



# MDC Ordered To Pay \$2.9 Million To Injured Bicyclist

By ERIC GERSHON

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A Superior Court jury in Hartford has awarded a former children's book illustrator \$2.9 million for injuries suffered years ago in a bicycle accident on land owned by the Metropolitan District Commission.

The six-person jury awarded the money Friday to Maribeth Blonski of Rocky Hill after finding that the regional water and sewer authority improperly placed a steel gate across a path within the Talcott Mountain Recreation Area, said Blonski's lawyer, Michael A. Stratton.

On May 16, 2002, Blonski, now 43, was biking on a trail in the area, also known as the West Hartford Reservoir, when she struck the gate, breaking four vertebrae in her neck, Stratton said.

The MDC had installed the gate to block motor vehicle access to the water, he said.

R. Bartley Halloran, the MDC's chief in-house lawyer, said Sunday through a spokeswoman that the MDC was surprised by the verdict and intends to appeal.

When the accident happened, Blonski was host of a local-access television program about mountain biking, Stratton said. Blonski now works at the front desk of a health club, he said. She previously worked as an illustrator of children's books.

It took eight years to resolve the case because of a dispute about whether the MDC was immune from responsibility, Stratton said. After a four-day trial before Judge Edward Domnarski, the jury decided the authority was not immune in this instance, and also found that Blonski was partially responsible.

Stratton said Blonski had offered to settle the case for less than the amount awarded by the jury, but MDC refused.

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**Plaintiff Expert: Robson Forensic founder, Lance Robson, P.E.**

**Robson Forensic**

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