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**Subject:** Speed in the Hills

**Date:** June 9, 2019 at 2:15:42 PM MDT

**To:** undisclosed-recipients;;

June 9, 2019

Dear Helena Hikes members — It looks like spring has finally arrived, maybe even summer! We hope you are enjoying the season.

We counted 14 species of wildflowers in the South Hills over Memorial Day weekend. We also saw dozens of folks out hiking and enjoying nature in spite of cool temps, including lots of families with kids of all ages.

Another event took place on Memorial Day weekend that gives us pause. A high-speed mechanized race occurred over an extensive chunk of the South Hills on a very rainy Sunday, May 26, posing a danger to other trail users and causing damage to the wet trails. You may be familiar with the annual Enduro mountain bike race.

As you know, Helena Hikes is a conservation group dedicated to safety, protecting our natural landscape, and sharing the trails. We are concerned that the increasing use of our trails for high speed mechanized activity is contrary to these values.

There was a time when all users enjoyed our trails together in harmony, with respect for each other and for the resource. With the advent of more sophisticated biking machinery, along with a vocal minority of trail users bent on speed, competition, and thrills, we are in danger of losing that balance.

Helena Hikes Steering Committee members believe we need to restore the balance by reducing high-speed mechanized use on our trails and finding appropriate venues for mechanized racing. We would like to have a system where we enjoy our trails along with our biking neighbors; where etiquette, safety, and respect for the environment and for each other underscore the use of our trails.

We don't oppose mountain bike races. However, we don't think our public South Hills trails/natural area City parks, with their heavy concentration of pedestrians, are an appropriate venue. **We would like to hear your thoughts on this.**

Here are some of the issues we see:

1. Technology allows mountain bikes to achieve ever-higher speeds. Recent speeds clocked and posted by bikers on our local trails range from 20 to 36 mph (up to 12 times faster than a walker going 3 mph). These speeds pose a serious safety hazard to hikers, runners, pets, and wildlife. (\*See a list of speeds clocked on specific trails at the end of this message).
2. While the Enduro is a one-day race, bikers apparently practice on various segments of the race all the time. Below are links to two videos where race organizers demonstrate segments of recent races (2017 and 2018) and mention people practicing on the segments. The high speeds around blind corners are particularly concerning. You'll notice several encounters with hikers.  
  
<https://www.pinkbike.com/video/487552/>  
  
<https://www.pinkbike.com/video/471210/>
3. We appreciate the fact that Helena Enduro sponsors (Montana Bicycle Guild) encouraged racers to be courteous to other trail users. They also gave us a heads-up about the race so we could at least alert the 125 people on the Helena Hikes email list. That's potentially helpful on race day, but not on all the other days when bikers are doing practice runs on the trails.
4. Other venues are available for high-speed mechanized events that would not affect hikers/runners/animals as much. One possibility is the Great Divide ski area, which has hosted mountain bike races in the past. In fact, all other 2019 races in the Montana Enduro series take place at ski areas.
5. It's not just official races and practice runs for these races that pose a danger. Many bikers regularly try to beat the best recorded time on various trails in the South Hills using the Strava app. Essentially, races are taking place on our South Hills trails every day.
6. Clearly, downhill speed riding is a lot of fun for the participants. Is there a place to allow bikers this thrill without endangering other trail users and the environment?

7. The Helena Enduro race takes place during what is historically the wettest time of our year, with potential for significant impacts to trails and fragile vegetation. Several of us walked sections of this year's Enduro the day after the race and documented extensive trail widening, rutting, erosion, and damage to vegetation. Biking on muddy trails is counter to Prickly Pear Land Trust's etiquette campaign standards, also posted in the South Hills trail maps.

**Again, we would like to hear your thoughts on all this.** Please let us know what you think by replying to this email. We welcome and value your ideas.

Thank you!

**\* Recent leading speeds on South Hills trails posted on the Strava racing board:**

[Woodchip Trail \(Deford\) Downhill](#) 36mph

[Top of the World Ridge](#): 29 mph

[Lower Horse](#) 26mph

[Lower Entertainment](#) 26 mph

[Little Moab](#) 26 mph

[Show me the Horse DH](#) 25mph

[Entertainment Bypass](#): 20 mph

[Rent Money Downhill](#) 22mph

[Archery Range Decent](#): 22mph

["The Woods"](#) 21mph

**Helena Hikes Steering Committee ([helenahikes.org](http://helenahikes.org))**

**Lisa Bay**

**DD Dowden**

**Barry Hood**

**Tony Jewett**

**Sanna Porte**

- **Check our website for updates on meetings, documents, and more: [www.helenahikes.org](http://www.helenahikes.org)**
- **Should you wish to no longer wish to receive email from Helena Hikes, please contact us at [helenahikesinfo@gmail.com](mailto:helenahikesinfo@gmail.com) and request 'PLEASE REMOVE':**