

# Connecting with Nature on Fiscalini Ranch Preserve: Ringing on the Ranch



By KITTY CONNOLLY, Executive Director, Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve ([fiscaliniranchpreserve.org](http://fiscaliniranchpreserve.org))

Fiscalini Ranch Preserve's trails are mostly multiuser: pedestrian, bicyclists, and some equestrian. Recently Cambria Community Services District installed signs at each major trail head designating the right-of-way hierarchy, but with the growing visibility of bicyclists, conflicts are increasing. Pedestrians regularly report being startled when bikes suddenly overtake them, and bicyclists have been knocked down by off-leash dogs. Since the Ranch has been "discovered" by cyclists, we expect bicycle use to increase over time, which means we need to address these issues.

Ringing on the Ranch aims to reduce the conflict between bicycles, pedestrians, and equestrians by encouraging each to carry a bell while using Ranch trails. "Loaner" bells on Velcro straps will be provided at trail heads alongside the signage about right of way. Users can take a bell, attach it to their belt, handlebars, or saddle during their visit, and then, when they are done, return it for the next person to use. For Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve (FFRP), the goal is to increase the safety of all Ranch visitors.

FFRP's approach drew from several local models. Central Coast Concerned Mountain Bikers in the San Luis Obispo and Los Osos areas have been offering bike bells for 8 years. Folsom Auburn Trail Riders Action Coalition started their program near Sacramento a year ago. In Los Angeles, Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists Association has been up and running for 6 years. The Sage Trail Alliance, Santa Barbara, is the senior program at 10 years.

Established programs have experienced positive verbal and social media comments from users. They have seen people having conversations on the trail about the bells instead of having clashes over right of way. As



The loaner bells are white and display the logos of both Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve and Cambria Community Council. They will be found at each trail entrance attached to a magnetic strip for easy access.

The bells for sale by FFRP are silver.

evidence that the bells have reduced conflict, some have found that park managers have changed their attitudes about bicyclists to the point where they allow bikes on more trails.

There are certainly some challenges to running a bike bell program. Number one is the loss of bells. Some are kept by accident, some as souvenirs, and some because they are useful. Keeping bells in stock, especially when a program begins, takes quite a bit of work. Luckily, FFRP has a dedicated corps of volunteers who can take on this task while they are restocking brochures.

Another challenge is paying for the bells. Fortunately, FFRP got seed grant funding from the Cambria Community Council to get this program started. Going forward, we will look for other local sponsors as well as contributing our own funding. If you want your own Ranch bell, you can get one at our store (604 Main St or online).

Keep an eye out for the new bike bells on the Ranch. We hope they will improve your visit.