



New York Mountain Bicycling Coalition

NewsLetter

Winter, 1999

First Newsletter Issue Publishes

NYMBC was founded late 1997 after a successful and productive meeting held near Cortland, NY at the Greek Peak Ski Area. Representatives from most of the major MTB advocacy groups from around the state came to figure out a way to increase communication among our groups, and to get a mechanism in place to handle state-wide policy issues affecting MTB access that may arise. Participants decided on forming the umbrella group NYMBC, deciding that most successful activities would continue to be accomplished at the local levels. We actually decided against producing a NYMBC newsletter, and instead just include state-wide issues in local newsletters. However, as NYMBC is intended primarily as a source of information, and given member groups' intense focus on local issues over the past year, the need for a NYMBC newsletter has become more apparent. Since as the IMBA NY representative I am asked to prepare quarterly reports of state activity, a newsletter is the best way to get this information out to both NY groups and IMBA. Of course, this newsletter is not the only conduit of information available to us. Remember that we have a web page at <http://www.ggw.org/NYMBC/> and an e-mail list at ny-mtb@cyclimg.org.

Since I am based in Western NY, most of the news here is from Western and Central NY sources. I'd like to provide more Adirondack, Hudson Valley, NYC, and Long Island news, so please send it my way (See end of the newsletter for addresses).

Columbia Land Conservancy Sets Multiple Use Conference April 17

Abbie Duchon of the Columbia Land Conservancy in Columbia County (mid/upper Hudson Valley) has been in contact with NYMBC regarding a planned conference this spring. The Conference, to be held April 17 in New Paltz, NY is called "Managing Open Space Resources" and is focusing on multiple use issues. She is requesting a MTB representative for a panel discussion as part of this conference. We have not identified a representative yet, but we really need to have someone attend this conference. Please contact Jon Sundquist if you can help out.

Ms. Duchon is also quite active in the NY Outdoor Coalition, a state wide coalition of outdoor groups (about 70 at last count). NY MTBers have had sporadic representation in this group before. While a state-wide group, it seems to be concentrated (at least in terms of meetings/active participants) in the Hudson Valley/Shawangunk/Catskill area. NYMBC intends to join this coalition, but we need a volunteer from this region who can act as a point of contact. This group is the one who has been pushing for a strengthened General Obligations Law, which is the law that protects land owners from liability from recreational users of their property. You can contact Ms. Duchon directly at the Columbia Land Conservancy, P.O. Box 299, Chatham, NY 12037, 518-392-5252, or at clc@capital.net (put her name in the subject line).

New Trails for Western New York

The word from New York is lots of new trails are planned to go in in 1999. WNYMBA and RBC have been working separately with different regions of the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for new trails in state forests in the Western Southern Tier of NY. WNYMBA had scouted out and received approval of about five miles of new singletrack in Ellicottville, and has already started the progress of installing some new trails in two other state forests within 15 minutes of Ellicottville.

The stuff in Ellicottville will start from existing trails behind Holiday Valley. This will provide an attractive alternative to the Finger Lakes Trail in this area. Although this area sports one of only two sections of the FLT that are open to bikes, this section is getting very heavy use, and the new trails will help disperse riders over wider terrain. We also hope to include some of the new trail in the annual Roots Rocks and Ridges Race.

The other two areas are in Golden Hill State Forest and Nine Mile Creek State Forest, both about 15 minutes from Ellicottville. WNYMBA already put in about 4 miles of new trail in Golden Hill late last year, and more is planned. Nine Mile Creek, hidden deep in the hills between Ellicottville and Olean already sports about 15 miles of old logging roads that have reverted to single track. Several more miles of new single track have been designated for this area, which could become a new mecca for Western NY biking.

Directions to these places, as well as detailed (and huge) maps of the trails are accessible from WNYMBA's web site at www.wnymba.org Contact Jon Sundquist at 716-655-3364 or jsundqui@buffnet.net for more info.

The Rochester Bicycle Club (RBC) has been hard at work on similar plans as well. They have new trails laid out in the Stid Hill state forest near Bristol Mountain ski area which are to go in next year. For more info, visit RBC at <http://www.win.net/rbc/bbs/rocn.htm> or contact todd.calvin@rbc/bbs.win.net

National Forest Trail Policy To Be Reevaluated

The only National Forest land in NY is a relatively small area in the Finger Lakes Region. The Finger Lakes National Forest (formerly known as the Hector Land Use Area) is located on the "backbone ridge" between the southern ends of Cayuga and Seneca Lakes. This area was the typical legal "grey area" place until a few years ago when bikes were officially banned from all trails in the forest. The section of the FLT through here, like most FLT sections, is included in this ban. However, the Forest Service is currently reviewing trail policy, and this could be the opportunity to get some trails open and/or get new ones built. However, although the Finger Lakes Region is known for its great biking, it's not known for strong advocacy. However, David Burke, who lives near the forest is trying to get some action going, and has been attending planning meetings. If you want to see biking opened in the Finger Lakes National Forest, contact David at davdwb@aol.com, or write him at 9181 Schier Rd., Interlaken, NY 14847. A local horse group has also contacted NYMBC to see how we can work together to make trails anything but "hiker-only". This group reports "As it now stands, mtbs are not allowed. All of us would like to see this change, except the hikers. They have a fair amount of written support, and we need someone to present at a meeting Feb. 22. People that would like to use these trails should e-mail elnorris@prodigy.com, or call Linda Pearsall (horse trails rep) at 607-280-0021 after 7PM."

Parts of Green Lakes State Park Reopens

A few years ago, Green Lakes State Park near Syracuse got shut down to bikes. This place was wide open to bikes before, perhaps too much, since without any regulation, it was the classic "give them enough rope to hang yourself" situation. Bad enough as this loss was for Syracuse, it threatened to have a ripple effect. In fact, the State Parks Office considered closing all state Parks to all MTB use, until Allegany Park Manager Barb Lester persuaded them otherwise. Still, after the Green Lakes Closing, biking became a

"regulated activity" in the parks. And of course, the easiest way of regulating was to close trails. CNY-Dirt worked hard with the parks people for years, including much maintenance on the closed trails. 1998 saw the fruits of their labor, as some trails were finally reopened. The park is still not "wide-open" as it was years ago. And there are still some trails that bikers wish they had access to. But overall this was a good step. Not just for the bikers of Central NY, but symbolically as well. The closure that threatened to domino into much larger closures has now been partially reversed. Congratulations to CNY-Dirt for their hard work and results.

Trail Planning Seminar to be Held

The Finger Lakes Trail Conference is Putting on a Trail Layout Workshop April 16 and 17 (Friday and Saturday) in Naples, NY. The workshop is focused on how to lay out a good trail through various kinds of topography. The workshop will be conducted by Bill Menke of the National Park Service. Mr. Menke is the NPS's representative for the North Country National Scenic Trail, which follows the FLT in New York. This seminar should be quite useful for planning trails that will require a minimum of ovrk to maintain. It is always easier to construct or reroute a trail correctly, than to spend countless hours trying to fix a badly placed trail. This will also be a good opportunity to meet with FLTC trails folks, and expand lines of communication with this powerful group (most of the FLT is still closed to bikes).

The workshop will be held from 9 AM to 4:30 PM at Camp Warren J. Cutler (which offers some fine riding, but is in need of more volunteer maintenance work) in Naples, NY. People are encouraged to attend either day, as their schedule allows. The Friday date was added to allow attendance by land managers "on company time", but is also open to the general public. For more info, contact NYMBC, or the FLTC at P.O. Box 18048, Rochester, NY 14618, fltc@axsnet.com

Draft Catskill Forest Preserve Public Access Plan Available for comment

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has issued the Draft Catskill Forest Preserve Public Access Plan. This plan includes proposals to:

- increase the visibility and improve the appearance of the Forest Preserve from Catskill Highways;
- institute a balanced approach to Forest Preserve access for various types of recreational activity;
- Foster public appreciation and understanding of the natural, cultural, educational, and economic values of the Forest Preserve; and
- Strengthen the connection between the Forest Preserve and Catskill local gov'ts, businesses, organizations, and residents.

This plan will affect our use of trails in the Catskill Forest Preserve in years to come. Public meetings were held in Late January and Early February on this draft plan. However, you may provide written comments to Jeff Rider at jarider@gw.dec.state.ny.us, or at:

Jeff Rider
NYS DEC Region 3
21 S. Putt Corners Road
New Paltz, NY 12561
914-256-3083

or

Peter Innes
NYS DEC Region 4
1150 N. Westcott Rd
Schenectady, NY 12306
518-357-2066

The public comment period for the draft Plan ends March 23, 1999. Please contact these folks for a copy of the plan, and please send your comments to them urging a continued policy of open trails for bikes.

For more information on NYMBC:

New York Mountain Bicycling Coalition
P.O. Box 784
Syracuse, NY 13209-0784
Tel: 716-655-5130
e-mail: ny-mtb@cycling.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)
Cortlandt Area Bicycle Club (CABN)
'Gunks Off-Road Patrol (GORP)
Fats in the Cats
Concerned Long Island Mountain Bicyclists

NYMBC
c/o Jon Sundquist
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