



New York Mountain Bicycling Coalition

NewsLetter

Fall 2001/Winter 2002

Draft DEC Region 7 Recreation Plan Released for Comment May Form Basis for State-Wide Regulations NYMBC Strongly Opposed to Many Provisions; Supports Others

The week before Christmas, The Region 7 DEC (Central NY) released its long-awaited draft recreational plan for all Region 7 state forests. It's available at:

<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dlf/publands/ump/reg7/recplan/reg7rec.pdf>

The plan does not prohibit mountain bicycling. However, it does severely restrict mountain bicycling and changes the management approach to all-trails-closed-unless-designated open, which is unacceptable. The DEC has put a lot of work in this, and is trying to please everybody. But there are some restrictions in here that are unacceptable, and is very disappointing. Below are some excerpts. However, we strongly urge everyone to read the whole thing so that you get everything in context.

Discussions with Lands and Forests officials in Albany indicate that this plan may form the basis for similar regulations state wide. This is not just a Region 7 issue. It could potentially affect riders in every part of the state. If you are reading this and like to bicycle, you really have to send in your comments.

NYMBC has developed a detailed analysis of the plan, and has provided guidelines that we suggest using in developing your response to this plan. This guidance will soon be available on the NYMBC website (<http://www.ggw.org/nymbc>), and is available in the meantime is on the webserver

of an Ithaca-area activist at <http://www.ludgatefarms.com/alert.htm>. Please review this information and respond. The in-a-nutshell version is presented below.

First of all, the biggest problem with the draft plan:

1. Restrict mountain bike use to designated trails. In order to minimize erosion, prevent user conflicts and eliminate unauthorized trail construction, mountain bike use will be restricted to designated trails. Mountain bike trails may be part of multipurpose trail systems.

2. Existing multiple use trails, where mountain bike use is proposed, will be designated after inspection shows that the trail is in a suitable location and in satisfactory condition. Trails in an unsatisfactory condition or location will need to be upgraded or rerouted before they can become a formally designated trail. Trails not suitable for mountain bikes will be closed.

We fully support closing unsustainable or illegally built trails. But the procedure must be to designate these such trails and close them. Not open the trails one by one.

Although there is a lot of implementation scheduling in the plan, there is nothing about when these designations will be made.

next...

5. To protect the quality of the trails, allow mountain bike use from May 1 to October 31. Mountain bike use will be prohibited from November 1 to April 30 to protect the trails.

Again, we support keeping bikes of trails during muddy conditions. But when you have conditions like you had this fall, when things were dry as a bone in most places, including Region 7, the trails should be open. The policy as to when trails are closed has got to be much more flexible, and take into account the better quality (e.g. faster drying abilities) and variations in the climate.

The DEC may rightly point out the sections such as "3. *Develop four new trail systems where mountain biking will be allowed.*" But unless the policy is kept as the current "open unless closed", development of new systems will not make up for other lost opportunities. Furthermore, most of these "new" systems will actually be existing trails, and in many cases, roads. In appendix 6, there is a comparison of miles of current MTB trails compared to miles under the proposed plan, and it shows a great increase under the current plan. However, when "current" situation for Shindagin Hollow, the most popular forest for cycling in Region 7, lists zero miles and the "proposed" situation (and remember, trails will be closed unless open) has only 15 miles, this inventory clearly does not adequately reflect current situations, and does not support any claims of increases in biking opportunities.

OK, so what can you do? Two things: written comments and attend public meetings.

As mentioned above, NYMBC has prepared, and is continually updating, some detailed guidelines on how to respond to this plan. This information at the URLs presented above.

Please review the information provided on these links. However, for convenience, the contact information is repeated here as well:

Send your comments (***before February 28***) to:

NYSDEC
Division of Lands and Forests
Re: Recreation Master Plan
2715 State Hwy.
Sherburne, NY 13460

or

NYSDEC
Division of Lands and Forests
Re: Recreation Master Plan
1285 Fisher Ave.
Cortland, NY 13045

if you have developed a more in-depth, cogent, and convincing letter, consider sending them to higher ups in the DEC. These would include:

Thomas Wolfe
Chief, Bureau of Public Lands

Robert Davies
Director, Division of Lands and Forests

Peter Duncan
Executive Deputy Commissioner

these three official are at:

NYSDEC
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233

also consider:

Kenneth Lynch
Director, Region 7
NYSDEC
615 Erie Blvd. West
Syracuse, NY 13204-2400

The meeting dates and locations are:

Jan. 7, Homer H.S., 80 West Road, Homer
Jan. 8, BOCES, Butterfly Road, Mexico
Jan. 9, SUNY Forestry school, Syracuse, Baker Lab
Jan 15, Johnson City High, 666 Reynolds Road, Johnson City
Jan 17, Norwich High, Midland Drive, Norwich.

They are also accepting e-mailed comments at r7forest@gw.dec.state.ny.us, but snail-mail comments are much more effective. Use e-mail only if you wait till the last minute!

What ***not*** to do in responding to this plan:

Don't fly off the handle with comments you wish you didn't make, especially by e-mail. Remember that the DEC has worked hard to put this together to balance competing interests. If you want to influence their opinion, you need to make well reasoned points. There is a large body of literature that contradicts the impact issues on which they are basing most of their restrictions. Furthermore, there are plenty of examples where such restrictions are not required to maintain great trail and other outdoor opportunities.

Finally, please forward this information to as many people as you know and are interested, but please forward it all, and not just the snippets. Please read, and encourage others to read, the whole document. Comments made that do not reflect what is actually in the document will fall on deaf ears. Don't comment based on just what you read here.

Mountain Biking Trail Building Workshops in Adirondacks a Huge Success

This past August, the IMBA Trail Care Crew led by Jen and Rich Edwards and sponsored by Subaru, facilitated three mountain biking Trail Building Workshops. The results were outstanding. Three successful Trail Building Workshops in four days. Workshops in three counties, separated by many miles. 55 people attended, including 13 from the Department of Environmental Conservation, 2 from the Adirondack Park Agency, 4 from the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA), representatives from 8 Towns and villages, and several bike shops and avid mountain bikers. Rich and Jen Edwards said the interest and two way dialogues were among the best they had ever experienced in dozens of workshops.

The hosts for the Edwards' eight-day stay in the Adirondack Park were Lee and Judi Borland of Speculator and Lake Placid, facilitators of the Adirondack Park Mountain Biking Initiative. The Borlands envisioned and have promoted the original objective of the Initiative---to encourage the development of the entire Adirondack Park as a true mountain biking destination. Today the Initiative has grown to include 21 organizations and 24 towns and villages working together to develop that original vision of this relatively new sport's potential into increased sports recreation tourism throughout the 6+ million acre Adirondack Park.

Lee Borland commented, "The success of the Trail Building Workshops exceeded our wildest

hopes in the number of attendees, the diversity of the backgrounds of those attending, and the enthusiasm shown. The Workshops provided the fundamentals needed to build all-season, multi-purpose sustainable trails for use by hikers and mountain bikers."

The Initiative's next step is to work with the Towns of Inlet, Wilmington and Lake Pleasant, who already have a Volunteer Mountain Biking Coordinator and a local grassroots Mountain Biking Committee. They also intend to encourage several other towns and villages to develop a similar plan, following the example of the three "model" towns. It is an immediate goal of the Initiative to find and encourage a total of six to eight towns who could be "Ready for Riding" in 2002 with a minimum of 3 or 4 loop-type mountain biking trails. Then, the Initiative's Steering Committee will help facilitate the planning and execution of a State and tourism-industry sponsored advertising campaign to spread the word that the Adirondacks is an attractive Mountain Biking destination.

Judi Borland remarked, "Our 6+ million acre Adirondack Park is truly unique in perhaps the entire country, with the potential that exists here for increased sports recreation tourism that includes mountain biking. Lee and I have traveled in 15 states in the past year and a half, and are not aware of any state or region from Mississippi to Maine that has this great a potential."

NYMBC Group Ride In Peekskill a Success

Eleven riders from around the state attended the group ride at Blue Mtn. in Peekskill last September. The ride was hosted by Erik Ferguson of the Westchester Mountain Bicycling Association. WMBA has been very successful working with the Westchester County Parks Dept. on getting access and building new trails. Erik led us on a long ride through Blue Mountain County Park that had some really nice trails (some built with help from the IMBA TCCs) and wowed us with his incredible technical riding skills. This was a great chance to touch base with riders from around the state, with the upstate and downstate IMBA reps coming literally from opposite ends of the state. From the top of Blue Mtn. I craned my neck to try see the skyscrapers of NYC 30 miles to the south. Unfortunately, I was unable to pick out any, not even the world trade center, which unbeknownst to us would live just 2 more days.

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@topica.com
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