

# A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE PACIFIC CREST TRAIL AND BICYCLING

## PACIFIC CREST TRAILWAY (1932-1945)

– *Bicycling in perfect harmony with the purposes of the PCT.*

In 1945, Clinton Clarke, the “Father of the Pacific Crest Trail”, published the *Pacific Crest Trailway*. In it, he discusses the purposes of the trail and how a trail of this magnitude is intended to promote outdoor activity, physical fitness and an appreciation for nature.

P. 18: “Now what are the fundamental purposes behind this great trail? What are the objectives and what does it hope to accomplish? In discussing these points it is necessary to speak frankly and express views that may arouse differences of opinion. There are three important aims and objectives. First, the preservation of wilderness regions. Second, programs of exploring expeditions of adventure and romance that will create leadership, self-reliance and sound physical development. Third, to lead people back to a simpler and more natural life and arouse a love for nature and the outdoors.”

P. 21: “What has been accomplished in setting up exploring expeditions over the trail? Again it is necessary to make frank statements. Mechanization has created a soft, flabby civilization; there is a marked deterioration in the physical, mental and spiritual caliber of our youth, due to too much bossing, regulation and regimentation. The medial report of the U.S. Army on the physique of 5,000,000 young men taken into the armed forces shows a serious deterioration in the strength of their legs and backs, causing a misplacement of the internal organs and a lowering of vitality and endurance. In a word; too much sitting on soft seats in motors, too much sitting in soft seats in movies, and too much lounging in easy chairs before radios. Make a ratio of the number of motors, of the number of tickets sold for movies, and the number of radios sold, compared to our population, and compare these figures to any nation in Europe, and we see what an appalling over-mechanization has done to enslave the people of the United States.”

<http://pcttrailway.pctplanner.com>

Note Clarke’s use of “mechanization” and “motors” in reference to the general state of society, with its automobiles and entertainment outlets. It is clear that Clarke would not classify a bicycle as a mechanical or motorized device creating a “soft and flabby civilization”. While bicycling on the PCT may never have crossed Clarke’s mind, we know bicycling absolutely fits his ideals for physical fitness and certainly fulfills his three main objectives.

## PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON (1965)

– *Bicycling specifically included at the genesis of the National Trails Act.*

In 1965, President Johnson delivered a speech to Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty. In it, he addressed several topics, including trails, which lead to the Trails for America study and ultimately, the National Trails Act:

“The forgotten outdoorsmen of today are those who like to walk, hike, ride horseback or bicycle. For them we must have trails as well as highways. Nor should motor vehicles be permitted to tyrannize the more leisurely human traffic.”

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=27285>

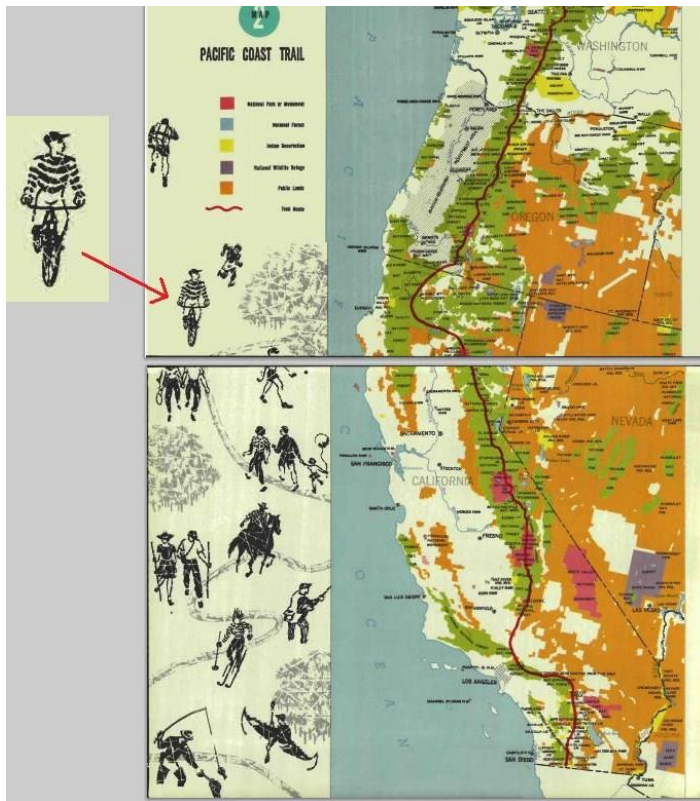
This quote also appears on page 2 of the *Pacific Crest Trail Comprehensive Plan* (1982) as the legislative background for the Federal designation of the PCT as a National Scenic Trail.

## **TRAILS FOR AMERICA (1966)** – *Bicyclists are equal trail partners.*

There are 127 mentions of cycling in this historic document, where bicyclists, hikers and equestrians are equal peers in the trail user family, including the proposed National Scenic Trails. Here is an important excerpt:

P. 14: "A limited number of national scenic trails should be established to provide opportunities of extended foot, horseback, and bicycle trips for Americans in all parts of the Nation. National scenic trails should have natural, scenic, or historic qualities that give them recreation potential of national significance. Such trails typically should be several hundred miles in length, have overnight shelters at appropriate intervals, and be interconnected with other major trails that provide opportunity for extended hiking or riding experiences."

There is even a caricature of a cyclist on the PCT map:



[http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt/pdf\\_documents/trails\\_for\\_america\\_1966\\_ocr.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt/pdf_documents/trails_for_america_1966_ocr.pdf)

## **1967 CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS** – *"Mechanized" NOT intended to include bicycles.*

During the Nationwide Trails System Congressional Hearings in the House of Representatives (1967), one testimony comes from Norman Clarke, on behalf of the Bicycle Institute of America (BIA). His comments show that bicycles were absolutely included in the National Scenic Trails user family, even though cycling on remote, backcountry trails was not popular at the time:

*"This Bill provides for the establishment of a nationwide system of trails that would include a number of National Scenic Trails, such as the Appalachian, Continental Divide, Pacific Crest and Potomac Heritage. We are pleased to see the recognition that this Bill gives to the place these Trails hold in our country, and for the increased opportunities they will offer the hiker and the horseback rider. Large portions of these Trails have only limited appeal for cyclists, either because they are on too rugged a terrain or because they are far removed from population centers. There are, however, significant portions of them that would be ideal for cycling and we were pleased to note that the Trail Study Report recommended that cycling be encouraged on several portions of these Trails."*

There was no objection to this testimony.

This exchange between Senator James McClure and Secretary Stewart Udall further show that bicycles were part of the National Scenic Trails family from conception. Motorized (mechanized) vehicles, however, were adamantly opposed on National Scenic Trails as these particular trails were also seen as a way to escape an increasingly motorized society:

Senator McClure (ID): *"Well, perhaps I am not making myself understood. Under the proposed legislation, this bill that we have before us, there would be no provision for motorized vehicles at all and these trails would be confined to nonmotorized traffic—bicycles, horseback, and on foot."*

Secretary Udall (Dept. of Interior): *"Well, Dr. Crafts can answer more specifically on that. My impression is that since we are talking of hiking, bicycling, horseback, I think almost of necessity that you have got to exclude mechanized transportation from the four proposed national scenic trails. Certainly no one, I am sure, is going to propose we open up the Appalachian Trail, for example, to the mechanized type of transportation."*

The transcripts of the House and Senate Hearings contain 16 mentions of "mechanized". Thirteen of those are in reference to motorized forms of transport and three of them refer to a "mechanized society," as Clinton Clarke discussed in the *Pacific Crest Trailway*.

The transcripts of the House and Senate hearings provide fascinating insights into how these issues were viewed at the time and exactly what went into the creation of the National Trails Act. Anyone interested in this topic would be well served by reviewing these lengthy documents.

House: [http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt/pdf\\_documents/natl\\_trails\\_system\\_hearing\\_hr4865\\_1967.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt/pdf_documents/natl_trails_system_hearing_hr4865_1967.pdf)

Senate: [http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt/pdf\\_documents/natl\\_trails\\_system\\_hearing\\_s827\\_1967.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt/pdf_documents/natl_trails_system_hearing_s827_1967.pdf)

## **THE NATIONAL TRAILS ACT (1968)**

### ***– Bicycles NOT excluded.***

There is absolutely no wording in the National Trails Act that would limit the PCT to pedestrian and horse travel.

[http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt/pdf\\_documents/natl\\_trails\\_system\\_act\\_public\\_law\\_1968\\_image\\_not\\_amended\\_web.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt/pdf_documents/natl_trails_system_act_public_law_1968_image_not_amended_web.pdf)

## **EARLY USE OF BICYCLES ON THE PCT**

### ***– Bicyclists were early and legal PCT users.***

This newspaper clipping summarizes what Norman Clarke (BIA), House Chairman Wayne Aspinall, and other members of Congress discussed during the 1967 Hearings. While bicycles weren't designed for the rugged nature of the PCT back then, hearty adventurers were still utilizing it with bicycles:

"Once upon a time, more than a dozen years ago [this would be prior to 1973], I was basking in the radiance of the North Sister not far from Yapoah Crater when I spied a strange spectacle headed in my direction along the Pacific Crest Trail. Bikers. Or more correctly, bicyclists. But they were walking, not riding, and were pushing their pack-laden two-wheelers slowly and tediously along the trail, which traversed an unrelenting field of lava. At the time, the bikes -- a pair of 10-speeds -- reminded me of boats at the coast, stranded in low water when the tide goes out. In short, they were out of their element."

-Doug Newman, *Eugene Register-Guard*, July 14, 1985

<http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=Uu5VAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=g-EDAAAAIIBAJ&pg=6804,3170390>

Ten years later, the modern mountain bike was developed, making travel on the PCT somewhat easier and less rare, which led to this:

## **PACIFIC CREST TRAIL ADVISORY COUNCIL (1971 – 1988)** **– *Opposition grows in the absence of public comment.***

From the Secretary of Agriculture's Meeting Minutes of the PCT Advisory Council, it appears members of the Council lobbied the USFS to have bicycles banned from the trail from 1983 until the closure order was signed in 1988. There is no evidence of bicyclists testifying to keep the trail open, nor any record of attempts to solicit the views of bicyclists. There was no public involvement or comment period.

## **1978 "PRIMARILY" VS. "EXCLUSIVELY"** **– *USFS management practice, in addition to the clear intent of the legislative language, reveals the meaning of "primarily."***

Much debate has transpired regarding the PCT being designated "primarily a footpath and horseback riding trail." USFS's own management practices surrounding the trail – specifically allowing the use of snow skis – make it clear that the agency does not interpret "primarily" to mean "exclusively." Bicycles are powered by foot no less than skis are. In addition, the legislators of yesteryear themselves explain what they meant when they used the term. The phrase originally comes from legislation surrounding the Appalachian Trail and was adopted for the PCT in 1978. Ten years earlier, in 1968, a House of Representatives Report (which led up to the official National Trails Act) included this snippet regarding "primarily" vs. "exclusively":

"In providing for the overall administration of the trails, the administering Secretary should take into consideration the uses which might be accommodated. On some segments of the Appalachian Trail, for example, horseback riding is an accepted and customary use. While the bill expressly states that the Appalachian National Scenic Trail shall be administered "primarily as a footpath" it is not the intent of that language to require that the trail be administered "exclusively as a footpath". On the contrary, a strong record has been made so that horseback riding, where it is presently permitted or appropriate, shall not be prohibited by administrative direction in the future."

[http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt/pdf\\_documents/natl\\_trails\\_system\\_house\\_report\\_no\\_1631.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt/pdf_documents/natl_trails_system_house_report_no_1631.pdf)

If modern mountain biking had been 30 years old in 1968 or 1978, we would not be having this battle of semantics.

## **1983 National Trails System Act Amended on uses**

In 1983, the National Trails System Act is amended to allow for bicycles on the PCT (16 U.S.C. § 1246(j)), but, perhaps because bicycles are still an unnoticed novelty on the PCT, the Forest Service does not amend the 1978 PCT regulation.

## **1987 PCT Advisory Committee Pushes for Closure**

In November 1987, The PCT Advisory Committee is alarmed by the appearance of bicycles on the PCT. Its minutes for the November 1987 meeting report that it had previously recommended "that mountain bikes should be prohibited on the trail," but that the "Secretary of Agriculture has not found this to be a high enough priority item to proceed with issuing regulations."

"Regulations have been proposed to the Chief, Forest Service; but they have not been published as yet," the minutes report. In the meantime, "The Pacific Southwest Regional Forester has instructed Supervisors to enact local regulations, if necessary, to prohibit mountain bikes on the PCT."

But this is not satisfactory to the Advisory Council. The "need exists for a consistent policy along the entire length of the trail; therefore, we need the Secretary's Regulation over local orders. [¶] The Council is very concerned about the lack of action over getting the regulations published." The Council decides once again to "Indicate to the Sec[retary] of Agriculture the need to publish the regulation prohibiting mountain bikes."

Despite these worries, the Washington, D.C., office of the Forest Service continues to take no action.

## **1988 Temporary Closure in Pacific Southwest**

On April 21, 1988, Regional Forester of the Pacific Southwest Region, Paul Barker issued an order banning bikes and hang gliders unless they are given special authorization.

## **1988 Temporary Closure on whole trail**

On August 31, 1988, Faced with the Forest Service's view that there is no problem warranting a bicycle ban for the PCT, three Regional Foresters, Paul Barker, J.S. Tixier and James Torrence type up an order closing the PCT, including its non-Wilderness sections, to bicycles. In the absence of any ability to get the Forest Service to engage in rulemaking, they use a procedure reserved for *temporary* closures and good for only 90 days.

## **STAN TIXIER & PAUL BARKER**

### ***– Original Foresters support reinstating bicycles***

In an effort to learn more about how the 1988 closure came to be, two of the three living Foresters who signed the closure order were contacted and interviewed. Stan Tixier and Paul Barker confirmed that it was the Advisory Council that pushed for the closure. Both men said they would support ending the ban.

**From:** [Stan Tixier](#)

**To:** '[Jeff PCTRI](#)'

**Sent:** Thursday, November 08, 2012 3:57 PM

**Subject:** RE: Pacific Crest Trail

Jeff – Thank you for writing.

It has been some time since I co-signed that order. My best recollection is that the people who were responsible [for the] management of the Pacific Crest Trail recommended closure to mechanized travel because at the time they saw conflicts among users and also the complication of different rules for different parts of the trail, primarily the exclusion of such use in Wilderness. If the current situation has changed and those in charge believe that bicycle use can be reasonably managed on the non-Wilderness portions and if there is strong public support for such a rule change, I would certainly not object. In fact, I would support such a change.

I am now 80 years old but in reasonably good physical health. I ride my foxtrotting horses in the summer and ski in the winter. Several of the trails in our area where I ride have co-existing users, hikers, bicycle riders and horse riders. I find that there is a great deal of courtesy among users and very little conflict.

If you want to discuss further, you can reach me at [redacted]

Best regards, - Stan Tixier.

In March, Mr. Tixier was updated on the issue, and he took it upon himself to email Mr. Randy Moore with his thoughts in support of reinstating bicycles on the PCT:

**From:** [Stan Tixier](#)

**Sent:** Thursday, March 07, 2013 8:25 AM

**To:** '[rmoore@fs.fed.us](mailto:rmoore@fs.fed.us)'

**Cc:** Jeff PCTRI

**Subject:** Pacific Crest Trail

Randy – It has come to my attention that the Forest Service is currently reconsidering the 25 year-old ban on use of mountain bikes on the Pacific Crest Trail. As Regional Forester of the Intermountain Region at the time, I was a co-signer of the order. At that time the conflicts among trail users involving hikers, bikers and horse riders were considerable. There were bad feelings, especially toward the bikers who, at that time, often failed to fully recognize the importance of proper trail protocol. Since mechanized travel in the Wilderness portion of the trail was and is prohibited by law, it was logical and considered appropriate to simply ban such use from the entire length of the trail.

As you may or may not know, I am a long time horse rider. I am a member of the Old Bulls, a group of Forest Service retirees who are horsemen. We have ridden and packed into most of the great Wildernesses in our area over the past 20 years, at least 2 or 3 trips per year. In addition, despite advancing age, I regularly ride the trails in the Ogden area each summer. I have noticed a marked improvement in courtesy on the trail by all users in our area in recent years. The mountain bikers especially now “slow down” and unhesitatingly pull off the trail to allow horses to pass. Conflicts among trail users are now a rarity. It has been an impressive and most appreciated change. I suspect it may be the same in California, Washington and Oregon.

My purpose in telling you this is that if I were considering allowing mountain bikes on the non-Wilderness portions of the Pacific Crest Trail today, I think I would be inclined to reinstate such use and allow those valid recreation users of the National Forests the enjoyment of that beautiful area that they deserve. Randy, I wish you the best as you deliberate this issue.

Best regards, - Stan Tixier, Eden, UT

In a telephone conversation with Paul Barker, he shared his recollections of how the closure came into being and he also indicated his support for opening the non-Wilderness portions of the PCT, even providing suggestions on how to go about doing so.

During the conversation, Mr. Barker explained how he and his wife enjoy cycling “the fantastic trails from Spokane to the Idaho/Montana border” and said:

*“I expect you’d have strong resistance from the Sierra Club, but many of them are getting older and switching to bikes. They are getting accustomed to them and how great they are for healthy exercise and getting around.”*

Before wrapping up the conversation, he made this comment, indicating how easy it was to ban bicycles, and how easy it would be to terminate the closure:

*“But all things change over time. There’s nothing to prevent a regional forester from changing the rule and opening it.”*

## **1988-2010**

For 22 years, the 90-day validity period for the Forest Service employees’ closure order is forgotten and the order becomes permanently enforced. No-bicycles signs appear at PCT trailheads

## **2010-2022**

The Pacific Crest Trail Reassessment Initiative asks for the 1988 PCT closure order to be rescinded or reassessed. The two surviving signers of the closure order state that the closure is no longer necessary. The Forest Service nevertheless reiterates the closure order on February 6, 2013. PCTRI, relying on 36 C.F.R. § 261.70 and the Forest Service Handbook rule that “[t]he issuing line officer shall review each issued order annually to determine . . . that the order is not in conflict with . . . current regulations under 36 CFR Part 261, Subpart A,” expresses the opinion that the order will lose its validity on May 7, 2013

## **SUMMARY**

***– The time has come to end the ban on bicycles.***

There is no historical basis or defensible management rationale for excluding bicycles from the PCT. Bicyclists – like thru-hikers – are historical members of the PCT family since the early 1970’s and should be recognized as such.