



New York Mountain Bicycling Coalition

NewsLetter

Really Late Fall, 1999

The “New Trails Issue”

Welcome to the “Really Late Fall” NYMBC news. Never mind the calendar says winter, that issue comes out in February! Reports have been coming in this year about a lot of great new trails New York MTB clubs have been building. This issue of NYMBC news covers some of these reports. If you are reading this, and are saying, “hey, that’s nothing compared to what we’ve been doing”, well, let me know! I know there’s been plenty of trail building in the Catskills that I don’t know the details of, and lots more, too.

Mohawk Hudson Cycling Club Builds New State Forest Trail

The MHCC, in conjunction with the New York State DEC, would like to announce the upcoming opening of a new technical single track trail in the Pittstown State Forest Area, outside of Grafton, New York for Spring of 2000. This trail is the brainchild of MHCC member Gary Thomann, who spent much of this past summer envisioning the route, flagging the trail, GPSing until satellites fell from the sky, impressing the hell out of the local land managers, getting the necessary permits, and rounding up the slave labor from the tried and true workhorses that form the core of the MHCC mountain bike contingent of the club. A big thanks to Gary for all this work and to all else who volunteered their efforts this past fall to help make this trail a reality!

The Pittstown State Forest Area was originally an area set aside to re-grow after it was virtually clear cut 50 years ago. DEC Region 4 land manager Bill Shongar reported that he had long wanted to build such a connecting trail through the area, but never had the time or the person power to do so, and was quite enthusiastic at the prospect of this happening. Prior to this trail, there were only a few old skidder roads and several downhill treacherous trails leading down the mountain from the Grafton Lakes State Park to adjoin a main fire lane which runs the length of the 1,100 acre reforestation area. The new trail will connect up from the downhill/fire road/old skidder roads before it takes you on a fairly difficult 4 mile loop into the dense second growth woods of the State Forest land. The trail is so far described as challenging singletrack with a classic rocky New England feel to it, including switchbacked/bench cut uphill and downhill, constant rock wall crossings, and a few fairly good solid rock drop ins (some of which will be optional, as there will be several routes to choose from for both intermediate and expert riders). Besides the technical aspects, this trail brings you into some of the untouched backwoods beauty which makes up the surrounding foothills of the Berkshires on the NY side of the border.

Upon its completion in the spring, this multi use trail will be marked by the DEC for all users of the non-motorized kind and will be maintained by volunteer efforts of the MHCC members.

The Pittstown State Forest land can be accessed via Williams Road in Pittstown, NY or through the old town roads that run through the Grafton Lakes Park and down the northern side of the mountain down to the fire lane. For more information on you can help complete this trail and its official opening, please contact the DEC or check the Mohawk Hudson Cycling Club's web page at <http://www.mohawkhudsoncycling.org> for trail work/party days.

Westchester Mountain Bike Association readies new trail

Erik Ferguson (914-271-6535 e-mail address: Eferguson@webnetservices.com), the trail maintenance coordinator for WMBA reports of some great new trails they have been installing at Sprain Ridge Park, a County Park less than half an hour from NYC! The park is not officially opened yet, but it will be this Spring. From the beginning WMBA worked closely with David DeLucia, the recreation director for the Westchester County Parks Department. In fact, the idea to add mountain biking to the park, and the layout of some of the trails, were his.

The trails are the definition of technical Northeast singletrack. While the park is relatively small, (about a half mile, by about 3 miles, with a whopping 300ft. of vertical!) WMBA has made a section of trail that takes a few hours to ride. On this trail there are hundreds of turns, about one hundred logs, and a few dozen nice large rocks to roll up and over.

The trails range from intermediate (with logs) to very difficult (with dozens of logs). The park was once an arboretum, so there are several somewhat exotic trees and plants there. The rocks are very similar to the rock garden in the Bronx botanical garden, smooth, grippy, and well rounded, perfect for riding on.

Before the trail officially opens, WMBA needs to build a small footbridge over a wet section, and make a beginner trail. Even after a rain, there is no wet areas or muddy sections, and even the floods of hurricane Floyd didn't erode any of the trail.

Rochester Bicycle Club Puts in New Trail On DEC Land in the Bristol Hills, and Continues Work to Keep Letchworth Open

Todd Calvin of RBC writes in to tell us that 1999 has been a resounding success in their neck of the woods. RBC's work with the NYS DEC has brought them to complete their first substantial trail construction project at Stid Hill wildlife management area near Bristol NY. The complete out and back trail is more than six miles and we have just started to realize the potential available there. The coming season will allow RBC to implement design enhancements to help reduce the maintenance required in some locations. There is also a large section of the area on the western side that would support an additional loop of about 2 miles.

The IMBA trail care crew joined up with RBC this fall and provided some invaluable information on trail construction and design. RBC also had the opportunity to hone their skills and expand their resources to include; 2 new MAX tools, getting the bugs worked out on the Cargo Cat trailer, an Inclinator, and a smaller and easier to carry chain saw (which will now fit on the cargo trailer). Todd writes that if your maintenance crew is looking for a highly versatile tool, the MAX provides a lot of capability in a small package.

The ongoing work at Letchworth State Park has been proceeding pretty smoothly. Although there isn't a lot of hoopla, the Trail Patrol has been working diligently, and much of the trail work that has been done to date has resulted in improving the sustainability of the trail there. With help from WNYMBA, RBC lead several work days to keep this trail in its current pristine condition (the lack of rain has helped too).

RBC is still working to advance access to trail systems on parklands in the metropolitan area. This is a theme echoed throughout the state. The concentration of population and the fact of the limited amount of open space near a city create significant competition for those resources. Todd is eager to hear from anyone else in the state who have come up with successful urban strategies. Contact him at tcalvin@rbcbbbs.win.net

More from RBC

This past season RBC started a new outreach program, which is planned as an annual event. They held a picnic and MTB ride for inner city kids. It provided the opportunity to educate some of the potential future mountain bikers, as well as have a lot of fun in the process. RBC arranged for some loaner bikes from local shops and from some of their own stables. A local grocery chain donated food for the picnic and they rounded up a bunch of volunteers to oversee the kids for the afternoon. They also provided free helmets they could keep, for those kids who may not have been able to buy a helmet of their own. It was a rewarding project and one your organization may wish to undertake.

WNYMBA Gets In on the New Trail Action in a Big Way

Ambitious trail building plans yielded some impressive results this year in western NY. Though blessed with tens of thousands of acres of state land across the western southern tier, these forests simply weren't laced with trails like they are in the state forests of central NY. With a lot of hard work and cooperation with the DEC, WNYMBA was able to open the one main singletrack on these state lands, the Finger Lakes Trail. This is the only section of the FLT outside of Letchworth SP opened to bikes. However, this still provided only limited opportunities, and the stage was set for the trail to get closed again due to overuse, since it was the only game in town. WNYMBA turned this situation around starting with a lot of scouting field work in 1998 and over last winter. Dozens of miles of new trails were laid out, and many of them reviewed inch by inch by DEC land managers.

Armed with one of the last "Temporary Revocable Permits" issued before the state swicthed over to the Adopt-a-Resource program (see last quarter's NYMBC news for more on that program) trail construction started as soon as the snow melt in early April. Two state forests were worked this year. The first was McCarty Hill/Rock City, right in the resort town of Ellicottville, and home to the major FLT section used. WNYMBA installed a five mile, technical, and way scenic route that branched off the existing race loop at the Holiday Valley Ski area where it bordered the state forest.

While only five miles, the hills and technical challenges provided enough of a ride that a significant amount of usage was diverted from the FLT, relieving the pressure on that trail and keeping it open. Most of the trail was finished up by the end of national trails day except for one short section that used an old skid route to drop a hundred feet down to a sidehill traverse. While useful, it was way beyond the 10% maximum target grade and unsustainable. So in August, the IMBA trail crew stopped by and helped build an incredible switchback that brings this section of trail into spec.

Meanwhile, ten miles down the valley, another five miles of new trail were being put in at Golden Hills State Forest. These loops provided a more intermediate opportunity compared to the technical challenges closer to town.

WNYMBA has more ambitious plans for 2000, with more new trails. The opportunities are so great, they plan to work the first Saturday and third Sunday of each month!

DEC News

Three out of the four trail building stories this quarter were on DEC land. The DEC has been great in cooperation with local MTB groups in this respect. I recently met with Tom Wolfe, head of DEC's Lands and Forests division. He informed me that he would be keeping NYMBC abreast of any upcoming Unit Management Plan (UMP) reviews, since these plans can affect future MTB use.

On a related note, Rob Messenger will be replacing Bill Rudge as the DEC manager of the Catskill and Adirondack forest preserve. Bill, who had worked closely with cyclists, is returning to the New Paltz office, while Rob is heading in from Olean. Rob was the manager of the Golden Hills forest where WNYMBA's trails were built this year, and was instrumental in getting MTB use written into the UMP for the Nine Mile Creek SF. NYMBC, and our affiliate on the Forest Preserve Advisory Council (Paul Capone) look forward to working more with him.

For more information on NYMBC:

New York Mountain Bicycling Coalition
279 Oakwood Ave
East Aurora, NY 14052
Tel: 716-655-5130
e-mail: ny-mtb@cycling.org
Trailhead@wnymba.org
web: www.ggw.org/NYMBC/

For info on how to help keep trails in your area open, contact your local MTB advocacy organization.

Founding Organizations:

Western NY Mountain Bicycling Association
Rochester Bicycle Club (RBC)
Central NY-DIRT (Dedicated Individuals for Responsible Trail-use)
Mohawk-Hudson Cycling Club (MHCC)
Westchester Mountain Biking Association
'Gunks Mountain Biking Association
Fats in the Cats
Concerned Long Island Mountain Bicyclists

NYMBC
c/o Jon Sundquist
279 Oakwood Ave.
East Aurora, NY 14052