



New York Mountain Bicycling Coalition

NewsLetter

Summer, 1999

No State Meeting for 1999

I just brought my car in today (Sept 2) for its annual inspection, which was due in August. Similarly, the summer edition of this newsletter is also due in August, and I'm about as up to date on this as my car inspection! The bottom line, is that late summer has been busy with trail work and lots of great riding, and no time for planning another meeting for NYMBC. In last quarter's newsletter, I put out a call for interest in having a meeting in conjunction with the New York State Series Race at Chenango Valley State Park near Binghamton. This is a centrally locate area with great riding, and many folks might be there for the Chenango Valley Challenge. However, I received very little interested feedback for this. So coupled with the busy local action and lack of interest, we will hold off on holding another summit till next year. I do think it is important that we find the time next year to meet again in person and share what we know about fighting for open trails.

The good news, however, is that things have been going well state-wide, with the exception of continuing access restrictions and closure threats closer to NYC (see the spring issue). Many clubs have been active in new trail construction on public lands throughout the state. In the past, some have raised the argument that bikes don't belong on the trails because it was the hikers who built the trails, and who have the "sweat equity" in them. This is becoming less and less the case as bikers around the state have been working with land managers to build new trails.

Local Activists Working Towards Opening Finger Lakes National Forest Trails to Bikes

The Finger Lakes National Forest is the only national forest land in NY. Until recently, there has been no legal biking on this parcel of land between the southern ends of Cayuga and Seneca Lakes. However, David Burke of nearby Interlaken has, along with Bruce Feron have been working tirelessly on their own accord to get this changed. Currently, David reports that the first trails have been opened to bikes. However, most trails will have to undergo a lengthy environmental review process before they are opened. This is the standard approach taken by the forest service throughout the country when trail reevaluations are done.

Currently, Dave and Bruce are serving on an advisory committee of various trail user groups to iron out opinions on use of the trails. While Dave says some trails will probably not ever be open to bikes, good progress is being made. The purpose of the committee is to achieve consensus, and Dave reports that for the most part, good consensus is being reached. However, due to the forest service trail review procedures, it could still be three to four years before all the trails that can be open are opened. This is the time that will be required to complete the reviews mandated nationwide by the USFS.

If you are in the Finger Lakes area and what to give Dave a hand, contact him at 607-387-5186 or davdwb@aol.com

Capital Area Cyclists Meet With State Parks about Moreau Expansion

In mid-August, There was a regional State Parks meeting in the Albany area regarding mountain biking in state parks. What follows is an edited account of the meeting from Mohawk Hudson Cycling Club member Gary Thoman, who is also editor of MHCC's regular "Mountain Biking News" e-mail newsletter.

Attendees at the meeting included several state park managers, some other Office of State Parks and Historic Preservation (OSPHP) officials, a few bike retailers and mark Bettinger of the Sierra Club who also happens to be a strong advocate of mountain biking. John Butkus and Gary Thoman were there to represent users, although some of the other people at the meeting were also users.

Mike and Jan Riter, the IMBA Trail Care Crew #1 were there (following trail work days in Western and Central New York the previous weekend), and gave a presentation on proper trail design. They were awesome! They talked about how a trail should not go directly down a fall line, but instead wander back and forth following the natural contours. In their experience, on multi-use trails user conflicts become more numerous as trails become wider and straighter, because speeds increase. Generally, trails should be 18 to 30 inches wide and have both up/down and back/forth variations, to make the trail interesting and to keep the sight distance down. By making it impossible to see very far down the trail, rider speed is kept low. They also said that if an area has scenic spots or challenges (such as steep drops) and trails are not included to these areas, then users are likely to build unauthorized trails to them, causing maintenance and patrolling problems. These were good things to hear from an established mountain bike organization, which hopefully will have influence in the state agencies.

The most immediate purpose of the meeting was to discuss mountain bike trails at the new land (approximately 4,000 acres) in Moreau State Park near Glens Falls, including new land on both sides of the Hudson River. OSPHP would like to develop a general trail plan for the park, and then construct the trails. Some of the poorly designed/hard to maintain trails would then be closed. Since OSPHP has few

resources, the trails will probably have to be built by volunteer labor. DEC has a successful history of using volunteer labor for trail work on state forest land (see next article). Similar volunteer programs have been implemented in State Parks as well, including Green Lakes near Syracuse, and Allegany and Letchworth in Western NY. In the capital area, some of the individual park managers (such as Tom Conklin at Grafton) have developed similar programs as well.

Apparently the next step is to start the trail planning process for Moreau, although from the meeting it wasn't clear that there was any definite course of action. There will be a series of public meetings for user input later in the year. The process will probably extend for several years.

DEC Implements "Adopt-a-Natural-Resource" Program

Taking a page from the "Adopt-a-Highway" programs now in place everywhere, The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has now implemented an "Adopt-a-Natural Resource" program. This program was started last year to encourage volunteer maintenance in state forest lands. Previously, trail work was done under either the general volunteer applications or a temporary revocable permit (TRP). The volunteer forms were difficult to use since they were required to be filed out in advance, and had to be filled out by each individual worker (and who really knows who is going to show up for maintenance day in advance?!). The TRP was more flexible, authorizing specific activities. However, the TRP program is being phased out in favor of the Adopt-a-Natural Resource program.

The new program is very flexible and can be used for anything from maintenance a specific trail, to a wide variety of trail construction/maintenance/signage, etc. activities. As a real cool added advantage, the DEC will provide signs similar to the ones you see on the highways giving you credit for the trail work you've committed to do. So next time someone complains the bikers aren't doing their share of trail work, one can just point to the sign! Included on the next page is the simple form to apply for this program. Replace the DEC address with the one for your local regional office.

For more information on NYMBC:

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P.O. Box 784
Syracuse, NY 13209-0784
Tel: 716-655-5130
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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