
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
Information Bulletin #30 (First Amendment)

SUBJECT: Mountain Bikes on DNR Properties

1. Introduction

This document establishes policies and guidelines to govern recreational mountain bike use on a DNR property (as defined at [312 IAC 8-1-4\(3\)](#)). The purpose of this information bulletin is to assure consistent, fiscally and ecologically sound decision making is followed in managing recreational mountain bike use on DNR properties.

Mountain biking is a valid recreational use of certain DNR properties. As a result of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Planning process, research into the outdoor recreation participation habits indicates mountain biking is one of the fastest growing outdoor recreation activities.

Mountain biking will be allowed on designated trails that are constructed or converted and maintained to recognized standards. These trails will be non-technical in nature and may be designated by the Department of Natural Resources (the DNR) in locations and lengths that do not unacceptably alter the environment, natural resources, or the existing or historic recreational opportunities of the area. This bulletin does not authorize the use of mountain bikes except at localities approved by the DNR and as conditioned here and on-site by the DNR.

2. Mountain Biking History and Background

Mountain biking is a relatively new sport and activity. In the last 25 years, mountain bikes have gone from being unheard of to the number one type of bike sold in the United States. Bicycles were originally a means of transportation, and they are still used that way today. The first mountain bikes were nothing more than road bikes with fat tires. Today's mountain bikes are technological marvels, with 24 or more gears, aluminum alloy frames, and even suspension systems. The off-road cyclist is looking for more riding areas to test both the rider and bicycle and to experience the outdoors while covering much more ground than the average hiker.

The Huntington Reservoir Mountain Bike Pilot Project has demonstrated the management of a mountain bike trail is feasible on some state properties. This information bulletin is intended ensure future bike trails adhere to sound management practices and that trails will be made available to more riders throughout the state.

3. Policy Statements

A. "Mountain bike" defined

The term "mountain bike" refers to non-motorized bicycles designed or used for off-road travel.

B. Trail construction and maintenance

Mountain bike trails shall be maintained using current International Mountain Bicycling Association standards. Trail density and carrying capacity will be determined and reviewed by the DNR as needed.

C. Mountain bike access to DNR properties

Access to DNR properties by mountain bikes is limited to designated public entrances. Public entrances are defined as day-use parking areas, designated trailheads and (for ride-on users only - no vehicle or trailer access allowed) those sites where designated mountain bike trails intersect a public roadway.

When trails exist in gated DNR property, users must enter through the gate and pay applicable fees.

Access from adjacent private property is authorized only if each of the following conditions is met:

1. The property is not gated.
2. The access is made a designated public trailhead for all mountain bike users with the landowner accepting liability, in writing, for public access through the property; or, the landowner grants the DNR a recreation access easement.
3. The development of an access does not conflict with another section or subsection of this information bulletin, and the access is consistent with the property plan for mountain bicycle trail management.

D. Multiple use and single use trails

Mountain bike trails on DNR properties shall be designated as mountain bike only, multiple use bicycles included, or otherwise identified special use trails. The use designation shall be based on resource, recreation, or maintenance considerations. Mountain bikes will be allowed only on trails or areas designated for this use ([312 IAC 8-2-1](#)).

E. Special event rides

The DNR may issue a license for a special event trail ride under the following conditions:

1. The event is limited in size so as not to exceed the specified carrying capacity of the facilities.
2. The sponsor of the event obtains a special event license from the DNR. The special event license shall contain appropriate conditions and deposit fees as determined by the property manager.
3. The property manager must pre-approve the use of all trails and facilities to be used for special events.
4. All special events shall comply with [312 IAC 8](#).

F. DNR properties that provide mountain bike trails

The decision to authorize a mountain bike trail on a DNR property is made by the division responsible for the management of the property. The decision shall be based on the division's mission statement, environmental considerations, and this information bulletin.

As a prerequisite to authorizing a mountain bike trail, a DNR property shall support a minimum of five (5) miles of continuous or connected mountain bike trail. In addition, the DNR will not add new or expand existing mountain bike facilities until each of the following conditions is met:

1. The facilities meet the DNR mountain bicycle trail standards.
2. Adequate funding is available to assure proper operation and maintenance of the facilities.
3. The need for additional facilities is verified.

G. Safety

The following standards apply to promote public safety:

1. Trails shall have a speed limit of 15 miles per hour on all multiple-use trails.
2. On multiple-use trails, mountain bike riders must yield to all other users.
3. The designation of a public vehicle road as a bike trail is limited to where no other trail routing is feasible. Trails currently using public vehicle roads should be re-routed to avoid this conflict. Every effort will be made to minimize the use by mountain bikes on the driving surface of a public vehicle road.

H. Volunteers and donations

The DNR shall actively pursue cooperative programs with individuals or groups wishing to volunteer services or donate funds or materials to improve facilities on DNR properties. Donations and volunteer efforts will be used only within a structured program approved by the division and consistent with this information bulletin and the goals of the property, the Division and the DNR. These structured programs will be jointly developed by property staff and volunteers whenever possible and will focus on bringing existing facilities up to standards before considering expansion or creating new trails or facilities. For each program, the property manager will define in writing what, if any, special privileges or conditions will be accorded to volunteers within that program.

I. Concessionaires

Any person, group, or firm that engages in business on a DNR property, or uses the property as the base for, or as part of, any for-profit business, must have a written contract or vendor's permit for operation from the DNR.

J. Education

To the extent practicable, the DNR shall provide users with information on the impacts of recreational use, methods of minimizing negative impacts, trail ethics and general natural resource information.

K. Closures

The property manager may temporarily close a bike trail, or a portion of a bike trail, where reasonably required to protect public safety.

An authorized representative (as defined at [312 IAC 8-1-4\(1\)](#)) may temporarily close a bike trail, or a portion of a bike trail, or may restrict users on a bike trail, for any of the following purposes:

1. Protection of public safety.
2. Protection of the environment.
3. Prevention of damage to the trail.
4. Trail maintenance or rotation.

The DNR director may close or restrict the use of a bike trail for any reason determined in the director's exercise of sound discretion.

Before implementing a closure, the DNR shall seek to minimize the negative impact on the recreational opportunities of all users. A closure should be conspicuously signed.

4. History

Information Bulletin #30 (24 IR 2262) was approved by the Natural Resources Commission on February 21, 2001, and became effective April 1, 2001. On January 16, 2007, the Commission reaffirmed this information bulletin.

Posted: 02/14/2007 by Legislative Services Agency

An [html](#) version of this document.