



OFF-ROAD

The official publication of the Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists

DECEMBER
2003

The MORC MISSION:

The Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists (MORC) is a non-profit volunteer organization dedicated to safeguarding the future of mountain biking in Minnesota through the promotion of responsible mountain biking, the establishment and maintenance of mountain biking trails, and the preservation of Minnesota's natural resources.

Next Board Meeting

Tuesday, Jan. 13th
at 7:00 p.m. at REI
Bloomington

Trail Closings..

This winter please check for trail closings at morcmtb.org before you ride!

Message from the President

2003 in Review

This has been an exciting year for MORC – we've experienced unprecedented growth and successes during 2003. I'd like to take a few minutes to recap what we've accomplished in 2003, and identify some key challenges for 2004.

Last November, the Board developed a set of Strategic Goals for 2003. Here are my impressions of how we're performing against those goals:

Continue to Strengthen Core Trail Work Activities at the Minnesota River Trail, Battle Creek, Lebanon Hills, and Terrace Oaks.

I believe MORC is doing quite well in this area. Not only are we maintaining the trails, but enhancements are being made to the trail systems. Lebanon Hills has become MORC's "signature" trail, showcasing how a sustainable trail can still be fun and challenging. The best indicator of how MORC is doing with trailwork is that we're seeing significantly higher ridership in all the trail systems we maintain. One note of caution – turn-outs at trail work sessions have been a bit spotty. We definitely need to work harder at recruiting volunteers next year.

Win Official Designation for natural surface bike trails in Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

Incomplete. We're still making progress, but big cities tend to move slowly. This will continue to be a key goal for 2004.

Successfully host IMBA HotSpots Activities in Minneapolis/Saint Paul.

This was an immensely successful event. Almost 100 people attended trail schools during HotSpots, and over half of them were Land Managers. IMBA officials have described the Twin Cities HotSpots visit as the "best one yet". While we can't hope for a HotSpots event next year, we're lobbying hard to get IMBA back in town next year for some follow-up sessions.

Successfully host two major bike races (Spring Cup at Buck Hill and 24 Hours of Afton).

Both events were quite successful. Attendance at the Spring Cup was down, due to threatening weather, and Afton proceeds were down a bit, due to expenses for prizes. However, feedback from racers at both events was quite positive, and both events raised significant funds for MORC's trailbuilding projects. For 2004, we need to further strengthen our event coordination efforts, to ensure the continued success of these fine events.

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Minnesota River Trail Update

I would like to introduce myself to the membership as I have taken over the Bloomington river bottoms trail steward activities for MORC from Dennis Porter, and in the process become a board member. It will be a tough act to follow Dennis Porter in this role, as Dennis is an institution with 10+ years of advocacy at all levels in support of the trail – thanks Dennis! As for myself I've been living in the area and riding the trail for 10+ years myself.

So what else is new? I'm sure you noticed that this summer and fall were great for riding at the river bottoms – with the dry summer and fall it's actually hard for me to remember where the mud holes are! With no flood damage to deal with this was a relatively easy year at the river bottoms. We organized some mowing in August, a concerned users ride, trash cleanup in October, and thanks to Don Youngdahl and his helpers plus QBP funding we now have some sweet stairs to help with access to the raft.

MORC members and other interested parties were urged to comment on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources draft plan for the Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area, which includes this trail – hopefully the final plan will reflect input from the users and maintain a natural trail. In the background IMBA and MORC have been working with the City of Bloomington and the associated landowners and managers of the trail area in addressing priority issues with the trail. Currently plans are in process to re-route two steep areas of the trail to address safety and maintenance issues. For more details see the trails area of the forums section on the MORC website. We hope to get the go ahead for work to start next spring, when we will need to ask for your help.

Please feel free to ride the trail year 'round – however help us protect the trail by refraining from riding anytime the ground is soft or muddy – and help police others as well.

Contact me with any questions related to the trail:
Steve Eberly - seberly@att.net

Web Site Update

It was an exciting year for MORC, and I'm not just talking about on the trails. 2004 saw much growth in MORC's online services. The site went through two look & feel changes, the addition and enhancement of many trail reviews, but perhaps the most exciting addition was the message forums. The forums went online last November and has since gained 582 members and seen over 12,000 posts! The forums have helped us better communicate MORC activities and events, but more importantly have become a place where area riders can hang out and talk about everything from what bike to buy to what SUV tends to roll over the easiest. The forums really showed their value when people started getting group rides together. I know I personally made many new friends and riding buddies last year via the forums. What a great way to get our biking community together!

2004 will see even more improvements online! There are plans to upgrade the forum software, continue working on trail reviews, and get more MORC merchandise for sale online.

Speaking of MORC merchandise, we are in the final steps of ordering the MORC jerseys! It is never too late to order a MORC jersey - just go to the merchandise page online and place your order anytime. We just need a minimum of 16 jerseys each time we place an order. (over 35 have been sold so far!)

John Lundell - Webmaster - john.lundell@usa.net

NCMBP—North Central Mountain Bike Patrol

The North Central Mountain Bike Patrol (NCMBP) has just completed another busy season. This group of dedicated mountain bikers patrolled more than 30 events during April - October 2003. The events include mountain bike races in Minnesota and Wisconsin, Adventure Races, and the Twin Cities Marathon. In addition members also patrol area trails to assist, educate, and inform riders.

Patrollers provide first aid, trail information, mechanical assistance, and trail user education at events and mountain biking areas.

Patroller candidates are required to have current certification in First Aid and CPR and attend a weekend training course in mountain bike patrol basics. Several members are also trained in Search & Rescue and have been contacted to assist with searches in the past year.

This past season NCMBP had a bike raffle, and the bike (Trek Fuel 80) was donated to the patrol by Penn Cycle. Many thanks to Penn Cycle for helping us raise the money to get the patrol back on our feet again. The bike was won by Loren Johnson of Chanhassen. Loren already had a "Fuel 100" so he traded the bike in for a Trek Fuel 98 for his wife. Congratulations to Loren and Mary Kay.

During the next year NCMBP will be filing for non profit status, and recruiting and training new volunteers. We are always looking for new patrollers. In addition to patrolling events and trails, interested members may have opportunities to assist with training, fundraising and development of the organizations non-profit status. For more information on becoming a volunteer please contact Tom Schoewe, Minnesota Patrol Coordinator at Tom@Blackstars.biz.

Happy Trails, Tom Schoewe — tom@blackstars.biz.

24 Hours of Afton - A Success in 2003

Thanks to the support of the MORC board, members and friends, the 10th version of this regional event went off well in August. MORC supplied the enthusiastic volunteers to staff set-up, registration, round the clock race timing, food sales, and teardown – THANKS AGAIN!

In the face of generally declining racing participation in Minnesota, the event was up about 10%, with 249 participants and the largest ever solo category. If you are not familiar with the event, or the promoting club The Habaneros, please visit the event website which has more details and some photos - www.24hoursofafton.org

This year marks the third year of event partnership with MORC. In three years event proceeds have benefited MORC to the tune of over \$13,000.

In 2004 the event will take place on August 27-28 at Afton Alps. It would be great to get more MORC teams out there – who's game to give it a try?

Steve Eberly, Habanero Bicycle Club - seberly@att.net

Editor's note: The MORC Board sincerely thanks The Habaneros for their generosity in donating the proceeds of the 24 Hours of Afton the last 3 years, and we hope to continue the partnership. If you're a racer contemplating a new challenge, here's an opportunity to participate in a truly unique event.

2003 IMBA Southern Minnesota Recap

2003 has been an extremely busy year for land access and trail building opportunities. Some of the highlights:

1. 10 day IMBA HotSpots program. Listed as one of the most successful in IMBA's history.
2. Trained 92 individuals in sustainable trail construction.
3. 21 personnel from Three Rivers Parks District attend one of the 2 day training classes during the Hot-Spots program.
4. Planned reroutes for River Bottoms trail.
5. Planned reroutes for Terrace Oaks Trail
6. Begun discussions with Washington County about possible access to some of their parks. Continued discussions with Three Rivers Park District.

I think one of the greatest indications of our success the past year was the improvement in our IMBA trail scorecard. In 2002 we had a grade of C and for 2003 we received a grade of B-. That is one huge improvement; can we top it for 2004?

I believe that next year we can move up to a B or even a B+. We have access to new areas as well as permission to improve many of the most popular existing trails in the Metro area.

One of the areas that we need to improve on is trail distribution. Most of the trails that we are working on are in the South Metro. We need to gain access to land in the other compass points of the area. Spreading the trail wealth around will allow everyone to have a favorite trail right in their own back yard. If you know of a park or parcel of land that has the potential for mountain bike trails let me or one of the MORC board members know. We can then begin making the contact with the land manager to get permission for trail work.

If you have any question please contact me:

Tim Wegner - IMBA Representative Southern Minnesota—twegner50@yahoo.com

Harmon Park / Salem Hills, Inver Grove Heights

With 3 miles of finished singletrack, 5 miles total of cut trail, 2 bridges, and a 40 acre field freshly planted with prairie grasses and wild flowers, Salem Hills is well on it's way to becoming a trail worth checking out next summer. Now, if we have a good showing of workers come spring and good weather, we should have it open even sooner.

For those of you who were among the 30 or more people who at one time or another this last summer were able to get away from the daily grind of work, family, or training to come and help develop this brand new park, many thanks. For those of you who have not had a chance to come check out the area or to get out and work on a trail, I will be posting dates and times on the Forums come spring.

When finished, Salem Hills will have a stacked loop system of multi-use trails for hiking and biking in the summer and snowshoeing in the winter, totaling close to 6 miles. The terrain is much like a golf course with beautiful sweeping climbs and descents through the open prairies and quick little runs through densely wooded pine and hardwood groves in the park. Deer, turkey, fox, and other wildlife along with wild blackberries, asparagus, and apple trees can all be found in the park along with some nice wooded clearings great for getting off the bike and taking a break.

Keep an eye on the website for more information and see everyone next spring.

James Ford - Salem Hills Trail Steward - kleincrazy@comcast.net

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Continue to grow the Affiliate program, by adding new Affiliate Members and establishing stronger bonds with existing Affiliates.

The Affiliate program has been very successful – bringing a wealth of new ideas to the MORC Board and dramatically increasing the size of MORC's extended membership. MORC currently has 12 Affiliates, which is twice the number with which we started 2003. However, Affiliate interaction & cooperation with MORC varies widely. For 2004, we need to focus our efforts on how to work more closely with all of MORC's Affiliates.

Establish regular (weekly/monthly) MORC social rides.

Bob Bryan has made some positive strides in morphing his TCBC group rides into TCBC/MORC group rides. This is still a work-in-progress.

Attain 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status.

Incomplete. Rick McFerrin has graciously volunteered to drive this process through to completion. We should have the necessary filings in place by March 2004.

Enhance the breadth and utility of online resources for Minnesota mountain bikers.

Thanks in large part to the efforts of John Lundell, MORC has made outstanding progress in this area during 2003. The MORC online Forums have provided a great success story – providing Minnesota cyclists with a very active meeting place that's available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

MORC achieved dramatic growth during 2003, increasing from approximately 200 members to approximately 375 members, plus 10 Corporate Sponsors. We have also significantly increased MORC's recognition & respect with Land Managers and the cycling community. A year ago, most Land Managers didn't know who MORC was – now many are asking for our help.

MORC opened a new trail system at Salem Hills Park in Inver Grove Heights, which will continue to grow in the coming year. We also completed a test loop at Murphy Hanrehan Park, with more work on the horizon with the Three Rivers Park District. And there's plenty more in the works!

One effort I personally believe is critical to the long-term success of mountain biking in Minnesota is the development of an in-state "destination" trail system, similar to CAMBA in Wisconsin or Maah Daah Hey in North Dakota. MORC has been in contact with groups in the Chippewa and Superior National Forests, and we're hopeful such a trail network can eventually be established by connecting the various trails scattered throughout these large and beautiful forests.

With all the growth MORC has experienced, we are seeing a few growing pains. We're now to the point where MORC has more potential projects than funds or volunteers to complete them. Therefore, we'll need to work harder next year at raising funds, submitting grant applications and recruiting volunteers. Once MORC obtains 501(c)(3) status, we'll need to be more diligent and detailed in tracking our activities and finances.

As MORC members, we should all feel proud of what has been accomplished in the past year. With your support, I'm confident we'll achieve even more in 2004!

MORC Annual Meeting & Party

The 2003 MORC Annual Meeting & Party was held at Buck Hill on Saturday, September 20th. By all accounts, the event was an unqualified success! The trails at Buck Hill were open to members all afternoon, and a large contingent took advantage of the great weather to get in plenty of riding and socializing. We fired up the grills at about 5:00 PM and proceeded to feast. I don't think anyone left hungry!

The Annual Meeting was called to order at approximately 6:00 PM, with the following major topics of note:

- 1) An excellent video montage was presented by James Ford.
- 2) Steve Garnjobst discussed MORC Goals & Accomplishments for 2003 and Challenges for 2004.
- 3) Affiliate Board members who served in 2003 were recognized for their fine efforts:
Bob Bryan, Twin Cities Bicycling Club (TCBC)
Hans Erdman, North Country Trail Patrol
Rick McFerrin, Two Wheel View/Trips for Kids
Kurt Lange, Cyclists of Gitchee Gumees Shores (COGGS)
Kristin Lohn, Boreal Bike Club
Alden Patton, North-Central Mountain Bike Patrol (NCMBP)
Miriam Taylor, Minneapolis Off-Road Cycling Advocates (MOCA)
- 4) At-Large Board Members not seeking re-election were recognized for their contributions:
Jan Lee, Matt Moore, Dennis Porter and Gary Sjoquist
- 5) Gary Sjoquist was designated as the first MORC Director Emeritus, an honorary title that acknowledges Gary's tireless efforts in founding MORC and working on behalf of Minnesota cyclists.
- 6) Members were given ample opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback, during a lively Question & Answer session.
- 7) The 2004 slate of MORC At-Large Directors was unanimously elected by the membership. Your 2004 At-Large Directors are:
Steve Eberly, James Ford, Steve Garnjobst, Jeff Gude, Dale Gundberg, Eric Lealos, John Lundell, J.J. Robb, Scott Thayer, Tim Wegner and Don Youngdahl
- 8) The meeting concluded with drawings for door prizes. Many thanks to Erik's Bike Shop, Penn Cycle and QBP for ensuring we had plenty of excellent items to give away. In fact, everyone who attended won something.

A special thanks to Buck Hill for providing MORC with access to the trails and use of the Chalet at NO COST!

Show Me The Money!

Where does MORC get its funds, and how are they spent? Good question! Here are some answers:

In 2001, MORC had income of \$11,800. In 2002, annual income grew to \$16,200. 2003 has been the best year ever for MORC, with income of \$23,500 through November!

Here's where that income came from:

- \$3500 from Habenero Cycling for the 24-Hours of Afton bike race.
- \$3000 profit from Erik's Spring Cup at Buck Hill bike race.
- \$2600 from REI to sponsor the IMBA trail schools this summer.
- \$1050 from Gravity Labs, QBP, Valley Bike & Ski, and Penn Cycle.
- \$500 from an IMBA / Cliff Bar grant for Minneapolis trails.
- And the remaining \$12,850 came from individual memberships, affiliate memberships, and from deposits on the new MORC jerseys. The individual membership numbers are at their highest level ever, due in large part to the positive response to the trail construction that MORC has completed the past several years. Thanks to all of you for your donations!

Now, where did all that money go? Here are the percentages:

- 56% to trail construction, trail tools, trail signage, and building materials like the treated wood for bridges.
- 19% to this summer's IMBA Trail Schools that trained over 60 Minnesota land managers and park department staff on the proper design and construction techniques for building sustainable mountain bike trails.

If you've been counting, that's 75% of MORC's income going directly into trails and new trail development. The remaining 25% goes to:

- 8% for MORC socks, t-shirts, and schwag for membership renewals and for the volunteer trail workers.
- 7% for the newsletter printing and mailing costs.
- 6% to keep the MORC web site up, running, maintained, and growing.
- 4% for insurance, the annual membership meeting, and all the other little stuff.

Your \$20 membership means a lot to MORC, and with \$15 going directly to trail construction and development, it means a lot to your fellow bikers as well. Thanks for your support!

Dale Gundberg - MORC Treasurer - traildale@netzero.net

2003 Lebanon Hills Trail Report

Here are the year's highlights:

January – Tim's Dream Trail, a one-mile extension to the expert loop was flagged to extend a single-track trail all the way back to the parking lot.

February – Elevated bridges were built off-site and hauled into the new double-X loop on frozen ground via an ATV and a trailer.

April – Meetings with land managers.

May – Construction continued to complete the double-X loop for a planned June opening. Tim (the MN IMBA rep and new MORC director) cracked a couple ribs and suffered some internal bleeding on a test ride – but on the brighter side, he did get a rock named after him. The Dingo built a nice tabletop jump, and volunteers, led by Jan Lee, built some truly difficult rock gardens and technical singletrack.

June – the new 1.5-mile double-X loop opened and brought a new level of challenge to the trail system. Subsequent weeks were spent adding log drops and other stunts. Volunteers rerouted the bike trail around some badly eroded doubletrack.

July – Both national IMBA trail crews visited the trail, rode it, and led volunteer crews who spent many hours adding new stunts, bermed turns, log rides, more rock gardens, etc. Thanks to Shad the BMX Man for fine tuning the take-off ramp on the tabletop jump.

August – we took a break from trail work, except for John Lundell, who is addicted to trail work and couldn't stop. Some people believe that John is really a poor homeless person who lives in the woods at Lebanon Hills. That's not true – he isn't poor. The Pioneer Press did a feature article called "Trail Blazers" on the volunteers and the trails they build at Lebanon Hills. The Dakota County Parks Staff inspected the route for Tim's Dream Trail and we discovered many bee nests along the trail. After being stung 4 times, I discovered that I have an allergic reaction to bee stings – doh!

September – Jan and Paula Lee settled into their new home in Sandpoint Idaho, and left behind a sad but strong and dedicated crew of trail volunteers. John Lundell took over as LH Trail Steward #2 and all was right with the world again – well almost. John flagged a bypass trail around an eroded double-track trail section, but he ran out of flagging tape and got lost in the woods – thank goodness for cell phones. Dakota County Parks proposed a \$25 per-person fee-for-use for all mountain bikers to take effect in 2004. MORC board members met with the Park's advisory committee and were successful in stopping any further action on this.

October – We began work on Tim's Dream Trail – a combination expert/intermediate section of new trail that bypasses most of the doubletrack and creates a singletrack exit from the expert loop that meanders for about a mile and ends up back at the parking lot. We added Saturday work sessions and crews cut the buckthorn underbrush, chain sawed the deadfall, installed a new bridge, and used the TrailSource Bobcat and Dingo equipment to cut thousands of feet of bench-cut trail on some very steep side slope. The new trail is fast and flowing and should be a blast to ride next year. We completed over 90% of the trail this fall, so we should be able to open it right away in 2004. And, finally, we added a 16-foot long teeter-totter to the double-X loop. It's just a temporary installation right now, but if all goes well, we have the materials ready to cement in a permanent installation in 2004.

November – We flagged some more new trail for 2004 construction.

Now for the good stuff: What's going to happen in 2004?

Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists-MORC

1905 Woods Lane
Burnsville, MN 55337

www.morcmtb.org



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In May, Tim's Dream trail will open in its entirety. It will be soft for the first week or two, so be gentle. It will harden up quickly and morph into a big-ring, big-air trail with lots of scoot. In June we hope to have approval to start construction on the new trail we flagged this past November. The gravel road trail out of the parking lot is scheduled to be replaced with all singletrack that measures approximately 1.25 to 1.5 miles and we will then abandon all the ski trails for bike use. With the concentrated use that LH is seeing, the ski trails just aren't holding up. When this section is completed, LH will be a 100% singletrack experience, and will give riders an opportunity for two complete laps at right around 18 miles. Sweet. The rest of the summer will be spent tuning up the existing trail system and adding more fun stuff to ride.

Come out and volunteer for some trail work sessions, or at least to be a test rider for the new trail we'll build. Who knows, you might get a sharp rock named after you! See you next spring.

Dale Gundberg - Dakota County Parks Trail Steward - traildale@netzero.net