



# New York Mountain Bicycling Coalition

## *NewsLetter*

*Fall/Winter, 2000*

### **"Where's your group"**

It's been very busy times lately for Mountain Bike advocacy. There's a lot to report, and not only because this is a combined Fall/winter report. Garnering front page news on this newsletter (and mid-page coverage on many city newspapers around the state) is the new Adirondack Park Mountain Bike Initiative.

On a related note, soon after you receive this newsletter, there are meetings to be held around the state to gather input on the Unit Management Plans for various forests of the Adirondacks and Catskills. The Adirondack folks have been busy with the public hearings held to date in the park but need the support of others around the state.

This brings me to the title of this article. I recently attended a public hearing on future use of the most popular place for mountain biking near Buffalo. The meeting, reported later in this newsletter went well. One item that was discussed was the controversial issue of ATV access. When one guy tried to make his case to allow ATVs, the parks commissioner asked him "Where's your group". I think this is something key to remember when we fight for MTB access. Organizing in groups like our local groups or NYMBC may not always seem worth the time or effort, especially when we may be putting in trail work or other activities on our own. But when it comes time to decide who gets to use the trail, land managers look for organizations to work with, and it is important that these organizations be in place and functioning.

### **New Adirondack Park Mountain Biking Initiative Launched**

Back in December, a meeting was held in Lake Placid, under the umbrella of IMBA, to discuss the idea of promoting the Adirondack Region as a premier mountain biking destination. This report is submitted by long-time Adirondack Bike Advocate Paul Capone, who is working with Lee Borland and many others to bring this to fruition.

The focus group at the December meeting consisted of key state and local officials, environmental and tourism organizations, and mt. bike enthusiasts - about 30 people in all. Tim Blumenthal, IMBA executive director, was the special guest who gave a nice talk describing what it takes to draw mountain bikers to the area and pointed out examples of success stories in various parts of the country. He was followed by Tom Martin, DEC Regional Forester, who described the UMP process and why it is crucial to provide DEC input on mt. biking opportunities so they can be considered and included in the UMP's. Tim Holmes, a consultant, briefly talked about a recent grant from Bikes Belong to undertake the planning and cost outline for a recreation path to link Saranac Lake and Lake Placid. This funding will also create a Web site ([www.bikeadironacks.org](http://www.bikeadironacks.org)) which will serve as a clearinghouse for bicycling info for the Adirondack region.

These presentations were followed by general discussion to gauge the interest of those attending for taking further steps to move forward with this grassroots project. Most everyone reacted positively and agreed to continue the dialog with the formation of a Steering Commit-

tee. The next meeting will be held at DEC in Ray Brook on Jan. 29th at 9:30 am. This group of about 15 people will be working out details for developing specific proposals to make this vision a reality. One of the first goals will be to decide what roll the various organizations and individuals should play and what resources are available. Next week, a letter and survey will go out to the all the towns and villages in the Adirondack Park to explain what this effort is about and to request their input on existing/potential mt. biking trails in their locality. We will be building a database to compile the responses to at least begin to gather inventory of trails suitable for mt. biking.

Also on the agenda is to select a couple of areas in the Park to use as pilot projects to showcase mt. biking opportunities, perhaps Wilmington and Inlet. The project would be to develop a sustainable trail network proposal that would attract cyclists and provide assistance to the communities in the planning and design with guidance from IMBA. We want to spread this type of project to all sectors of the Park, but it is important to begin with a small success.

Also on the agenda will be to begin organizing an IMBA Epic Ride here in the Adirondacks. Tim B. was supportive of this idea.

So that's a synopsis of what it is about. Obviously we will be reaching out to knowledgeable people, like you, who can provide advice and support. I will keep you posted of any news concerning the Steering Committee. I welcome your comments.

For more information about this new initiative, contact Lee Borland at [Borland@capital.net](mailto:Borland@capital.net) or Paul Capone at [ski2smyl@capital.net](mailto:ski2smyl@capital.net).

### **Attend upcoming Adirondack and Catskill Forest Unit Management Plan Hearings!**

What are these about? Well, the web site at <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dlf/publands/ump/swletter.html> says it best:

Statewide Public Meeting on the Forest Preserve Unit Management Planning Initiative December 22, 2000 — Dear Concerned Citizens:

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is hosting a series of Open Houses to gather public input on Governor George Pataki's initiative to complete "Unit Management Plans" for all state lands in the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserves. The Department has scheduled seven (7) sessions across the state to provide added opportunity for citizens who care about these state lands and want to keep informed about this planning initiative, but do not live close enough to attend Open Houses in the Adirondack or Catskill forest preserves.

These Open Houses will be held in the following cities throughout the State:

- ▶ Buffalo - January 16: Cheektowaga Town Hall, 3301 Broadway Street, Cheektowaga, NY, Exit 52 off the New York State Thruway (716) 686-3400
- ▶ Rochester - January 17: Rochester Museum & Science Center, Eisenhower Auditorium, 657 East Ave., Rochester, NY (716) 271-4320
- ▶ Syracuse - January 18: SUNY Environmental School of Forestry, Marshall Hall, Alumni Lounge
- ▶ Long Island/Greenvale - January 22: Harbor Hill School, Glen Cove Road, Greenvale, NY Exit 39N off the Long Island Expressway (516) 625-6394
- ▶ New York City - January 23: Warwick Hotel, 65 West 54th Street, New York, NY (212) 247-2700
- ▶ New Paltz - January 24: DEC Regional Office/New Paltz, Rooms 2 and 3, 21 S. Putt Corners Rd., New Paltz, NY (914) 256-3000
- ▶ Albany - January 25: Guilderland Town Hall, 5209 Route 20, Guilderland, NY (518) 356-1980

All sessions will be held evenings from 5 P.M. to 9 P.M. Those arriving between 5 and 6 P.M. will have an opportunity to interact one on one with the planning team and view displays highlighting each of the Forest Preserve Units currently scheduled for plan completion. At 6 P.M. there will be a short orientation on the Unit Management Planning Initiative. At 6:30 there will be an opportunity for the public to present comments for all participants to hear. The evening will wrap up with another chance for one-on-one discussions with DEC staff. A Unit Management Plan (UMP) must be

completed before significant new recreational facilities, such as trails, camping sites, parking areas, or boat launches can be constructed. The Unit Management Planning process involves an extensive analysis of ity of the land to accommodate public use. DEC is looking for your ideas about how these lands can contribute to natural resource protection, recreation and community development.

This series of open house meetings has been scheduled as one of many ways for the public to learn about and provide input into the UMP process. DEC has developed a website devoted to this UMP process which provides current information regarding UMP progress and additional opportunities for public input. The site has been designed to include descriptions of many of the state land units we are planning for, some draft and final plans, a listing of staff responsible for accepting comments for each UMP, and office and e-mail addresses for each UMP planner. The website address is:

<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dlf/publand/ump/index.html>

Involving the public in the development of UMP's is essential to carrying out effective public land management. Some statewide organizations have already begun promoting the meetings and we are grateful for their support. If you belong to an organization that might be interested in this effort, please post these meeting dates for your membership to see.

We look forward to seeing you at one or more of these sessions! (–end of quote)

I draw your attention to the last two sentences: well, NYMBC is doing its part publishing this here; I have also tried to contact key members of local groups separately as well. And they weren't kidding with the last quote: I have been in e-mail communication with some DEC people involved with this process, and got this recommendation: " I want to encourage you to let your members know about our UMP meetings that will be happening around the State the end of this month. It is important that we hear from all interested parties concerning the management of state lands.

I hope to see you at one of the meetings. Thanks for your interest in state land manage-

ment."

So don't take my work for it: listen to the land managers! Even if this doesn't affect your riding areas, it is important to set a good precedent for the Catskill and Adirondack lands. Furthermore, I received an e-mail from a concerned New Jersey cyclist who frequents the Catskills who told me: "The NY DEC is updating it's Unit Management plan for the Catskills. The NYNJTC is lobbying to have them restrict mountain bike access in this area which current does not have any. They are asking members to e-mail and go to the public meetings. A loss of access in this are would be a most significant blow. I think the DEC will only respect NY comments and so this will require a strong rally of local bike clubs." I have no idea whether there is any concerted effort to ban bikes from other user groups. But it is better not to wait and find out! Please try to make one of these meetings in your area.

### **WNYMBA Cautiously Optimistic on Riding Opportunities at Hunters Creek**

By far the most popular place to ride near Buffalo is Hunters Creek. And it is the best, too, at least when it is dry (soils are clayey and silty). But for the past six years, it has been in legal limbo as Erie County, who owns the land, has posted it no trespassing, then proceeded to let anything go. Not the best management practice! With a change in government last year, the new parks commissioner signaled this management approach may change.

In November, 2000, park users, including WNYMBA members, organized a public meeting with commissioner Jasinski. The commissioner was eager to hear input from the users, and cyclists were well represented. The commissioner apparently now recognizes that cyclists are concerned and organized users of the parks, and are committed to working on its sustainability.

Final official word of how the legal restrictions will be resolved is still forthcoming. But in the meantime, WNYMBA is working with other user groups to develop a hierarchy of programs that could be implemented on a phased volunteer basis, and that would likely be accepted by the county.

.For more information on NYMBC:

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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

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