



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
Sooky Goldman Nature Center
2600 Franklin Canyon Drive
Beverly Hills, California 90210
Phone (310) 858-7272 Fax (310) 858-7212

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 5, 2004
TO: Joseph T. Edmiston FAICP, Rorie Skei, Paul Edelman
FROM: Walt Young
RE: Proposed gate closure of Canyonback Trail

It has come to my attention that there is a proposal to erect a gate on the Canyonback Trail that would block pedestrian travel on the trail after dark. This gate, if erected, will pose a severe threat to public safety.

As you know, the Canyonback Trail is part of a larger trail system located in an area commonly referred to as the Big Wild. Park visitors use this trail system to travel through various parks that are managed by a variety of public agencies. It is not uncommon for park visitors to complete large hiking and biking loops within the Big Wild. Many of the public entities that manage the open space within the Big Wild do not restrict hours of operation. As such, we as an Agency do not enforce nighttime restrictions for park visitors who are clearly traveling through our property for the purposes of completing their journey.

Closing the Canyonback Trail at night will have public safety implications on both a micro and macro basis. I can well imagine individuals who will be separated from their vehicle by the closed gate, and who will not have sufficient water or energy to reverse course and hike to an unfamiliar trailhead. Worse yet, the temptation to travel cross-country in unfamiliar terrain may be irresistible, leading to a backcountry tragedy.

Lastly, with the ever-present threat of wildfire, I cannot imagine taking any action which would prevent hikers from freely traveling in the backcountry. Thirty years of public safety experience in Search & Rescue, Wildland Firefighting and Law Enforcement as a Park Ranger leaves me no doubt that this proposal is a bad idea.