



Mountain Biking  
in MDNR Parks and Recreation Areas:  
A Trails Program Needs Analysis

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## Section 1.0 Background and Introduction

## 1.1 Background on Mountain Biking in Parks and Recreation Areas

As long as there have been bicycles and Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) managed public lands, the bicycle has been used on those lands. However, it was not until the mid- to late-1980's that the modern, fat-tired "mountain" bike started to show up in increasing numbers on various primitive trail systems in Michigan's MDNR Parks and Recreation (PnR) Areas.

Perhaps the first PnR Area where mountain biking truly "took off" in Michigan is the Potawatomi Trail System at Pinckney Recreation Area (R.A.) As Area Managers and other user groups saw increasing numbers of mountain bikes on the trails, both struggled to understand and accept this new form of trail recreation. During 1989-90, small cliques of mountain bikers around the State began to encounter a degree of opposition to their use of the trails. Rumors circulated surrounding the possibility that MDNR would ban mountain bike usage from non-motorized trails. This possibility sparked (through a chain of events that is now only lore) these various groups of mountain bikers from around the State to form the non-profit 501c(3) Michigan Mountain Biking Association (MMBA) in 1990.

Since that time, mountain biking on Michigan's primitive trail and rail-trail systems has grown exponentially. The MMBA has seen its membership go from a handful of eccentric individuals to almost 2,000 members spanning all ages, both genders, and wide-array of national origins. To wit, the MMBA estimates that only a fraction of all mountain bikers actually using MDNR PnR Area trails are among the card-carrying, dues-paying 2,000 members on our roster. Not only has mountain biking grown at an astonishing rate, but we believe that it is now the number one year-round day use activity at the majority of the PnR Areas listed in Appendix B of this Needs Analysis Document.

It is important to note that as the sport of mountain biking has grown, so has the participation by mountain bikers as a stakeholder partner to MDNR. Over the past ten years, we believe that the MMBA has been the number one trails-related stakeholder partner to the PnR Division, as measured by the number of volunteer hours and dollar resources we have put into the trail.

Currently, the MMBA has a number of member programs and publications, all of which are used as conduits to provide partner resources to MDNR. Our First Across The Finish Line Trail Maintenance Series – now going into its fourth year – encourages Chapter members to participate in trail cutting and maintenance workdays at PnR Areas by rewarding all volunteers with over 10 hours of annual trail work with awards and prizes. Our State Championship Point Series harnessed mountain bike race promoters around the State, getting them to contribute dollars from each race to trail maintenance and advocacy. Our Mountain Kids program introduces young mountain bikers to proper safety, skill, and etiquette techniques when riding on trails.

In short, the MMBA has worked well with local MDNR PnR Area Managers and other stakeholder groups to preserve non-motorized trails and greenways in Michigan for future generations. Although the MMBA can point to a number of successes in its greenway/trail stewardship, as well as, in its partnerships with the MDNR and other trail user groups – the MMBA has had its failures. Now, as we approach the end of our first decade, our biggest failure may be the one that collapses all that we have worked for during the past ten years.

We have failed to ensure that all of our work with local PnR Area Managers was being properly communicated with senior MDNR management in Lansing. We feel this failure has resulted in a MDNR hierarchy that is woefully unaware of the scope and depth of mountain biking going on at many MDNR PnR Areas, as well as, the history of mountain biker stakeholder “partner” activity.

It may be a case of too-little, too-late as we feel we have already lost a “battle of misperception, misunderstanding, and misrepresentation of fact” at Pontiac Lake R.A. earlier this year. As the PnR Division begins the centralized process of Trails Program Master Planning with outside consultant Public Policy Associates (PPA), we fear that we may lose more unjustifiably.

We believe strongly that as the demand for mountain bike trail continues to grow in Michigan, that we cannot stand to lose what we have worked so hard to build -- our trails, our access, or the relationships we’ve developed. We cannot lose our history.

As such, we have assembled this document reflecting the needs of our users. We feel it is our only shot at loss prevention.

## 1.2 Introduction to Mountain Biking Trails Program Needs Analysis

This Mountain Biking Trails Program Needs Analysis is being produced in order to help facilitate PPA’s work on a Trails Management Plan for MDNR. PPA, in cooperation with various stakeholder groups, has come up with a draft management plan framework that will be utilized in compiling a final proposed management plan for MDNR. This framework is in traditional management plan structure – detailing a mission statement, goals, objectives, and strategies. What the MMBA hopes to do in this Needs Analysis is to synthesize the macro- and micro-level needs of MDNR PnR Area mountain bikers with the PPA management plan framework.

To accomplish this, the seven goals set forth in the PPA management plan framework are broken-out in Section 2.0 of this Needs Analysis document (2.1 through 2.7). Under each section goal, objectives necessary to meet these goals are detailed. These objectives include both PPA provided objectives, as well as, some additional MMBA provided objectives. Under each objective is the core of this document – a needs analysis

providing what is “needed” by PnR Area mountain bikers in order to reach each objective. These needs are either designated as General, or, Chapter-related. General needs are defined as those needs that are necessary statewide in order to meet objectives. Chapter needs are defined as those needs identified by a specific chapter of the MMBA regarding trail systems within the geographic boundaries of their chapter (for more detail on MMBA Chapters, please see Appendix B). Finally, under each need identified, is a strategy suggestion for how MDNR and stakeholder partners may work together to meet the need.

## Section 2.0

### Analyzing Mountain Biker Needs Using Trails Program Goals

#### 2.1 Sound Management

##### Objective #1 Enforce consistent trail safety standards.

General Need: Application of trail safety rules based on MDNR facts, studies and incident reports – not necessarily due to simple user request. Application should also not be based on Lowest-Common Denominator (LCD) management practice.

[Trail safety should not be taken lightly, but neither should the application of trail safety regulations, especially when they could have a negative impact on certain user groups. If science, data collection, or study demonstrates a need for a safety rule or regulation – then the safety issue at question should be addressed. However, MDNR must be careful not to create knee-jerk safety policy based on conjecture or individual perceptions. Users or user groups may have an agenda and be willing to do or say anything to MDNR to perpetuate that agenda. It is important to root out fact from fallacy.

For instance, some in the equestrian community have said that mountain bikes are dangerous on the trail due to the speeds they

can attain. However, there is little evidence to suggest that there are documented instances of biker-horse trail collisions. Yet, for the sake of "safety", MDNR made decisions to separate equestrian and bike use at Pontiac Lake. This was a decision made by individual perception and bias, not fact or study. At the same time, dangerous incidents number in the double digits each year in other MDNR lands user groups such as hunting and snowmobiling. Every year, despite having far shorter seasons than the mountain bike user group, tens of hunters and snowmobilers are killed (or kill other users) while participating in their sports on MDNR land. This is documented fact. To the best of our knowledge, no mountain biker has ever been killed or seriously injured/killed another while participating in our sport on MDNR land. We are left asking, "Why the bias?" Given these facts, should MDNR really be focusing on the safety of mountain bike trail use?

If conflicts or incidents do occur on the trail, MDNR must not utilize Lowest-Common Denominator (LCD) land management practice on the trails. In other words, if there are a small number of conflicts reported due to minority portion of a user group that is not using common sense or exercising sound judgment on the trails, a land manager must not make blanket prohibitions against the whole user group. Rather, the land manager needs to seek enforcement procedures to curtail the activity of the rogue trail users.]

\* Strategy: This need is easily addressed as an item in the forthcoming MDNR PhR Division Trails Program Master Plan Policies and Procedures.

General and Western Chapter Need: The closure of the Yankee Springs Area trails during firearms deer season must cease.

[In keeping with the philosophy of multi-use (see Section 2.1, Sound Management, Objective #3), it is not appropriate to produce seasonal closures to all user groups to accommodate one user group. To do this sets a dangerous precedent. Perhaps

mountain bikers should request a few weeks during our peak season for exclusive use of PnR Areas? No, we would not make such a request because we believe in the multi-use philosophy. We are not sure why Yankee Springs Area Management has chosen to close the trail system during firearms deer season the past two years. If it is due to safety concerns, then the question needs to be asked whether or not it is appropriate to give a user group exclusive use of a trail because THAT USER'S activity may cause harm to other users. We believe that this is flawed management practice and logic. We believe that it is a hunter's right to practice their sport on state land, as it is our right to practice our sport. There is no reason that hunting, if properly executed, should cause harm to any trail user. This policy of exclusivity, if done for safety reasons, is nothing but Lowest-Common Denominator land management at it's worse. It may also be a by-product of favoritism among MDNR management toward the "hook and bullet" user groups.]

\* Strategy: Trails Program Master Plan policies and procedures should see to it that such management practice is eliminated. The Trails Program Coordinator should oversee that this is done.

## Objective #2 Utilize design, cutting, and maintenance standards.

General Need: MDNR Trail Construction and Maintenance Handbook.

[Such a handbook would detail how to construct and maintain sustainable trail. Sustainable trail has a grade of no more than 10 to 12 percent, and an outslope of around 3 percent. Exceed these guidelines in Michigan's generally sandy loam soil, and the trail cut will become easily eroded. Many of the trails in PnR Areas currently exceed these modern design standards. They are relics of a past age, when sustainable construction and environmental impact were not great concerns do to lower trail traffic and ample land resources. Many of these trails employ "fall line"

construction techniques. In other words, the trail goes up and down grades indiscriminately, without consideration for trail slope. A handbook would set standards which both MDNR Lansing Planning and local Area Managers would be required to utilize. New trails would all employ handbook construction techniques. Older trails would not be shut down, rather “grandfathered” into the current trails inventory, and brought up to standards slowly over time as maintenance needs arose (i.e. as a fall line construction slope becomes degraded due to erosion, MDNR along with “partner” stakeholder groups would reroute the trail section so that it meets trail handbook standards.) As a rule, a trail cut in a sustainable manner will be user-friendly to a wide-variety of user groups.]

\* Strategy: MDNR should be able to draw on stakeholder resources regarding trailbuilding technique, as well as, on the resources of other land managers in developing this handbook. The handbook should be easy to create given an abundance of good available information which currently is in print. The proposed new MDNR PnR Division Trails Program Manager would assemble this handbook.

### Objective #3 Manage trails as multiple-use, except under certain circumstances.

General Need: Continue to allow mountain biking on those PnR Division multiple-use trail systems currently allowing bike access. Allow mountain bike access on all PnR multiple-use trail systems where they are currently not permitted.

[Scientific data provided during the stakeholder process indicates the environmental impact (as measured by erosional impact, a.k.a. sediment displacement) of mountain bikers to be either less than or equal to that of other typical non-motorized trail users. Banning mountain bikers use of a trail for reasons of “impact” has been used by MDNR Land Managers in the past and is unwarranted by scientific research. Such Policy is rooted in

personal bias and misperception. Such Policy should be rooted-out subsequent to the completion of the PPA/MDNR Trails Program Master Planning Process.]

\* Strategy: This need is easily addressed as an item in the forthcoming MDNR PnR Division Trails Program Master Plan Policies and Procedures.

General Need: Provide for separate trails for foot and bike traffic where there is significant horse traffic.

[In Michigan's typical sandy loam soil, often equestrian use becomes incompatible with that of foot and bike use. Both foot and bike traffic prefer a more hardpack trail, while equestrians prefer a softer, more churned-up trail. Equestrian use has a distinct impact on the trail which is characterized by a large degree of sediment displacement creating a beachy, sandy top soil (see stakeholder meeting pre-reading, Erosional Impact of Hikers, Horses, Off-Road Bicycles, and Motorcycles on Mountain Trails, Joseph P. Seney, Montana State University, 1990). Such top soil is not ideal for foot and bike traffic, and often deters these groups from using trails heavily used by equestrians. This can be witnessed at Waterloo R.A.]

\* Strategy: Areas of such concern should be identified by the PnR Division Trails Coordinator with the assistance of stakeholder groups. The Coordinator should try to work with stakeholder groups to remedy such incompatible uses through the creation of new separate trail systems.

General Need: The prohibition of any new equestrian access to existing foot and bike trail systems for the impact reasons noted in the aforementioned General Need.

\* Strategy: This need is easily addressed as an item in the forthcoming MDNR PnR Division Trails Program Master Plan Policies and Procedures.

Mid-Michigan Chapter Need: Creation of a separate foot and bike specific trail loop at Waterloo Rec Area, free of the impacts of equestrian traffic.

\* Strategy: A proposal for such a loop was detailed in a November 1998 proposal submitted to PnR Division Planner Paul Yauk entitled, "Eastern Waterloo Trail System Proposal". This proposal, written by the MMBA with the input of other foot traffic users, detailed how a separate trail system could be laid out and built by stakeholder volunteers at a minimal cost to MDNR.

**Objective #4 A state parks coordinator will manage the trail system throughout the state.**

General Need: A statewide MDNR Trails Coordinator.

[The usage on trails systems is now such that a full-time, dedicated position of this nature is warranted. Initial duties should consist of implementing the recommendations that arise from the PPA/MDNR Trail Program Master Planning Process. On-going duties will be to assess needs of land managers and stakeholders regarding the trail systems, planning and overseeing policy/procedure are applied accordingly.]

\* Strategy: If internal human resources within the PnR Division can not be "reshuffled" to fill this position, MDNR needs to incorporate this as a future "new" position in its overall budgeting process.

**Objective #5 Operate the trails with uniform and consistent management and maintenance policies and plans.**

General Need: Uniform and consistent application of PnR Division Trails Program Policies and Procedures at all PnR Areas.

[Prior to this PPA/MDNR Trails Program Master Planning Process, no such policies and procedures due to the lack of a Trails Program Master Plan. Subsequent to the conclusion of this process, such policies and procedures will exist.]

\* Strategy: Create statewide Policies and Procedures as a result of the PPA/MDNR Trails Program Master Planning Process. Implementation by local Area Managers will be overseen by the new Trails Program Coordinator in Lansing.

## 2.2 Sufficient Funding

### Objective #1 Representing trails program funding needs to legislature.

General Need: The PnR Division Trails Program Coordinator should work in conjunction with officers of various stakeholder groups in order to affect appropriate legislation for trails funding.

\* Strategy: The Trails Program Coordinator should work with Area Managers and stakeholder group leaders from around the state in order to assess dollar resource needs for the Trails Program on an annual basis. The Trails Program Coordinator, after compiling these needs, should work with stakeholder groups so that these groups know Trail Program financial needs. This will allow stakeholders to better affect the legislature with regard to funds procurement.

### Objective #2 Capture fee income from trail usage.

General Need: Every individual using PnR Area trail systems would be required to purchase an Annual PnR Area Trail Pass.

[The MMBA would only support this if the fees were guaranteed ONLY to come back to the PnR Division NON-MOTORIZED Trail Program. In addition, we would like to see fees collected applied toward the interests of the user group providing the most fee

base. This could be accomplished by having users fill out a postcard during the purchase of the Trail User Pass. The postcard would specify known trail use activities and would request that the user indicate the percentage of time that he/she will use the trail for each activity. Percentages on the cards would be tallied each year by the Trail Program Coordinator. Use percentages would then be applied to use of fee base collected.]

\* Strategy: Passes would be purchased just as Park Entrance Permits are now.

### Objective #3 Pursue "other" alternative trails program funding sources.

General Need: The Division must avail itself to the dollar and labor resources offered up by stakeholder groups.

[During the past decade, the MMBA has devoted countless volunteer hours and dollars to the cause of developing trail systems in partnership with MDNR. Were it not for the assistance of the MMBA, the Department would not have had the available resources to complete these trails. The Department cannot make a stakeholder group provide resources for the Trails Program, but where the stakeholder group is willing and able – the Department must avail itself to these opportunities.]

\* Strategy: Communication between PnR and stakeholders is key with regard to this need. It should be the responsibility of the Trails Program Coordinator to tap into stakeholder resources where possible.

## 2.3 Productive Stakeholder Relationships

### Objective #1 Enhance communication between user groups.

General Need: Enhanced communication between PnR Division Lansing/Regional Offices and District/Area Management regarding Trails Program Policies and Procedures. Enhanced communication between ALL levels of the PnR Division and stakeholder groups.

\* Strategy: The keys to realizing this need are to: 1.) Have a PnR Division Trails Program Master Plan with policies and procedures, and 2.) To have a Trails Program Coordinator to act as a conduit, facilitating communication between Lansing/field staff/stakeholders.

## Objective #2 Obtain stakeholder feedback on trails program.

General Need: Periodic trail user surveys should be completed by the Department or an outsourced consultant for the Department.

[It is imperative that data only be collected from individuals actually using trails in order for data to be accurate. For this reason, any such trail use surveys MUST be distributed only to those witnessed using PnR Division Trail Systems. Trail surveys should NOT be distributed to everyone entering a PnR Area in a vehicle. Many of the individuals in these vehicles may have no concept of trails or trail usage. They may be in the Area to swim, picnic, bar-b-que, hunt, fish, play frisbee, etc. When it comes to the outdoors, people are often dreamers. They buy a \$4,000 mountain bike or \$1,000 tent envisioning themselves getting into shape and taking vast expeditions to unknown lands. In reality, surveys available through outdoor equipment retailer associations show us that much of this equipment purchased may never leave a garage or basement. The point here is that people not on the trails cannot be relied upon to give accurate information on their prospective use of the trails. Their answers will often stem from their dreams. This can lead to misleading or inaccurate survey results, and can skew the opinions of PnR officials as to who is actually using the PnR Areas.]

\* Strategy: Collection of surveys annually by the Trails Program Coordinator with assessment to be shared with various stakeholder groups.

### Objective #3 Utilize “other” resources and avenues to meet stakeholder needs.

General Need: A PnR Division Trails Program Coordinator who will reach out to stakeholder groups to discover what they need.

[Communication with the PnR Division regarding trails issues is often one-sided. The Division does what it wants, or, does nothing without communicating with the public. Users and stakeholder groups do all the communicating, usually in the form of ex post facto complaining. Having a Trails Program Coordinator that actually solicited public opinion would go a long way toward meeting stakeholder needs.]

\* Strategy: The Trails Program Coordinator needs to actively solicit comments from the trail using public. The best way to facilitate this would be for the Trails Program Coordinator to have a list of principal stakeholder group contacts. The Trails Program Coordinator would be in touch with these contacts on a regular basis in order to solicit feedback and gather information.

## 2.4 Adequate Infrastructure

### Objective #1 Develop new trails and connect existing trails.

General Need: More mountain bike trail supply to meet growing demand.

[As a stakeholder, the MMBA has done its best to work with local Area Managers to create new mountain bike trail systems to meet the increased demands of our user group. In the past three years alone, extensive new trail systems have been established in Highland, Brighton, Ionia and Holdridge Lakes (Holly) R.A. by the MMBA. These trails were planned and cut by the MMBA under the approval and supervision of PnR Division Area Managers. Each trail took literally hundreds of hours by our volunteer staff to layout and cut. Records were kept of all our hours and submitted to MDNR.

Despite doing our best to meet the demand for mountain bike trail in PnR Areas, demand still outstrips supply. Visit Island Lake, Pinckney, or Pontiac Lake Rec Area on a Tuesday evening in summer and you will witness this fact. Row on row of cars with mountain bike racks – users out on the trail. Ask Land Managers of these Areas what the number one year round day use on their trails is and, undoubtedly, they will answer mountain biking.

While a limited supply of land does make creating new trails a problem. Some Areas can clearly do more to accommodate mountain bikers. These specific trail needs are addressed directly below as specific chapter-related needs.]

\* Strategy: See specific trail needs by chapter, addressed immediately below.

Mid-Michigan Chapter Need: A mountain bike and foot travel loop trail at Waterloo Recreation Area.

[Waterloo R.A. is the largest PnR R.A. in Southern Michigan, yet it lacks sufficient trail accommodations for mountain bikers. Area Management has traditionally been slow to embrace mountain bikers as a legitimate user group. Earlier in the '90's, management made a token gesture to accommodate mountain

bikers by allotting them a roughly two mile section of trail which was also heavily used by equestrians. This trail, as noted in 2.1, Sound Management, Objective #3 above, does not meet the needs of mountain bikers due to the top soil impacts of the equestrian community. In addition, it is far too short in distance to provide a quality recreation experience for mountain bikers.]

\* Strategy: A Proposal was submitted to Paul Yauk in MDNR PnR Division Planning in November 1998 regarding an Eastern Waterloo Foot/Bike Trail System. The proposal had the support of other stakeholder groups such as trail runners and Boy Scouts. The proposal also called for the majority of planning, cutting, and development costs to be absorbed by the MMBA (as done at Highland, Brighton, et al.) The MMBA is still willing to pursue this Plan with MDNR in order to meet the trail needs of foot and mountain bike traffic at Waterloo R.A. The MMBA believes we should work with the MDNR PnR Division Trails Program Coordinator and other stakeholders to develop a foot/bike trail loop at Waterloo R.A. Again, much of the resources necessary for planning and cutting can come from the MMBA.

Northeastern Chapter Need: A mountain bike and foot travel loop trail at Rifle River Recreation Area.

[As with Waterloo, mountain bikers have long requested the MMBA to work at developing suitable bike trail at Rifle River R.A. To date, we have not formally approached MDNR on this because of prioritization of work on other trail projects. However, we would like to include this in our collective planning agendas.]

\* Strategy: Work with MDNR PnR Division Trails Program Coordinator and other stakeholders to develop a foot/bike trail loop at Rifle River R.A. Again, much of the resources necessary for planning and cutting can come from the MMBA.

Pontiac Lake Chapter Need: A mountain bike and foot single-track loop in the North Unit of Bald Mountain R.A.

\* Strategy: Work with MDNR PnR Division Trails Program Coordinator and other stakeholders to develop a foot/bike trail loop at the North Unit of Bald Mountain R.A. Again, much of the resources necessary for planning and cutting can come from the MMBA.

## Objective #2 Promote the diversity of the trails.

General Need: A variety of mountain bike trail systems in the PnR Areas, ranging from beginner level to advanced.

[Do to lack of a PnR Division Master Plan incorporating trail diversity factors, the MMBA has taken it upon ourselves to make this a consideration when developing trail with local Area Managers. For instance, at Brighton and Highland R.A.s, the MMBA cut several loops for varied skill levels.

When planning for mountain bike trails, MDNR should recognize the following. Two factors go into rating a trails difficulty: 1.) Elevation Change, and 2.) Type of Terrain. A trail with lots of elevation change can be aerobically difficult due to more climbing (and thus more physical exertion). Likewise, larger descents can present more handling challenges for bikers. Regarding terrain, the more rocks, roots, and obstacles a trail has – the more “technically” demanding it is for a biker. Lots of turns and curves also produce a technically demanding trail. The MMBA suggests using these factors when contemplating diversity among the trails program.

Using these factors as a guide, the MMBA believes that there are currently ample opportunities in beginner trails within the PnR Division, due to the Division’s heavy focus on rail trails during the past decade. However, we believe that in the future, the PnR Division Trails Program will need to put more focus, energy, and resources into developing more primitive, rugged style trails for beginner, intermediate, and advanced level mountain bikers. The

number of users that seek this type of trail demands a switch in focus.]

\* Strategy: The PnR Division Master Plan should provide for the aforementioned diversity. The PnR Division Trails Program Coordinator should see to it that the Plan's provisions are realized.

### Objective #3 Provide access/opportunities close to urban areas.

General Need: More trail systems for mountain biking are needed given the increasing percentage of trail users that are mountain bikers, as well as, SouthEastern Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) projections for population growth and sprawl in the next 20 years.

\* Strategy: See 2.4, Adequate Infrastructure, Objective #1 above.

General Need: More land needs to be acquired in order to be able to provide enough trail resources into the next century.

[Several key parcels come to mind here that MDNR Land and Mineral Services Division should be actively trying to obtain. Most notable are the Stinchfield Woods Property adjacent to Pinckney Recreation Area which is owned by the University of Michigan and Oakland County land at Bald Mountain Road and Dutton Roads adjacent to Bald Mountain State R.A. While one would think the Department should actively be seeking to expand all PnR Area holdings in Southern Michigan, unfortunately this is not the case. During the past two years, the Department has made an effort to sell a portion of Pinckney R.A. holding a material segment of trail in a very ill-structured land-for-cash deal. In addition, the Natural Resources Commission just recently approved the conveyance of approximately 20 acres of State-owned land at Highland R.A. to Highland Township. The MMBA actively opposed both

Department efforts. Such disposition cannot continue to occur in the face of increasing demand for recreational land.]

\* Strategy: The PnR Division Trails Coordinator needs to communicate with the Land and Mineral Services Division regarding acquiring new land for annexation to PnR Areas in Southern Michigan. The Department needs to take a firm stance against any land conveyances in Southern Michigan that would result in a net loss of PnR Area land or trail. This should be a part of Master Planning policy and procedures. Funding? The Natural Resources Trust Fund should be utilized to its full potential to purchase new land. Halting the misappropriation of oil and gas lease revenue collected also wouldn't hurt this strategy.

#### Objective #4 Redesign trails for multiple-use, or provide separate use areas as appropriate.

General Need: This need is addressed in detail under needs addressed in 2.1, Sound Management, Objective #3.

#### Objective #5 Meet the existing facilities infrastructure needs related to trails.

Potawatomi Chapter Need: Wooden foot/bike bridge spanning the creek crossing on the Murray Lake Trail Loop at Brighton R.A.

\* Strategy: The MMBA is willing to assist with labor and possibly some dollar resources toward the construction of this bridge. The Trails Program Coordinator should assess such inventory needs and work with stakeholder groups to fulfill them.

Southeastern Chapter Need: A bridge crossing the Huron River so that Island Lake R.A. Yellow Loop trail users do not need to use the shoulder of Kensington Road to connect the trail. Such a bridge may be "cantilevered" off of the existing Kensington Road bridge.

\* Strategy: The MMBA is willing to assist with labor and possibly some dollar resources toward the construction of this bridge. The Trails Program Coordinator should assess such inventory needs and work with stakeholder groups to fulfill them.

## 2.5 User-Friendly Trail Systems

### Objective #1 Develop an effective signage system.

General Need: A rustic signage system that is universal in all PnR Areas providing direction and information on the trails intended use.

[On trail signage should display 1.) travel direction arrows for various user groups, 2.) icon symbols of user groups indicating whether or not they have trail access, and 3.) occasional marks corresponding to maps so that distances can be ascertained. Signage should also be rustic in nature, with no steel signs or concrete pilings, in keeping with good aesthetic stewardship (see 2.7, Promoting Stewardship, Objective #1.)]

\* Strategy: Once defined in the forthcoming PnR Division Trails Program Master Plan, appropriate signage methodology should be communicated to Area Staff and the MDNR Sign Shops for implementation.

### Objective #2 Trail maps and information at trail heads

General Need: Wooden routed trail maps at each PnR Area principal trailhead. Wooden maps should be accompanied by a small wooden box where trail maps may be placed.

[For years, the MMBA has worked with MDNR Area Managers to furnish these items at the various trailheads. Prime examples of good trail map information boards can be seen at the mountain bike trailheads at Pinckney R.A., Highland R.A., and Holdridge Lakes R.A. Numerous trailhead information board across the state are there as a result of MMBA dollars and/or labor contribution. The MMBA has also paid for and furnished paper maps which have been placed at various trailheads, bike stores, and outdoor shops around the state. Despite these efforts by the MMBA, there are many trail systems without proper information boards and maps at the trailheads. Island Lake jumps to mind as one of these. The PnR Division must ensure consistency in providing such infrastructure. It is our thought that this is more of an issue of apathy and lack of prioritization by certain Area Managers than an issue of budgetary constraint.]

\* Strategy: The forthcoming PnR Division Trails Program Master Plan should address the need for such infrastructure as a part of policies and procedures.

## 2.6 Educated Users

### Objective #1 Practice of proper trail etiquette on the trails.

General Need: Educational seminars and print/electronic (web) media material for trail system users on trail etiquette.

[Seminars and print/web material would cover the universal, widely-accepted "Rules of the Trail" regarding yielding patterns and proper trail behavior. Material would also cover consequences for breaches in etiquette, whether they be legal or policy related.]

\* Strategy: The PnR Division Trails Program Coordinator should arrange the propagation of such material using the assistance, expertise, and resources of various stakeholder groups. Such an

effort would mitigate educational costs for MDNR. The MMBA has been, and will continue to be a partner to MDNR in this cause.

## Objective #2 Promote understanding between user groups regarding their respective uses.

General Need: The recognition of mountain biking as a legitimate form of non-motorized trail use by other user groups.

\* Strategy: This recognition can be achieved through the implementation of strategies detailed in 2.6, Educated Users, Objective #1 above.

## 2.7 Promoting Stewardship

### Objective #1 Design trails to promote resource preservation, environmental compatibility, and aesthetics.

General Need: The “phase-out” of the utilization of unnatural, man-made elements within trail system infrastructure.

[ Due in part to some of the aged fall-line construction techniques utilized in the past during trail creation, MDNR and partner groups have increasingly introduced man-made erosion prevention materials to the trails in an effort to preserve them. Almost all of these materials are products used in landscape architecture, including items such as plastic GeoWeb, plastic matting, rubber conveyor belt, and synthetic fiber matting. Usually, these materials are used in a “Band-Aid” fashion on the trail, stopping some erosional bleeding in the face of the fact that gravity and Mother Nature will eventually win out.]

\* Strategy: PnR Division Trails Program Master Plans should call for phasing out the use of such material in favor of sustainable

trail cutting techniques. See 2.1, Sound Management, Objective #2 for additional detail.

## Objective #2 Promote activities that foster trail stewardship.

General Need: A more active role by MDNR Lansing in recognizing the work done by partners such as the MMBA.

[Maybe it is due to the flawed communication process that currently exists between field staff and Lansing, or maybe it is due to other priorities in Lansing – but, for whatever reason, much of the MMBA’s work to foster trail stewardship has gone unrecognized by Lansing. Over the last several years we have recorded hundreds of hours of trail work, including the single-handed construction of landmark trail systems at places such as Highland, Holdridge, Ionia, and Brighton Recreation Areas. These trail systems have become the paramount attractions at these Recreation Areas. Local Area Managers have been helpful and appreciative, and Paul Yauk in PnR Division Planning in Lansing have expressed gratitude. But, we have never been contacted by senior Division managers regarding these significant achievements. In short, we wonder if MDNR senior management or the Natural Resources Commission know how much mountain bikers have done as partners, and we even wonder if they are aware of how big mountain biking has become in their PnR Areas. It is our feeling that before the Department can promote future activities that foster stewardship on the trail, that they must recognize current activities promoting stewardship such as the work of the MMBA.]

\* Strategy: Establish a PnR Division Trails Program Master Plan. Create and fill the position of Trails Program Coordinator. Give that Coordinator policies and procedures as a tool. Make it the duty of the Coordinator to facilitate communication between stakeholder groups, field personnel, district personnel, and Lansing personnel.



## Appendix A: Draft Plan Framework

Available from Alexis Robinson, Public Policy Associates Research Assistant. This document was distributed at the second PPA/MDNR Stakeholder's Meeting on December 10, 1999.

## Appendix B: MMBA Chapters and Trail Jurisdictions

The following is a listing of MMBA Chapters along with the MDNR PnR Division Areas under their jurisdiction (according to the MMBA internal policies and procedures). Note that this list only includes PnR managed Areas with materially significant mountain bike trail systems, or PnR managed Areas where the MMBA seeks to have material trail systems. It does not include all mountain bike trails, or all PnR managed Areas.

### Southeast Chapter

- Island Lake R.A.
- Maybury State Park
- Highland R.A.

### Potawatomi Chapter

- Brighton R.A.
- Pinckney R.A.
- Lakelands Rail Trail

### Pontiac Lake Chapter

- Pontiac Lake R.A.
- Bald Mountain R.A.
- Paint Creek Rail Trail

### Holly-Flint Chapter

- Holly/Holdridge Lakes R.A.
- Seven Lakes State Park

### Mid-Michigan Chapter

- Waterloo R.A. (no material bike trail yet)
- Sleepy Hollow State Park (no material bike trail yet)

### Southwest Chapter

- Fort Custer R.A.

### Western Chapter

- Yankee Springs State Park
- Ionia R.A.
- White Pine Rail Trail

### Northeastern Chapter

- Rifle River R.A. (no material bike trail yet)

Northern Chapter

No MDNR PnR Division managed lands with material trail systems currently in Northern's jurisdiction.