

# OFF-ROAD RIDER

The official publication of the Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists

## SPRING 2002

### 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.

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### Next Board Meeting

Tuesday, June 11th  
at 7:00 p.m. at REI  
Bloomington

## President's Message

First of all, "Thank You" to all of you who supported MORC in 2001, with either your membership, your volunteer efforts, or both. 2001 was MORC's most successful year to date.

### 2001 Highlights

- Conducted an IMBA trail school for over 20 participants, including several land managers and many park department staff.
- Full page article on IMBA/MORC and mountain bike trail building in the Star Tribune (see the MORC web site for a copy).
- Purchased over \$2000 of mountain bike trail signage.
- Kicked off the Adopt-A-Trail program to put a MORC member in face-to-face contact with area land managers.
- Over 800 volunteer hours at Lebanon Hills through weekly trail construction sessions.
- Over 500 volunteer hours at Battle Creek on new trail construction, maintenance and restoration.
- Hundreds of volunteer hours at the Minnesota River Bottoms Trail.
- Organized a trail ride through the MN River Bottoms for a dozen staff from the DNR, MN State Parks, and from the City of Bloomington.
- Put together a MORC tool trailer, complete with dozens of trail building hand tools and some really sweet power tools.
- Became the adopted charitable organization of the 24 Hours of Afton mountain bike race by providing volunteers to help with the race setup and coordination – this results is a very sizable contribution to MORC – thanks to Gary Sjoquist for hooking us up.

### Goals for 2002

- Roll out the new and improved MORC / Minnesota MTB web site with the most complete and comprehensive Minnesota mountain bike trail directory and mountain bike event calendar on the web.
- Provide trail development assistance and web site hosting for MORC's new affiliate members.
- Constructing three more new singletrack trail sections at Lebanon Hills Regional Park.
- Updating trail signage and finalizing trail layouts and mapping for Battle Creek park.
- Working with the new mountain biking Mayor of Minneapolis, RT Rybak, to organize, map, restore and construct a city-sponsored and approved mountain bike singletrack trail network. To quote the Mayor, "For example, a great trail could be laid out using parts of Wirth Park, around Brownie Lake, coming down the Cedar Lake Trail into the woods behind Private Beach and back to the Cedar Lake Trail...up the river to Minnehaha Falls along paved trails and then onto the trails near the Falls leading into Ft. Snelling." This could be a whole lotta trail miles.
- Revise, restore, and reconstruct the mountain bike trails at Terrace Oaks in Burnsville.
- Prepare for next summer's IMBA Trail School, to include free attendance to city and county parks staff with a focus on Minneapolis city employees.
- Finish the design work and construct a very fast, race-training oriented 10 to 15 mile singletrack trail on National Guard property in Arden Hills.
- Race and event assistance at the Erik's Spring Cup at Buck in May, the 24 Hours of Afton in August, and the Lebanon Hills MTB Time Trial this Fall.

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## Lebanon Hills Trail Work Sessions

Again this summer, MORC will be coordinating weekly trail building sessions at Lebanon Hills Regional Park in Eagan, MN. We will meet every Tuesday evening from 6:00 to 8:00 PM beginning May 7<sup>th</sup>, at the mountain bike trailhead parking lot on Johnny Cake Ridge Road.

Take the Cliff Road exit off 35E in Eagan, head East about a quarter-mile to Johnny Cake Ridge Road, and then South a quarter mile to the parking lot. Wear long pants, hiking boots, eye protection, and work gloves. You may also want to bring water and bug spray.

MORC will provide all the necessary tools and instructions. This year, we are building 3 new singletrack sections:

1. a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile beginner loop with moderate grade changes that winds through the pine trees near the parking lot.
2. a 1-mile intermediate loop that is very fast and flowing with open site lines.
3. a mile of tight expert singletrack that emphasizes technical riding skills over raw speed.

All three of these new trails will be optional loops off of the main doubletrack trail.

For more information, contact Dale Gundberg at 612-242-1887.

## REI Trail Day Report

In August 2001, MORC partnered with REI on a "Trail Day" to restore and construct new trails in a county park. Over 40 volunteers participated, with REI providing the food, beverages and T-shirts. About 25 volunteers were mountain bikers, and the rest were hikers and XC skiers.

MORC made a real effort to contact and encourage the non-mountain biking user groups to participate, and they did in a big way. The hikers and XC skiers worked alongside experienced mountain bike trail builders the whole day and gained a great appreciation for the mountain bike community's dedication to, and knowledge of, trail building and restoration. At the end of the day, we had closed and reclaimed about 1600 feet of eroded hiking and biking trails by top dressing with black dirt, seeding with oats and rye grasses, and laying down 10' wide protective straw mats to stabilize the soil. Two new singletrack hiking/nature trails were completed by the hiker/mountain biker teams, and 1400 feet of new mountain bike singletrack was substantially completed.

This was the first trail building experience for most of the hikers and XC skiers, and they took to trail restoration and construction with a vengeance. They were taught the proper layout techniques for sustainable trail design, learned how to use strange new hand tools like Pulaskis and McLeods, and received hands-on instruction in the construction of a proper bench cut, grade changes and rolling-grade dips. They left much the wiser, dirtier, tireder, happier, and much more appreciative of what mountain bikers bring to the cause of sustainable trail building.

Most promised to return for more of the same, and expressed an interest in attending an IMBA trail school when one is available, so that they can share all that they will learn with their hiker or XC skier user base. When all was done for the day, the trails had benefited tremendously, however, the more lasting benefit was the recognition by the hikers, XC skiers, and County Parks staff, that mountain bikers are great people to work with, and probably know more about sustainable trail building than anyone else they know. That recognition not only put mountain bikers at the table, it put us at the head of the table.

In the months that followed that event, the County Parks Department has contracted with Mike Riter (of IMBA's original Trail Care Crew) for 14 days of trail layout and re-design. In just this one park, not just the mountain bike trails, but the Park's entire 2200 acre system of hiking, horse, and XC ski trails -will be placed in the capable hands of mountain bikers. The local mountain bike group, MORC, has been asked by the County to follow up on the consulting work done by Mike Riter, and to coordinate all the volunteer groups that will be involved in the trail re-alignment, restoration, and construction over the next several years. In just a very short time, and for a long time to come, mountain bikers are making their presence known on every trail and to every user group in the park, and gaining a very positive reputation in the process.

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## MN River Trail is Ready to Ride

The MN River Trail is ready to ride and the raft is in place to cross Nine Mile Creek. The trail is dry just about everywhere with only one muddy area in the Izaak Walton League property. I would just like to send a few reminders to everyone that rides this trail.

- Show respect to all other trail users. If we are going to keep this trail open to mountain biking, riders need to slow down when encountering others trail users.
- Stay on one trail. Those of us that put in a lot of volunteer time working to keep this trail open find it's difficult to defend mountain biking to Land Managers when there are more than one trail in one area.
- Don't ride on the trail when conditions are wet and muddy. It tears up the trail and wrecks the drive train on your bike.
- Veteran Riders - We need your help in educating the people that are newer to the sport on trail issues. Let them know if they are doing things to jeopardize the reputation of mountain bikers and explain why, so they understand the issues that can close down trails.

I plan on doing some trail maintenance sessions in late May or June. I'll send out information soon. Have fun riding!!!!

Dennis Porter

## Fast Down Hills—Erosion—Trail Closures

Why do some trail sections get closed, and/or replaced by reroutes that are much different than the original trails? Good question, and one that many riders on the trails are asking the volunteer MORC trail workers they encounter.

The short answer is lawsuits, erosion, and money, although not necessarily in that order. A public trail with high usage and erosion problems is either a) a constant drain on a land manager's financial and labor resources, or b) if not maintained, it becomes a danger to the public. The filing of a lawsuit by an injured cyclist, usually precedes the complete closure of the trail to all users. There has to be a better answer, and thankfully there is. It's called "Building Sustainable Trails".

At this point, a quick history of the mountain bike trails on public lands in Minnesota is in order. Way back when, before you and I rode our bikes in the dirt, trail erosion on steep down hills was a minor issue, but not a severe problem. This changed when mountain bikes came along.

Since mountain bike trails didn't exist, the land managers had to find a place to provide this new user group with a suitable off-road cycling experience. Building a new trail system was out of the question (no money, time, user demand, limited space, and government red tape) so the quick solution was to open the XC ski trails to mountain bikers in the summer – after all, in most cases the trails were just sitting idle over the summer. This got the mountain bikers out into the woods right away– a good thing – however, in the years that have followed, summertime erosion on XC ski trails has become a significant maintenance issue for area land managers.

Indeed, virtually all the state's XC ski trails that have in the past 10 or 15 years been opened to bikes or hikers in the summer are now addressing fairly severe erosion control issues. The solutions that have been attempted so far are:

- 1) fill the ruts and gullies a couple times a year (and they eventually wash out again with the next significant rainfall),
- 2) turn the dirt trail into a gravel road by covering it, and the ruts and gullies, with 3 to 5 inches of "class 5" rock (and eventually all the rock ends up at the bottom of the hill),
- 3) limit bike usage to a short two-month Fall riding season (like Murphey-Hanrehan),
- 4) build a new re-routed trail and close the eroded section (but typically the same trail design errors are made and the re-route erodes even more quickly),
- 5) close the trail to bikes and all other summer use

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(Continued from page 3) **Fast Down Hills-Erosion-Trail Closures**

- 6) build a well designed, re-routed sustainable trail to replace the problem section. Unfortunately, without input from the mountain bike community, this is the typical 10 to 15-year life cycle of an XC ski / mountain bike trail in the Midwest, except that it often ends with step #5 – trail closure.

Recognize that if a fun fast downhill or uphill section of your favorite trail just got closed and re-routed, and you don't like the re-route that the volunteers built – that the probable alternative was the closure of the trail. In that light, the re-route doesn't seem so bad. In fact, anytime a trail is changed this way, there will always be those that just love the changes, as well as those that are unhappy. It just proves that no matter what is done, nobody can please all of the people, all of the time.

This is not just a Minnesota XC ski trail and mountain bike problem. For those of you familiar with the Rock Lake Trail near Cable WI (part of the Chequamegon trail system), you know that this is probably the most fun and challenging trail in the Chequamegon Area Mountain Biker Association (CAMBA) system.

What you may not know, is that the entire Rock Lake Trail is being closed and rebuilt on a totally new route. The challenge will be to maintain the fun and technical challenge of the current trail, while adding sustainability into the mix. Over the next couple years, new sections will be built and existing sections closed, until the entire XC ski-based trail is abandoned for bike use. Without CAMBA, the entire trail would likely have been closed permanently.

Another example is the horse trail system in Dakota County. Over the last couple years, County management has received a wealth of sustainable trail knowledge through MORC and the International Mountain Biking Association. With that knowledge, they have determined that the extremely severe erosion problems on the horse trails that run straight up and down hills, are not fixable. If the horse riding community cannot come up with the volunteers to build re-routes, entire trail sections will be closed and the horse riders will lose 20% of their trails.

What MORC is dedicated to doing to preserve our places to ride, is to stay in close contact with land managers, train them in sustainable trail construction for all users, and assist them in correcting not just current trail problems, but the looming problems as well, so that "trail closure" never has to be a topic of discussion..

We do this through MORC's Adopt-A-Trail program, and through the efforts of trail-building volunteers like you. Every hour of trail maintenance work that can be avoided by building sustainable trails, is an hour that can be devoted entirely to building more trail mileage. With your help, MORC will succeed in its overall mission of "Gaining and Maintaining Trails"

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(Continued from page 2) **REI Trail Day Report**

### **2002 REI Trail Day at Lebanon Hills Regional Park – Eagan, MN**

Saturday, June 22<sup>nd</sup> 9:00 – 1:00 Lunch and T-shirt provided by REI New trail construction and restoration of abandoned trail sections.

You'll need long pants, hiking boots, eye protection, and work gloves. Tools will be provided by MORC.

Contact Pat Campion at REI to sign up and ensure that there will be enough shirts and lunches. [pcampio@rei.com](mailto:pcampio@rei.com) 952-884-4315

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(Continued from page 1) **President's Message**

- Sponsor and coordinate numerous trail maintenance sessions on an as-need basis.

### **Want to be a MORC Director?**

We are looking for new members to join the MORC Board of Directors. All you need to qualify are a good attitude and a willingness to contribute your time to improve mountain biking in Minnesota. MORC board meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM at REI in Bloomington and all members are welcome to attend. If you have any questions about MORC, feel free to contact me anytime at 612-242-1887 or e-mail me at [traildale@msn.com](mailto:traildale@msn.com).

Dale Gundberg

## MORC Goes to the IMBA Summit at Moab

MORC President Dale Gundberg, MORC Board Member Gary Sjoquist, and Northern MN IMBA State Rep Kurt Lange traveled to Moab, Utah for the 2002 IMBA Mountain Bike Summit April 18-21. Here's a report from Gary Sjoquist.

Dale and I flew into Salt Lake City, picked up a rental Ford Expedition, and hightailed it through blinding snow-showers to Moab eventually reaching Red Cliffs Lodge. Kurt had driven down, using the Summit as an excuse for two weeks of riding in Colorado.

The first order of business, since it was too late to go riding, was to drink some Fat Tire Amber (a sponsor, after all) and renew acquaintances. Many of the folks at the 02 Summit were IMBA State Reps and other advocates who had been at IMBA Summits in 1996 at the Biosphere near Tucson, 1998 in Kentucky, and 2000 outside of Austin, TX. In between beers, each attendee received a snazzy pair of Lake mountain bike shoes.

Friday, April 19<sup>th</sup>, the Summit officially began. Participants included nearly all of IMBA's state and international reps, plus key federal land managers from the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, BLM, Army Corps of Engineers, as well as journalists, industry sponsors, and leaders of other cycling and conservations groups. Nearly 200 people attended the Summit, whose major sponsor was REI.

During the Summit, several new IMBA initiatives and partnerships were announced, including:

- A memorandum of understanding was signed to promote cooperation between the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance brand of the National Park Service and IMBA
- A renewed partnership between IMBA and BLM was confirmed through 2007. BLM had several representatives in attendance to gather feedback that will be used to formulate the agency's new mountain bike strategy.
- A developing partnership between the Army Corps of Engineers and IMBA was announced to encourage new trail development on Corps land (the Corps manages more than 2,800 recreation areas coast to coast).
- Bikes Belong Coalition, a trade association representing the \$6 billion dollar per year bicycle industry, awarded its first grant to build a mountain bike trail. The grant was awarded to the Jackson Hole Friends of the Pathways organization, which build trails in Jackson Hole, WY.
- Cliff Bar awarded six IMBA Trail Preservation Grants at the Summit

For the first time, the IMBA Summit offered concurrent sessions on both Friday and Saturday. Attendees could choose from sessions devoted to building clubs, political effectiveness, IMBA's new partnership with Sprockids (mountain biking as part of school curriculums), funding opportunities, working with the Trail Care Crew Program and several other topics.

Both days, fortunately, a large chunk of time was reserved for riding since many in attendance had only read about Moab's famous riding opportunities. Friday, the entire Summit list of attendees was shuttled to the Slickrock Trail thanks to Western Spirit Cycling, one of Moab's major mountain bike touring companies.

Riding Slickrock was challenging, with surprisingly steep, short climbs and tight off-camber turns. It also required your full attention, since getting too far off-line meant a major fall of several hundred feet. With lots of folks riding Slickrock, (including tour groups of absolute beginners being reminded how to shift!), on essentially a two-way, narrow trail, it was a little dicey at times.

Saturday, Summit riders were shuttled to the Top of the World Trail, a 5.8-mile climb of nearly 6000 feet that found us battling more snow showers and a pretty technical trail of rock ledges, sand, gravel, and switchbacks up, up, up, and up some more. The view from the top was definitely worth the two hours of granny gear climbing, though, as it really did seem like the top of the world for all the panoramic views. The trip down was fast and hairy, using rock formations as berms, but also stunningly scenic. During the climb, there was little time to focus on the scenery, but on the way down you couldn't help but see the rocky bluffs, buttes, and red rock coloring set against blue gray clouds. It was pretty cool.

The closing reception on Saturday evening came all too soon. Ned Overend showed up to help IMBA give away schwag, and finally IMBA's executive director Tim Blumenthal gave a final summation. IMBA staff had done a terrific job of organizing the Summit, and it was very impressive that so many federal folks had come from DC and stayed to give presentations, talk with Summit attendees, and ride. The riding was great, the food was great, the location killer, and everyone came away motivated, educated, and renewed to fight the good fight for mountain biking once again.

## **Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists-MORC**

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Burnsville, MN 55337

**www.morcmtb.org**  
**www.MinnesotaMTB.com**

### **24 Hours of Afton Update**

MORC is fortunate to be the benefiting charity for the 24 Hours of Afton Mountain Bike Race on August 23/24. Held at Afton Alps Ski Area near Hastings, MN, this event is a great fund-raiser for MORC because it requires no financial investment on our part – basically, it's an opportunity for MORC members to pitch in, work a three-hour shift helping make the race happen, and allow MORC to gain \$5000.

But for this to happen, we need to have MORC members commit to helping staff the event. The worker schedule goes like this:

- Friday, Aug. 23<sup>rd</sup> – We need help from noon until 5:00 pm getting the race course set up, helping checking race teams in, and setting up the scoring system.
- Friday, Aug 23<sup>rd</sup> 5:00 pm through Saturday, Aug. 24<sup>th</sup> 5:00 pm - We need to have volunteers signed up to monitor the scoring for 24 hours continuously – each lap, each race participant's number must be manually logged and entered in the computer. We need teams of two people to commit to covering three-hour shifts (Friday 4 to 7 pm, 7 to 10 pm, 10 to Saturday 1 am, 1 to 4 am, 4 to 7 am, 7 to 10 am, 10 to 1 pm, 1 to 5 pm (the only 4 hour shift).
- Saturday, Aug. 24<sup>th</sup> 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm – we need several people to help with event tear-down and clean-up.

MORC is extremely fortunate to have the 24 Hours of Afton event. Most non-profit organizations like MORC have to generate expensive fund-raising schemes like direct mail, displays at events, grant-writing to foundations, etc. for financial support, none of which is a sure thing. The 24 Hours of Afton, though, is a great fund-raiser because it's very concentrated – one weekend once each year, easy to complete tasks, and with no financial risk to MORC. Please help if you can – this is a great way to do your part and support the work that MORC is doing on behalf of Minnesota's mountain bikers. We need to have more people at this year's event, so call Gary Sjoquist at (952) 941-9391, ext 288 or [garys@qbp.com](mailto:garys@qbp.com) to sign up to help. Thanks!