.5% annual increases for the next 9 years. The leased land is a “doughnut” 200 feet wide around the perimeter of the section, 30’ inside the section lines. Within this strip EPC is allowed to build and maintain a 30’ wide trail for non-motorized use by hikers, bicycles, and horseback riders – the Black Forest Section 16 Trail which BFTA helped to build. The interior 540 acres of section 16 was leased to Academy School District 20 (D20) for the same 25 year period at a much lower rate per acre. D20 also has a new lease beginning on Dec 8, 2022 in the annual amount of \$1213.00, with a 3% annual escalator. A SLB spokesperson says that the wildly different lease rates are due to

“different uses” although both are categorized by the Board as “Recreational Lease”. The entire section (both leases) is categorized by SLB as “Stewardship Trust” land, a special management designation limited to 10% of the SLB holdings, reserved for land “containing the natural values of beauty, open space, wildlife habitat, rare plants, geologic features and/or paleontological and historic features.” (see Judy von Ahlefeldt’s article in the ‘22 Summer newsletter). Because of inclusion in the Stewardship Trust, both leases are likely at a lower cost than they would be otherwise, and they are held to a higher standard of care, planning, and management by both the lessee and the SLB.

The county decided in 2022 to continue the lease in spite of the huge increase in cost after considerable study and a great deal of public input. The \$21,825 annual lease (up to \$27,256 in 2031) is a significant, unanticipated strain on the County Parks’ meager budget. Consequently the Parks Dept. is seeking donations specifically for Section 16 which can be made on the EPC Parks website on the Section 16 – Black Forest page: <https://communityservices.elpasoco.com/parks-and-recreation/black-forest-section-16#1656694913246-2dafa8d5-a133>. As of Jan. 6, 2023, \$1230 has already been received. The Parks Dept. is also planning on a public listening period this spring regarding the future of the trail, details of which have not been released. Options in the future include continuing to fund the lease, releasing the property back to SLB, county purchase of the land, and purchase by a third party, among others. The SLB has full discretion on any purchase in accordance with its mission.

The origins of the state land board go back to the United States winning its independence from Great Britain. Britain relinquished the Ohio Territory to the US and the founders needed a way to measure, divide, and distribute the land. Thomas Jefferson created the system to survey undeveloped land into square townships of 6 miles on each side divided into 36 one square mile (640 acre) sections. Each township had section 16, and later 36 as well, reserved for the maintenance of public schools. When Colorado became a state in 1876, Congress granted sections 16 and 36 in each township to the state to support public schools. The Colorado State Land Board was created with a mission to maximize revenue from these lands for public school expenses and seven other minor beneficiaries. At its origin, SLB acquired about 4 million acres of land. Today it holds 2.8 million surface acres, 4 million acres of subsurface mineral estate, and a Permanent Fund of \$1.1 billion. The total value of the School Trust in 2018 was \$4.1 billion and it has generated more than \$2 billion for public school capital expenses since 2008. In 1996 Colorado passed constitutional amendment 16 which changed the governance and mission of the SLB after a series of scandals under the prior doctrine of maximizing revenue. The amendment directs the SLB to emphasize long term productivity and sound stewardship of trust lands along with generating “reasonable and consistent income over time”. For the vast majority of trust lands, which are leased for agricultural production, these mission statements make sense. The statement from an SLB spokesperson that the Section 16 trail lease for such recreation as hiking, cycling and horseback riding is “unusual” suggests they may be less familiar with valuing such land use. It seems likely that the current lease values for Section 16 are based on the development value of the property as there are few logical alternatives. Consequently, the valuation and leasing cost will only go up over time.

Earlier I mentioned the meager budget the El Paso County Community Services Department Parks Division has to work with. The four peer counties used for comparison in the 2022 Parks Master Plan Update all have much larger budgets per capita, three have much more Open Space per capita, and all four have a voter approved sales tax percentage dedicated to trails, open space, and parks (TOPS). The city of Colorado Springs has a sales tax fraction dedicated to TOPS as well. That will be the subject of my next article in the summer BFTA newsletter.

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BFTA Membership

By supporting BFTA with your annual membership, you help provide the funding and support for a whole range of issues that affect Black Forest trails and the lifestyle we all want to protect. The Black Forest Trails Association is a non-profit organization under IRS Code Section 501(c)(3). Donations are fully deductible to the extent permitted by tax law.

There are 4 tiers of BFTA membership (Dues are tax deductible):

- 1) Individual / family (\$15 per year),
- 2) Business / club (\$30 per year),
- 3) Donor (\$50 per year)
- 4) Lifetime (\$150 one time).

Membership runs from April 1 to March 31, so if you become a member or renew now, your membership will be good through March 31, 2024. We use DonorBox, which is easy and secure, to accept online payments, or you can print out an application and mail your payment via US Postal service – either option can be completed via our website at <https://www.blackforesttrails.org/membership.html>