



New York Mountain Bicycling Coalition

NewsLetter

Spring, 2001

Attention all NY MTB Advocates: Group Ride and General Discussion Session Tentatively set for September 9, 2001 in Hudson Valley

This is the first general all-state get together planned since the inaugural summit of 1997 that launched NYMBC. After four years of facilitating communication, it is time to get together once again to renew acquaintances and talk first hand about getting and keeping access to trails.

This is not a summit! This is not a big production with lodging, presentation sessions, etc. It will be relatively informal with riding being a key component of the meeting. However, while it will be informal, what we will discuss will be crucial to ongoing access efforts throughout the state. We need to hear first hand your experiences and insight.

This date is tentative since we plan to be flexible in order to have as many folks attend as possible. Please get back to me at jsundqui@buffnet.net or 716-655-5130 with your preferences on dates.

The ride and the meeting will be held somewhere in the mid to lower Hudson Valley. The Westchester MTB Assoc. has already offered to help arrange riding and meeting areas. So please respond soon.

News Flash: IMBA has just released its Epic calendar as I go to final print this newsletter. There is an EPIC in Western Mass this weekend. Would you want to meet there?

Ithaca-Cortland Area Facing Loss of Popular Trails; Recreational Master Plan to be Released This Summer

The DEC Region 7 has been actively developing recreational management plans for the many state forests stretching from Oswego to Binghamton, most of which offer what is the best riding around anywhere (NYMBC held its inaugural summit here, riding in three of these state forests). As you may recall, NYMBC put out the word back in 1999 when DEC was scoping input from users for their management plans. I sent out lots of copies of the questionnaire, and we had good attendance at the public meetings. DEC *does* intend to keep lots of opportunities for cyclists in these state forests. The DEC is strongly emphasizing the trail work they've done for cyclists at Jenkville and Oakley Corners and other places. However, things are not looking that good for the most popular place to ride, Shindagin Hollow, even though DEC wants to keep this place as a cyclist destination.

Yes, that's right, Shindagin will stay as a bike-friendly place. But here's the catch: Right now, the DEC recognizes none of the trails out there. Even though many of these trails have been around for the proverbial "forever" (i.e. at least since bikes became more popular in the early 90's), none of the trails out there are considered official DEC trails. Making matters worse, some cyclists have taken it upon themselves to build new trails out there, according to the DEC, about which they are seriously mad. Because of the new trail construction, they are now considering all trails at Shindagin to be illegal

bike trails, regardless of whether cyclists built them or not. Plans have not been finalized, but the impression gained from individual phone calls to DEC is that once the plan for Shindagin is completed and implemented, many of the existing trails now at Shindagin will be closed, to be replaced by DEC-designed and built new trails.

With one major exception, none of this is a done deal. The master recreational plan for all of Region 7 is coming out this summer. It will be a draft and there will be a public hearing. However, given that the DEC has been working extremely hard on this for two years, it is not likely that they will be willing to make major changes.

The major exception is this: Like all state forests, one of their uses is timber production. Usually timber harvests take the presence of trails into account and have provisions to either protect or repair trails during or after harvests. However, according to DEC, there are *no legal trails* at Shindagin, and thus this harvest will continue without any consideration of the trails, eliminating popular trails such as the Chair Trail. Thus rec plan or not, some of these great trails are likely to be lost this summer regardless.

It is obvious that better dialogue between the cyclists and the DEC is needed. Ithaca/Cortland riders have for years had access to what is arguably the best riding and greatest number of trails around anywhere in the country. Things have been going great, with complete access to everywhere except the Finger Lakes Trail. With such a situation, anybody would rather just go an ride rather than sit in meetings with the land manager or organizing clubs. That's human nature. However, things have now changed.

Fortunately, cyclists have realized the need to organize and a new local advocacy group is forming, initially to cover just the Shindagin issue. This group has set up a meeting with the DEC for 7 PM on Wednesday, April 18 (location not yet determined). If you care about keeping access to trails at Shindagin, please contact Rebekah Doyle at rld22@cornell.edu or Sara Barker at sb65@cornell.edu to find out how you can help and where the meeting will take place. The focus of the meeting is not to come down on the DEC for the planned logging,

but to try to constructively listen to the DEC's concerns while educating the DEC about the concerns of the cyclists. The goal is to have at least the major trails in the sale area protected during the logging operation.

This issue goes way beyond Shindagin. The Master Recreational Plan will address all state forest land in Region 7. This will be the governing document for years to come. This document will define the extent of mountain biking opportunities in this region for the foreseeable future. If the plan doesn't cover riding somewhere, then there is little chance we'll ever have a chance to ride there. This is a *very important document*. This plan is coming out in draft in June or July. The time for organizing for presenting a credible response to this document is now. Hopefully, a strong response will not be needed. Hopefully the document will provide lots of opportunities for biking. The DEC suggests that there will be such opportunities. But knowing what we know now about Shindagin, there will probably need to be a response, and the time to get ready for that is now!

WNYMBA progresses on legitimizing access to Hunters Creek

The process of getting legal access to Hunters Creek Park, the most popular riding area near Buffalo continues with mostly positive results. WNYMBA has been working with a multi-user "Friends of Hunters Creek" who have been active in educating the new parks commissioner how users want to see the park managed. Broad consensus has been reached, and Erie County, through still balking on officially opening the park due to liability reasons, does acknowledge the current high levels of use and has given tacit approval to reblazing the current chaotic trail system to provide a more consistent and understandable user experience (e.g. people won't get lost so much) and for performing trail maintenance work.

Meanwhile the county has announced that they will be developing a county-wide parks master plan that will address a variety of issues, including specifically trails. This document will be key to determining the use of trails in parks throughout the area for years to come. WNYMBA is concerned over the planned use of a local group known not to favor bikes to collect data for the study.

Draft Master Plan Released for Sterling Forest State Park

(Edited from flier by John Deerkoski)

A Public Meeting to discuss the Adoption of the Master Plan is being held as this newsletter goes to press April 10 & 11, 2001, at Tuxedo, NY, and Greenwood Lake, NY

The Sterling Forest State Park Land was purchased by New York and New Jersey using state and Federal funds a couple years ago, prior to that it was private wilderness land. The land is one of the largest tracts of undeveloped wilderness in southern New York and is approximately 50 minutes from Manhattan. There is an extensive network of fire roads and logging trails that could provide hundreds of miles of trails that are perfect for Mountain Biking. The park is adjacent to Ringwood State Park in New Jersey.

At this time the park is open to hiking, hunting and fishing but mountain biking is NOT allowed. As cyclists who reside in New York and New Jersey we must demand that we be allowed to use the land that our tax dollars helped to purchase. We must also demand that bikers be involved in developing the detailed plans and bike trails for the park.

The Palisades Park Commission is currently managing the park and together with the NY State Department of Parks and Recreation is finalizing the plans for the use of the Park. The meeting mentioned above is to discuss the final Master plan. It is one of the last steps in the process and will decide the extent to which Biking will be allowed in the Park. The Palisades Park Commission is traditionally anti-mountain biking as evidenced by its current regulations in other local parks such as Bear Mountain Park and others in New York. Your support is necessary to make sure we have access.

More information on how to obtain the text of the Master Plan may be obtained at the NY/NJ Trail conference website at www.nynjtc.org/~trails/issues/2001/sfmp.html Please read the Master Plan. Copies can be obtained from Thomas Lyons, Director, Environmental Management Bureau, NYS OPRHP, Empire State Plaza Agency Building #1, Albany, NY 12238. If you could not make the meetings please write to the Master Plan contacts and voice your opinion.

Adirondacks: IMBA TCC Trail Building Workshops Scheduled; New Website

Continuing with the new Adirondack Mountain Biking Initiative started this year the folks in the North Country have put on line their new website www.bikeadironacks.org As with all new web sites, this is under construction but new material is added all the time. Speaking of the AMBI, they are hosting the IMBA trail crew for two trail building workshops on August 3-4 in the Old Forge/Inlet area and August 5-6 in the Lake Placid area. Any and all NY bikers are welcome to attend. The only other NY stops for the TCCs this year is at Long Island on July 20-23, and Syracuse on July 27-30. More info is at the IMBA web site at www.imba.com

IMBA issues North Country Trail position paper

The North Country Trail is a 4000 mile (uncompleted) National Scenic Trail from New York to North Dakota. Like other National Scenic Trails, such as the Appalachian Trail, it is administered by the National Park Service. About half of the selected route in NY runs along the Finger Lakes Trail. Bicycles have access to singletrack portions of this trail only in the state forests of DEC Region 9. The National Park Service, in conjunction with the North Country Trail Association, is working to restrict the trail to foot travel only, and ban mountain biking and horse use from most of the 4,000-mile path. This process may be many years in the making, but it is based in the concept of achieving "a desired future condition" that bans from soft-surface sections virtually all uses except foot travel. IMBA is opposing this effort of the NPS, and has issued a details position paper currently available from the front page of the IMBA web site. Check it out for more info.

For more information on NYMBC:

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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
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