

October 23, 2012, BHMBBA representatives Brent Kertzman, Chris Treinen, Dan Schneider, Jason Kingsbury and Jerry Cole met with Amy Ballard, Brady Howe, Dave Slepnikoff & Shirleen Haas of the Mystic Ranger District. Dave Slepnikoff oversees the recreation department for the Mystic Ranger District. Amy Ballard is in charge of special use permits such as what the Fat Tire Festival operates under. Shirleen Haas is in charge of all trails. Brady Howe is the non-motorized trail and recreation technician on the district. The meeting was opened by Dave Slepnikoff noting the Mystic Ranger District is seeing and feeling Rapid City's impact on Mt Biking.

We had a short conversation about unauthorized user-built trails. The Forest Service made it clear to the BHMBBA that Unauthorized User Building needs to cease including re-routing trails and the construction of new trails. Whether the new trail construction is simple raking in or bench cutting, both are illegal. Working in the spirit of partnership with the Forest Service the BHMBBA strives to educate the public why we can't just go build a trail without permission. EIS & NEPA studies are required for any future re-routes & new trails. By going through the proper channels and making sure that all necessary steps are taken we will ensure that the trails that are legally built will exist in perpetuity.

The Forest Service has specific steps that they must take prior to the start of any new project to make sure that the project meets the objectives of the agency and does not have a detrimental effect on the resources. The Forest Service has many things that they must take into consideration when planning a new project such as a new trail. Archeological sites, rare and sensitive plants and animals, effects on the watershed, sustainability, compatibility with future planned projects, public support and objections, and funding for construction and long term maintenance are just a few of the things that need to be considered.

Please don't re-route or build new trail. If you get caught illegally constructing new trail you will be prosecuted on the Federal level. Furthermore, building illegal trails does not portray mountain biking in a positive manner. In order to build or partnership with the Forest Service we need to adhere to all of their rules and regulations. We know it may be frustrating at times as like all Government agencies, the Forest Service can be slow. But, by working together with them we can accomplish more than by working illegally.

One point that was made clear is that the BHNH is, was & will always be a timber-oriented forest and that all recreation is secondary to their purpose. Dave Slepnikoff also let us know that mountain bikers are viewed as one of the lower impact trail user groups and that in the future we can continue to ride anywhere in the forest except for wilderness areas and areas temporarily closed for logging. A negative artifact of the BHNH being a timber oriented forest is a lack of funding for any recreational activities.

The mountain pine beetle has also had an effect on the priorities that the Forest Service has identified. The specialists that conduct the surveys on archeological sites, rare plants and animals, and so forth are busy working on projects that the Forest Service hopes will help protect communities from mountain pine beetle and wildfires caused by large amounts of dead trees. This does not leave much free time for the specialists to do research on other projects, such as new trails.

Dave Slepnikoff educated us about how the Motorized Travel Management Plan was mandated upon the Mystic District. Consequently the majority of trail funding has been designated to motorized use. Dave Slepnikoff also helped us to understand there is no money or personnel currently available on the Mystic Ranger District to conceptualize and facilitate a Non-Motorized Travel Management Plan and Trail System.

Currently there are only 68 miles of developed classified trails on the Mystic Ranger District. The majority of these trail miles come from the Centennial and the Deerfield trail, which are point to point trails, and the Flume, which is closed to mountain bikes and horses. Currently there is funding for the Mystic Ranger District to maintain only 18 miles of classified trails. The Mystic Ranger District is looking to groups such as the BHMBA to partner with for trail stewardship.

Amy Ballard had a folder 7" thick in front of her and when she spoke it was made clear the BHMBA is recognized as a credible and reliable partner with the Mystic District based on her 15+ year relationship with us. She made reference to the file being her largest for a non-profit group and was quite positive and upbeat about the BHMBA having an increasing role in the stewardship of trails on the Mystic Ranger District. Amy Ballard did question why the Mystic Ranger District is permitting multiple MTB races on non-classified trails each season.

It was noted that Ranger Bob Thompson is outgoing. Ranger Ruth Esperence (Bob Thompson's successor) will look to the Recreation department to be brought up to speed as to what is occurring in the Mystic Ranger District where recreation is concerned. Dave Slepnikoff is retiring in the summer of 2013 and hopefully his successor will be an advocate to help us continue to move forward with creating a Non-Motorized Travel Management Plan & Trail System.

At some point Amy Ballard invited the BHMBA to write a letter of intent to Ranger Ruth Esperence proposing a Non-Motorized Travel Management System and Plan on the Mystic Ranger District and possibly forest wide in the Black Hills. The BHMBA will present the letter of intent in January 2013. Brady Howe has been tasked to work on the ground with the BHMBA. The BHMBA is currently collecting and presenting GPS data to the Mystic Ranger District on many of trails we all ride.

There was some talk about creating an Adopt-A-Trail program through BHMBA where small groups of people could legally become responsible to maintain a section of trail. The Mystic Ranger District is looking to build volunteer partnerships to maintain trails. Right now the BHMBA has multiple volunteer agreements with the Mystic Ranger District for stewardship on over 130 miles of trail on the Mystic Ranger District. These include Storm Mt System, Victoria Lake System, Shanks Quarry-Rim System, Buzzard's Roost and the Centennial Trail from Pilot Knob to Dakota Point.

In the fall of 2013 the Mystic Ranger District anticipates all necessary studies will be completed so BHMBA can build two plus miles of new trails at Buzzard's Roost. Oddly enough Buzzard's Roost is not a Classified Trail System but rather a Recognized Trail System on the Mystic Ranger District. Buzzard's Roost will become first system to be classified.

Storm Mountain is second in line and will require raising \$50,000 to fund the necessary EIS & NEPA studies to become a classified, signed, sustainable trail system. This could be an opportunity to rebuild some sections of trail that are not sustainable.

Third will be the Victoria Lake System which will require raising \$50,000+ to fund the necessary EIS & NEPA studies to become a classified, signed, sustainable trail system. This could be an opportunity to rebuild some sections of trail that are not sustainable.

Fourth in line is the Shank's Quarry, Rim Trail & Schroeder Road System which will also require raising \$50,000+ to fund the necessary EIS & NEPA studies to become a classified, signed, sustainable trail system. This could be an opportunity to rebuild some sections of trail that are not sustainable.

The Mystic District has started the necessary studies for a new 14 mile trail on Mt. Perrin near Placerville. This would be a spur loop off the Centennial Trail at Rapid Creek Basin Trail Head. BHMBA is not sure where this project fits in.

The BHMBA has identified multiple trail maintenance projects such as rerouting and rehabilitating unsustainable trails. Some examples of projects the BHMBA has identified are as follows.

Some areas of the Centennial Trail and Trail 40 need to be rerouted and rebuilt to be more sustainable and user friendly for all user groups.

Some form of a designated Centennial Bypass needs to be proposed around the Black Elk Wilderness Area.

Inter connecting trial corridors will be proposed between the Centennial Trail and Storm Mt, Victoria Lake and the Shank's Quarry-Rim Systems.

The need for gravity oriented trails was also discussed and will be addressed more in the future.

The BHMBA is focusing on what we can do today which will be a series of Centennial Trail and Trail 40 clean up days in the spring. Tasks to be completed include cleaning up the trail tread, removal of dead fall trees and trimming encroaching vegetation back. The BHMBA will propose the installation of T.H.A.D.s at all gated fence crossing along the Centennial Trail much like the Northern Hills section has. We also need to replace and add to the trail marking system by adding more carsonite posts and 4" x 4" posts with directional arrows and Trail 89 signage.

The BHMBA will work and build partnerships with other non-motorized groups such as the Black Hills Runners Club and the Black Hills Climbers Coalition. Getting them on board would greatly help by providing more voices to the cause and more people to get out there and volunteer. The running club has several races each year in Victoria, Storm, and Buzzards Roost. The BHMBA is willing to bet other trail users would be just as disappointed as the mountain bike community if these trails were all turned into motorized trails, closed, or logged over.

The BHMBA will continue to support the folks up in Whitewood with their Oak Park Trail Project.

The BHMBA will be in contact with the City of Rapid City to see what role we can fill on Skyline Trails.

In closing the BHMBA is encouraging each and every one of you to join and get involved. There is so much potential here in the Black Hills.