

## **Request for Public Comment on Mt. Bike Trail Enhancements**

The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA) is seeking public comment on proposed enhancements to the existing 7-mile long Mountain Bike Trail at Fountainhead Regional Park in Fairfax Station, Virginia. The project is to be funded with \$100,000 grant assistance from the Virginia Recreational Trails Program (RTP). NVRPA and the local mountain bike club Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts, Inc. (MORE) plan to repair and enhance the current mountain bike trail at Fountainhead to provide a sustainable trail system that protects the environment and reduces maintenance, and to provide opportunities for diverse mountain biking experiences. The project will rehabilitate 3.5 miles of existing trail, close one mile of unsustainable trail, and build 4 miles of new trail as shown on the map below. Areas that are of most concern with regard to safety and trail sustainability will be completed first. Trails will be built using the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) sustainable trail building standards.

Written comments must be received by 5pm January 22, 2010 at NVRPA, 5400 Ox Road, Fairfax Station, VA 22039 or by email at [plandev@nvrpa.org](mailto:plandev@nvrpa.org).

The current eight miles of single use mountain bike trail at Fountainhead Regional Park provide a very challenging cross country trail system. This trail system has become one of the most popular riding destinations in the region. However, there is significant erosion and trail widening in many locations of the trail system. These areas are a result of unsustainable alignments, steep grades, poor flow, overuse, and riders going off the trail to find less challenging routes. The largest areas of concern are where the eroded sections are adjacent to running water and may be contributing to sedimentation. NVRPA and MORE are concerned not only for the current environmental impacts of the trail system but also for the decrease in riding experience. In order for the Fountainhead mountain bike trail to maintain value as a recreational trail system, it is imperative that steps be taken to address design flaws and ongoing erosion.

In 2007 the local mountain biking club, MORE, hired IMBA Trail Solutions to complete an enhancement plan for the Fountainhead mountain bike trail system. NVRPA approved the plan in 2008. The plan provides an opportunity to rehabilitate the unsustainable overused trail system. In the current footprint of the existing mountain bike trail system, a twelve to sixteen mile stacked loop trail will be built to provide superior trails for varying riding abilities.

The enhanced trail will provide a well planned stacked looped system, which is ideal for beginners through enthusiast riders. The current Fountainhead trails are not designed for beginner riders. The trails are too steep and at points too eroded for a novice to negotiate the trail safely. However, with a stacked loop trail there will be a beginner level loop, an intermediate loop, and an advanced loop. The beginner loop and intermediate loop will be the core trail while the outer most loop (furthest point from the trailhead) will be the most technical and advanced loop. This type of trail system allows newer and younger riders to advance to more difficult trails as their fitness and skill level improves. Stacked looped trail systems encourage new riders to the sport by providing the opportunity to increase their skill level before riding on trails that are too challenging. This type of trail will be a great

improvement to the Fountainhead Trails and accommodate the widest variety of riders.

If the RTP is awarded for this project, the funds will be used to complete the enhancement project on Loop One (beginner loop) and finish completion of Loop Two (intermediate loop). Funds also will be used to add a new trail to Loop Three (advanced loop). By completing Loops One and Two, and extending Loop Three, the trail system will provide the necessary improvements to create a stacked loop trail system. The trail will be rehabilitated to accommodate novice and advanced riders.

The Recreational Trail Funds will implement the rehabilitation of existing trail and the building of new trail to complete the entire beginner loop. Approximately 6,205 linear feet of new trail will be built and 3,872 linear feet of trail will be rehabilitated (closure or modification of existing trail) in the intermediate loop. Implementation of the enhancement project will have begun on the intermediate loop before RTP funds are awarded. However, RTP funds will be used to complete the remainder of 5,658 linear feet of rehabilitation and 13,198 linear feet of new trail in the intermediate loop. RTP funds also will be used to build approximately 8,238 linear feet of new trail in the advanced loop. (Please see attached map for different trail sections.)

As soon as the RTP is awarded, the project will be able move forward on hiring contractual work. NVRPA and MORE will work together to put the project out for bid based on the proposed IMBA Trail Enhancement Plan and contract a professional trail builder, with experience in mountain bike trail design and build work. Trail rehabilitation and enhancement work will be completed by a combination of professional trail builders and volunteer labor. A majority of the work will be accomplished by machinery and hand tools appropriate for trail building within narrow trail corridors. MORE's volunteer labor and other volunteer groups, such as the Boy and Girl Scouts, will be used to do the majority of the physical volunteer labor.

Due to the popularity of the trail system and the excitement surrounding this project, volunteers are eager to help out. The use of enthusiastic volunteers and MORE's knowledge and trail building experience at Fountainhead trails will help expedite the project.

Project implementation may be dependent on the schedule and availability of the contracted professional trail builder. Proper trail design also can be dependent on seasonal vegetation so timing of trail design will be important to the implementation of the project. Trail building can be postponed due to poor weather however no other possible project delays are foreseen.

During the design phase, IMBA and its local affiliate MORE, have been intimately involved in the design and layout to ensure that the planned construction yields trail that conforms to IMBA's strict standards for sustainability. Great attention has been and will continue to be paid to the construction of the trail to ensure high quality sustainable trail building standards are met. Construction will also make use of natural, local stone for armoring as appropriate to limit tread damage due to erosion.

The trail redesign will ultimately reduce maintenance related expenses (labor and material) required to keep the current trail system usable and fun. Sedimentation will be reduced through the use of erosion resistant trail alignments and trail construction techniques. Current trail-widening will be prevented by improving flow and sustainability. By providing

an easier entrance loop, less accomplished riders can work on gaining the skills and confidence required for the more difficult trails. This combined with effective filters, such as bridges without ramps at the entrance to the more difficult trails, should aid in keeping the single track 24" wide or less. Even though the overall mileage of the trail system is recommended to increase, the reduction in width on many sections may result in a very similar footprint in terms of square feet of compacted trail.

