

The True Story of Nibblers

A Sad Commentary on California Land Use Groups and Efforts

By Del Albright

The "nibblers" are after your freedoms. They want to nibble away at everything you hold precious – from guns, access, how your kids are educated, what bible you follow, how you recreate, and more. "They" have many names, but more importantly, they have influence and are instituting daily changes in your life.

Let's take landuse and access to our motorized trails as an example. If "they" don't like a trail we're doing, they will find an endangered species, an invasive species, or some archeological site to use against us. And they nibble. One bite at a time is all it takes.

It's easy to succumb to the one-bite approach. It doesn't seem like much if we give up a section of trail or re-route a trail over just one itty bitty endangered frog. Right? Nibble. Then comes the arch site—another nibble.

Anyway, you get the picture. There is always some nibbling going on around our sports that include motors. So what do organizations and groups do? Well, let's form a committee and study it. For sure, that is government. But let's get into what happens with committees.

In this day and age, most resource-oriented efforts strive to attain long-lasting results. Currently, "sustainable" is America's most significant buzzword (especially with government and anti-access groups). And who can argue with that – if we can't sustain it, we'll for sure lose it.

And the nibblers love that word. It's easy to throw up a roadblock to show that something may not be sustainable. Then we have to study it in committees – more.

Now to complicate things more, let's bring in organizational turf battles and who's boots are filling with liquid. Sure, we can form a committee and study it, but we go into it "walls up" and are ready to fight to defend our turf, sometimes to the detriment of getting something positive done. Personalities and egos set in.

Ok, no worries. Let's find cool names that sound very important and problem-solving-like and keep studying them. But doesn't it look like we're doing something if it's "in committee?"

California came to land use life on October 31, 1994, with the loss of 8 million acres to the Desert Protection Act. Immediately we started to form committees and groups to fix stuff.

1994: Land Use Network (LUN), the first significant land use email and internet group.

1996: North American Motorized Recreation Council (NAMRC), a national multiple-use motorized group.

1997: Resource Education Network (REN), CA's first multiple-use group.

1997: Multiple Use Shared Trails Workshop (MUST), CA's first hands-on multiple-use land use workshop.

1997: BLITZ 1997, a massive marketing effort to engage motorized users nationwide under the umbrella of the LUN.

1999: Sierra Nevada Framework, CA forest plan amendment efforts (stemmed from same folks in REN).

2003: Multiple Use Summit, CA's first organized gathering of all aspects of recreational leaders in backcountry uses.

And I'm sure I left out a few. But my involvement started in 1981 when I completed a Master's Thesis in Coordinated Resource Management and Planning (CRMP), trying to bring diverse interests together for a common goal. CRMP was part of the founding principles for the start of the REN and NAMRC.

Now we have names like Cross-Jurisdictional Collaboration to Advance Sustainable Recreation, Sustainable & Accessible Recreation, Responsible Recreation, and so on. For example, in California, we implemented the California Motorized Recreation Council (CMRC), a direct and state-specific spin-off of NAMRC. While always hopeful, it never ends.

We keep finding new names for the same idea with similar slants/missions. SO WHAT???

Follow-ups and actions that accomplish something are more important than having more meetings (and committees). Committees produce reports. Reports get passed around and filed. But not enough gets done to save trails or keep our sports alive. We MUST change that and ensure whatever committees and groups we have working for us get something done!

The nibblers are winning, bite by bite. And it's all because we aren't doing enough – we aren't engaged enough. We don't insist on more actions and less talk. Further, we don't support our organized recreation groups enough to fight back. Worse, we don't feel the gate closing on our butt – yet.

It is my humble opinion that, yes, we have more than enough committees, and yes, we need to be part of them – to ensure we get ACTION out of these cool-named entities that leave open doors for the nibblers. But we need to bolster our organized recreation groups (who make up the committees) to the point that our fight-back is strong, solid, and sustainable.

Allow me to say that again; we need to ensure our fight-back is sustainable.

Join, donate, and volunteer your time to those organizations you believe in to help keep the nibblers away from our dinner table.

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