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Trails Close to Home

We hope you are all staying safe and healthy throughout this COVID-19 pandemic! Have you noticed there are more people and families on your local trails? We have seen the numbers increase significantly with the closing of gyms, movie theaters, and malls. It has made us realize, more than ever, that trails close to home are extremely important. As is safety on the trails we ride! There is still time to join or renew your membership to be entered into the IMBA drawing for 16 different prize packages! Check out the story below on what SHARE has done to help make our crowded trails a little bit safer.

JOIN OR RENEW HERE!

Bike Bell Program

Roughly 4 years ago, the **SHARE Mountain Bike Club** and **thinkMTB Club** worked with the **Laguna Canyon Foundation (LCF)** and the **Orange County Parks** to introduce and implement a Bike Bell Program in a few of the wilderness areas in Orange County that are regularly frequented by mountain bikers, hikers and equestrians. Over the years, the bike bell program has continued to expand to more of the OC parks and also Crystal Cove State Park. The trails in these parks have seen a significant increase in usage over the past years, especially by mountain bikers and hikers. Because of this increase, it is common for the trail users to come into contact with each other; this can result in the need to share the same section of the trail. In recent years, there have been more reports of trail conflicts among trail users and the safety of trail users is also being impacted.

The established trail etiquette rules state that all trail users should share the trail in a courteous manner. The trail etiquette rules also indicate that there is a hierarchy relative to sharing the trail: hikers need to yield to equestrians, and mountain bikers need to yield to both equestrians and hikers.



Because of the trail etiquette rules, and the fact that mountain bikers can come upon the other trail users rather quickly, it is necessary for the bikers to alert the other trail users of their presence and indicate if they would like to pass the other trail user. The mountain biker can use the standard verbal alert by saying "on your left" and then wait for the other trail user

to acknowledge him/her before passing. This verbal alert still is appropriate and works when the bike rider is going fairly slow and is close to the other trail user (although this verbal alert can startle the other trail user if it is said too late or too loudly). However, many times when riding the trails in the wilderness and in the parks a rider is going fast, and also may not have a clear visual of upcoming trail users due to blind corners or dense foliage. In these situations, a bike bell that is attached to the bike handlebar is really great for the biker to use for alerting the other trail users of his/her presence.

To help promote the use of bike bells by riders, the SHARE MTB Club and thinkMTB Club have purchased and donated bike bells to the OC Parks and Crystal Cove State Park for them to distribute to riders. To date **over 9,000 bells total have been donated** to the OC Parks and Crystal Cove State Parks' Bike Bell Programs.

The SHARE MTB Club funded the initial purchases of their bike bells via a grant from REI that was given to SHARE specifically for the bike bell program and also by using funds from SHARE's general account that is replenished throughout the year by an annual fundraiser Poker Ride, by membership dues, and by individual donations to the Club. As the bike bell program has expanded, the need for more bells has increased. The bells are provided to the rider at no cost; however, if the rider would like to donate to the bike bell program and help with the purchase of more bells, he/she can donate via the SHARE MTB Club website listed on the bike bell box signs or directly at www.sharemtb.com.

There are two main types of bells -- an "active" bell that the biker needs to push the button to ring the bell, and a "passive" bell (bear bell) that does not need the rider to do any action and it rings continuously on its own. The type of passive bell that is currently being distributed to bikers is the type that can be silenced via putting a magnet on the bottom (the magnet is attached to a strap that can be easily put on and off while riding). The passive bells have the benefit of continuously ringing so other trail users can hear the rider coming from a distance; this prevents startling the trail users and also allows the trail user to move to the side of the trail if possible before the rider gets to where he/she is.



The bike bells are distributed by OC Parks and Crystal Cove State park mainly by placing the bells in special bike bell boxes that are clearly marked; these boxes are at a few of the main trailheads of the various parks. Occasionally, the bike bells are distributed to mountain bikers via volunteers that sit at a table at the main entrances to the parks and hand out the bells; these volunteers get a chance to talk to the mountain bike riders and get feedback from all trail users relative to the bike bells. The volunteers are representatives from the OC Parks staff (park rangers), SHARE and thinkMTB Clubs, the LCF Wilderness Access Volunteers (WAVs), and the Crystal Cove State Park staff.



The feedback received to date has indicated that the Bike Bell Program has been received very well and the feedback from the mountain bikers and hikers (regarding the bikers using the bells) has been overwhelmingly positive. The mountain bikers have been very receptive to not only taking and using a bell on their bikes, but also to the reasons why using the bike bell is important. The hikers have commented on how much they like hearing a bell to alert them that a mountain biker is approaching – they especially like the passive “bear” bell because it can be continuously heard from a distance and is softer in tone than the active “ringer” bell or a verbal alert from the rider. The mountain bikers also like hearing the bells on the other bikes so they are alerted that a bike is present.

The goal of the distribution and use of the bells is to help provide trail users with a safer and more enjoyable experience and also to help foster an environment that encourages courtesy and sharing of the trail by all users.



Check out this short video on trail etiquette from the Medicine Wheel in CO

TRAIL ETIQUETTE

Membership

How do your membership dues help?

- Fund trail work projects throughout Orange County
- Plan community events that are fun for the whole family! Including the SHARE poker ride and Take a Kid Mountain Biking.
- Provide training for new volunteers to lead trail work days and reward all volunteers with food and beverages after a day working on the trail
- Bike Bell Program and encouraging safety on the trails

Join or Renew Here

•Here is a link to May's meeting minutes: [May minutes](#).

Our next meeting Monday 06/01/20 via GoToMeeting



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