

Dear Ms. Forhan and Conservancy Board Members,

We visited Ball Ranch and Ledger Island on Saturday Jan. 29. We observed situations that were deeply concerning. There is unregulated access to both sites, public use conflicts, potential liability issues, graffiti, habitat destruction and trash accumulation. We hope you will consider what the ramifications of allowing the public pretty much free reign in terms of access and activities to these two sites before public use and access regulations are in place.

Unregulated Access: The Ball Ranch front gate has openings that allow foot and bike access day and night. Once inside the gate, one can access both Ball Ranch and Ledger Island fully. Other access points include Little Dry Creek, Peck Ranch and the Madera-side bluff on either end of Ledger Island. We saw people entering from all these access areas.

Public Use Conflicts: There are signs naming different areas, but no information about public use. Bicyclists have and are purposefully cutting bike trails throughout Ledger Island. Many of these paths cross through several different habitat areas. Dogs were both on and off leash. We wondered who has the right-of-way when walkers, runners and bicyclers converge.

Potential Liabilities: Hundreds of tree logs are piled 10 to 12 feet high along the road next to the large pond at Ball Ranch. We have seen young people climbing on those logs. Last year a fire swept through the area near the log pile. What happens if the logs burn in the next fire? What are the liabilities from fire, camping and poaching in this open-ended situation?

Graffiti: The log pile has full color graffiti names, numbers and designs on the log ends. It is hard to imagine how people got up high enough to mark the logs. The logs and the graffiti are an ugly sight set in the natural landscape. Inside the Ball Ranch entrance gate is graffiti on pieces of cement. With the two sites open day and night more graffiti is assured.

Habitat Destruction and Poaching: Already bike trails have been cut through milkweed plants used by monarch butterflies, wildflower bloom areas and thickets used by deer. Spent shotgun shells can be seen in several areas on both properties.

Trash: The Ball Ranch front gate area is rife with trash including an abandoned boat full of old, dirty stuff.

We bring these matters to you because we are concerned the cart is being put before the horse. It is human nature for people to react poorly when reigned in from activities they have taken for granted. We hope you will curtail, for all the reasons listed above, the unlimited access and uses now while there is still time. Give yourselves time to prepare protections and appropriate public uses for Ball Ranch and Ledger Island.

Thank you, Clary Creager, Micki Beston