

## local news

# Westside dirt bikers don't want to move

By **MARSHALL JONES**

STAFF REPORTER

Westside dirt bike riders are vowing to stay in their territory despite a heightened battle brewing with the Lakeview Irrigation District.

Ken Umbarger, president of Okanagan Trail Riders, says his club has spent too much time and effort developing the area to leave now.

"We have no intention whatsoever of walking away from Bear Creek after all the work we have done up there," he says.

The LID sent a letter to Okanagan-Westside MLA Rick Thorpe this week—with the support of the Central Okanagan Regional District—urging the government to protect the watershed area serving 13,000 customers by getting rid of the trail riders.

Manager James Moller says he has tried talking with the club but the club can't enforce any rules with non-members.

"We believe that the district, along with other registered stakeholders, have exhausted the available avenues to encourage all watershed users to respect and protect the watershed," he wrote.

"The damage to the watershed has increased over the past year, not decreased, and it is now time for the government to

take the lead to protect the watershed.

"Dialogue, signage and education are not solving the problems. What is needed is enforcement of existing government legislation and regulations."

He suggests the riders move to a new spot off Highway 33.

But Umbarger disputes Moller's version of events.

"If we want to make this into a model of a well-managed watershed, we would like to hear honestly from LID what we could do to

improve and minimize the problem instead of just saying they want us out of there.

"After reading (Moller's letter) I realized they were not interested in talking to us."

The club has been involved in managing the area since the Land Resource Management Plan for the area was conceived.

He says it was always earmarked for use by trail riders.

He suggests that any damage they may cause in

the area pales in comparison to other uses of the land.

"The claims that we are the main cause of water issue problems that LID is facing is laughable," he says.

"Look at all the other users, like logging. We are a minimal contributor to any problem LID has but we are the easiest target."

The *Capital News* attempted to contact MLA Rick Thorpe but numerous messages weren't returned.

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