

February 14, 2017

Camerino Sanchez
Parks Management Specialist
Resource Management Agency
Monterey County

Dear Mr. Sanchez,

The purpose of this letter is to notify you of a violent incident at Toro Park and to request immediate action to address deteriorating conditions at the park.

Hiking alone in Toro Park on Sunday, February 12, I encountered a group of four mountain bikers riding fat tire bikes in Harper Canyon. Upon recognizing me, one of them began threatening to physically assault me and demanded that I delete photos from the camera I was carrying. Fearing for my physical safety, I felt I had no choice but to comply and delete my photos as the enraged biker hovered over me and worked to whip the others into a similar frenzy. The apparent leader warned me to "stop harassing mountain bikers," "or suffer the consequences." "We know who you are and we know where you live," the leader of the group warned. "Get the f&ck out of our park you f&cking tree-hugger," "We better not see you here again."

Once away from them, I immediately called 911 and subsequently discussed the incident with a sheriff's deputy.

Harper Creek looks like a coastal tributary to the Big Sur, these days - lush, drenched and flowing vigorously (See Attached Photo 1). Mountain bikes are doing serious damage to flora and fauna there while also degrading and discouraging less impactful traditional permitted uses such as hiking and bird-watching, seemingly with no compunction for these actions (Photos 2 and 3).

After my conversation with the sheriff's deputy, I encountered two more cyclists on the designated bike-prohibited Black Mountain Trail (Photos 4-7). This trail is also suffering great damage from mountain bikes including the continued removal and cutback of manzanitas and other native shrubs in an apparent effort to widen parts of the trail, as shown in the attached photos. Samples of some of these Manzanitas were positively identified as the rare, endemic Toro Manzanita species at a February, 2016 meeting of the California Native Plant Society in Pacific Grove.

All told, I personally encountered seven mountain bikers on Sunday riding over exceptionally sensitive terrain on hiking trails that are designated as officially off limits to bikes. This has been a recurring problem for several years and it continues unchecked this winter, as bikers continue to flout the "Trails Closed to Bikes" sign at the Toro Park entrance, which was on display on Sunday. In January, Parks maintenance staff openly informed me that on two recent occasions they removed the sign after being pressured by angry bikers to do so, while the over-assigned

park ranger was tending to matters at another park. Also last month, I discovered (and presented to maintenance staff) the shattered remains of part of the wooden "No Bikes" sign located on the Gilson Gap trail which is a clearly marked footpath-only trail brazenly poached in recent years by mountain bikers (Photo 8).

I am concerned after two years of reporting incidents like these, that these actions continue unabated. I am particularly concerned that a small number of bikers are effectively able to rule the park, since there seems to be no resources to enforce Parks or County (or even federal?) laws. Unfortunately when residents attempt to peacefully act as stewards of the park, they are subject to threats of violence.

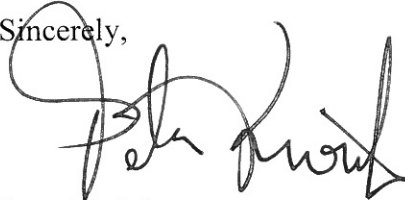
I take the threats that were made to me on Sunday very seriously and I want to know what the County intends to do about it. I also take seriously the relentless conversion of beautiful backcountry pristine public lands to destabilized, rapidly eroding scar-scapes now experiencing accelerated runaway erosion due to focussing of runoff along bike tire incisions. I am sure that restoring damages sustained on these public assets would already run into the six figures, not including monetization of the value of habitat loss. I want to know what the County intends to do about this also.

Over the last two years I have actively documented illegal trail building (e.g., Photos 9 and 10), trail poaching (e.g., Photos 11 and 12), and the exploitation of park under-staffing (e.g., Photos 13 and 14) and brought these issues to the attention of the Parks Department and the Parks Commission, only to see these problems continue and even worsen.

For these reasons, I have come to believe that, until the County is prepared and able to effectively patrol and protect Toro Park, mountain bikes should be prohibited from entering the park. There is currently no other way to prevent the further destruction and devaluing of this precious public asset.

The public deserves to know what will be done to protect park users from outlaws and natural park lands from continued environmental vandalism.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Kwick", with a large, stylized initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Peter Kwick

CC: John Guertin, Carl Holm, Supervisor Mary Adams

Attachments: Sample Photos Referenced in Text



Toro Park

February 12, 2017

Harper Canyon

Photo 1

A photograph of a dirt hiking trail winding through a grassy, brushy area. The trail is a light brown color and curves from the top left towards the bottom right. The surrounding vegetation includes green grass, small shrubs, and some dry leaves. The text "Toro Park" is overlaid in the top right corner.

Toro Park

**Harper Canyon
Hiking Trail**

February 12, 2017

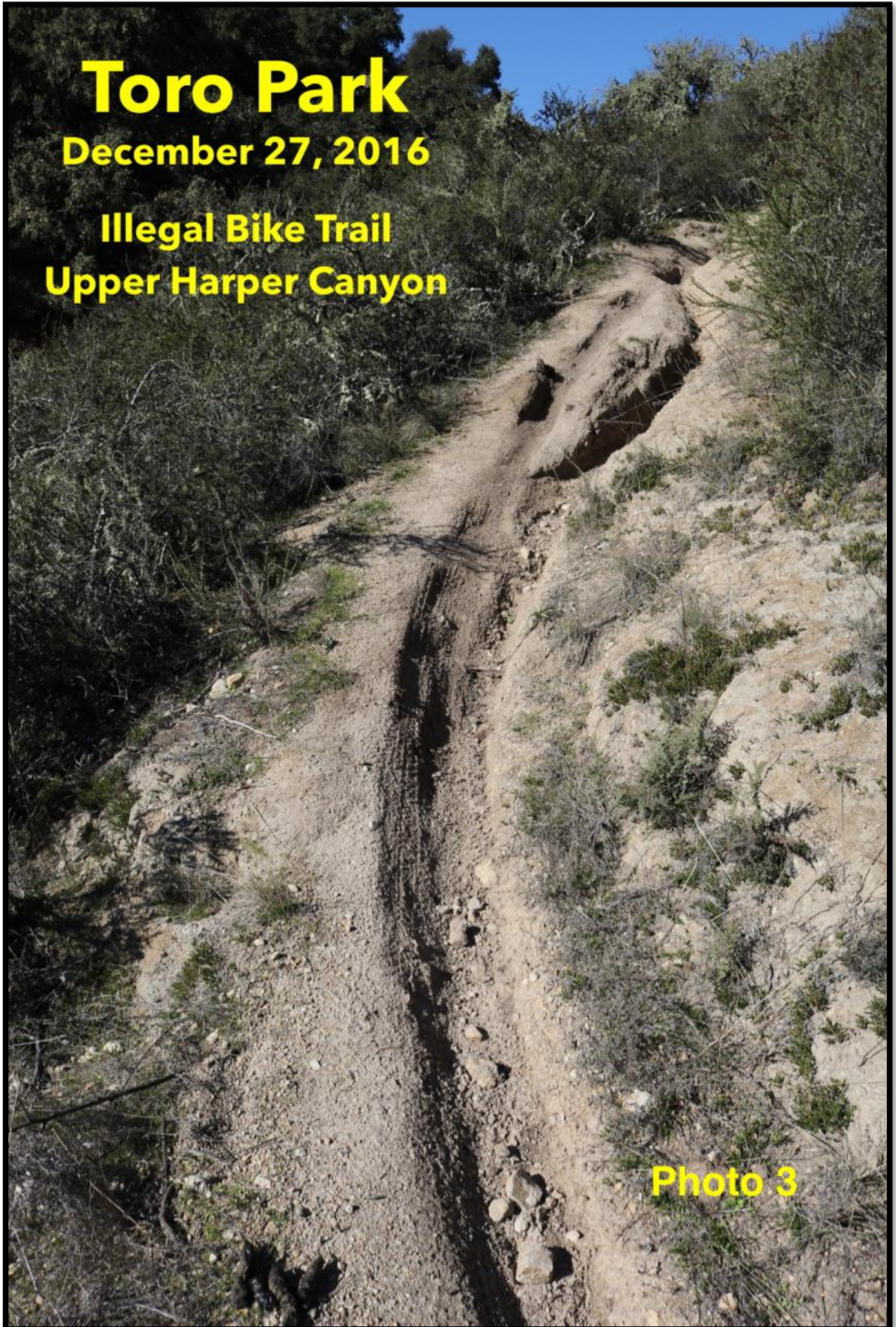
Photo 2

Toro Park

December 27, 2016

**Illegal Bike Trail
Upper Harper Canyon**

Photo 3



Bikers en route to Black Mountain Hiking Trail

Toro Park

February 12, 2017

All Trails closed
to Bikes Today

Photo 4

Photo 5

Toro Park

February 12, 2017

**Fresh Bike Tire Ruts
Black Mountain
Hiking Trail**

Toro Park

February 12, 2017

Photo 6

**One of several hundred Native Manzanitas
Illegally Removed on the
Black Mountain Hiking Trail**



Photo 7



**Black Mountain Trail
One of several signs
Routinely Ignored by
Mountain Bikers
resulting in severe
Environmental Damage to
Toro Park Public Land**

Photo 8

Toro Park

January 14, 2017

**Gilson Gap
Designated Hiking Trail**

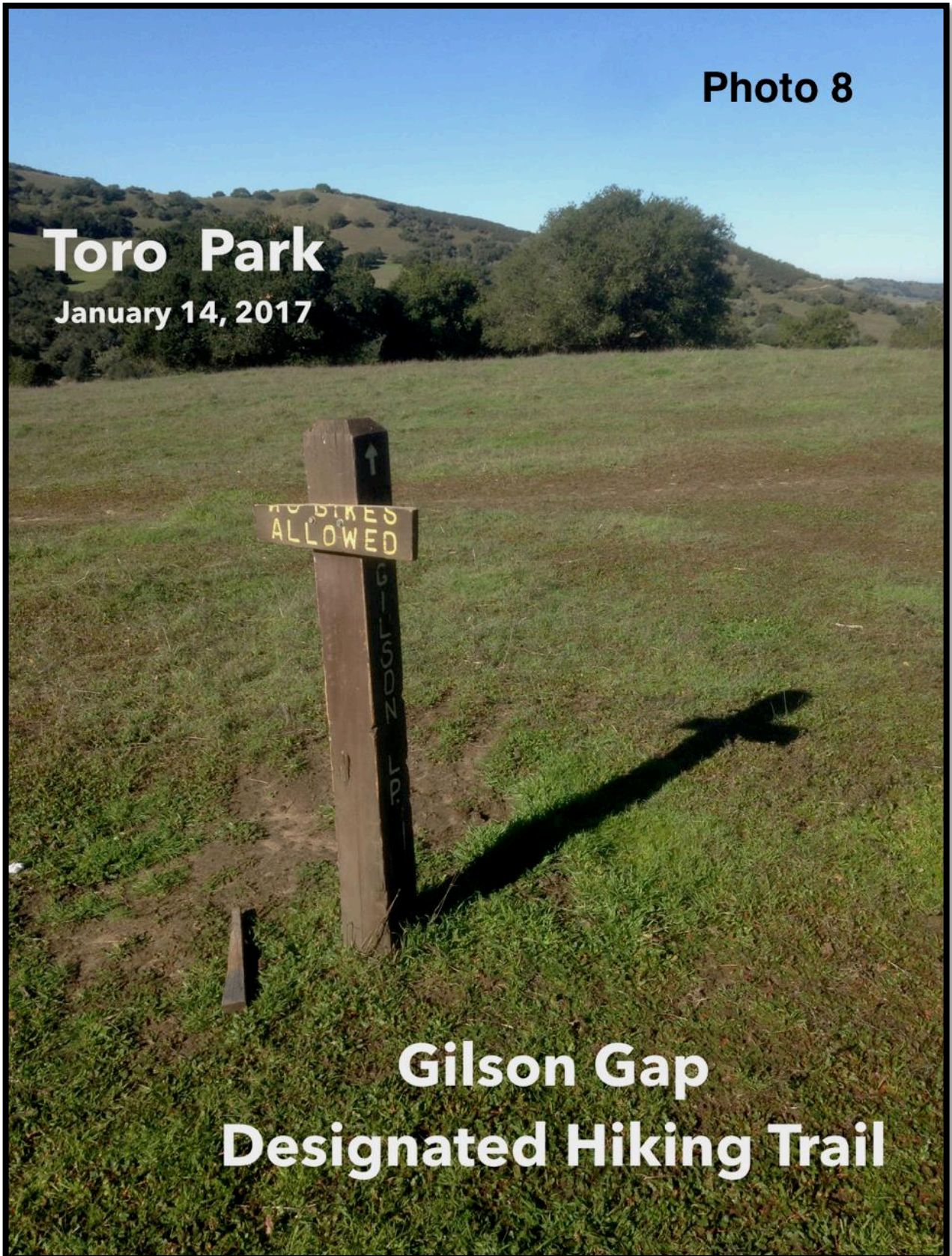


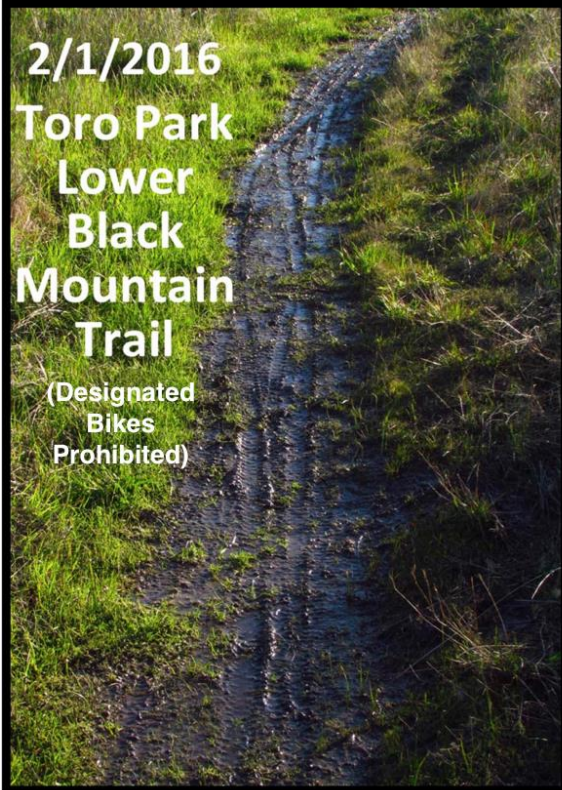




Photo 13

2/1/2016
Toro Park
Lower
Black
Mountain
Trail

(Designated
Bikes
Prohibited)



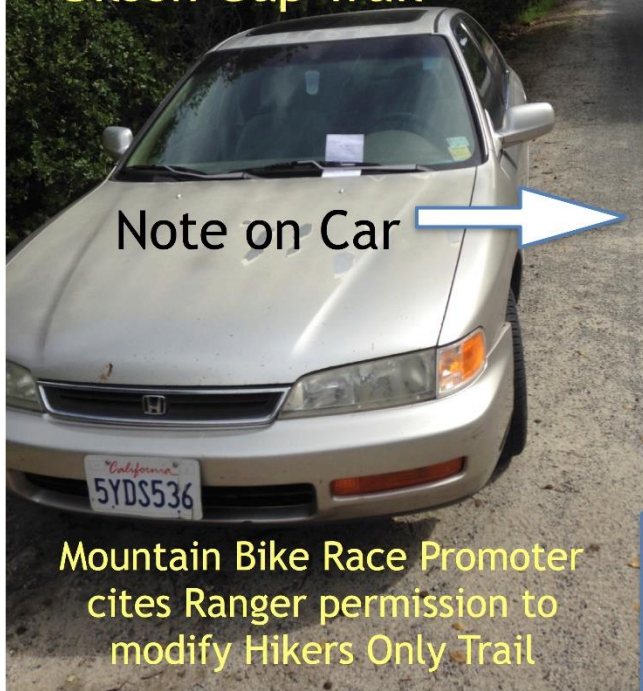
Toro Park
Entrance

DUE TO
WEATHER CONDITIONS
TRAILS CLOSED
TO
BICYCLES - HORSES

FOR TRAIL INFORMATION
CONTACT A RANGER
OR CALL
484-1108



April 6, 2016
Near Hikers-Only
Gilson Gap Trail



Note on Car

Mountain Bike Race Promoter
cites Ranger permission to
modify Hikers Only Trail

Photo 14

Hello
WE ARE DOING
TRAIL WORK
FOR THE SATURDAY
EVENT -
AS PER
STAFF NAMES REDACTED
RANGERS

Thank you

Name Redacted

Phone Number Redacted

County Parks Management, the Parks Events Coordinator and the Park Ranger would not corroborate claims made on this Mountain Bike Promoter's note: No event was scheduled for any Saturday in April and, they say, no permission was given to do trail work.