

4 December 2018

## **Open Letter to the Bendigo Mountain Biking Community**

Dear Mtb riders

I am writing to you in my capacity as president of the Bendigo Mountain Bike Club Inc. (BMBC), regarding the mountain biking in Bendigo Regional Parks, unapproved trail development and the Spring Gully Trail Network Master Plan.

Recently the BMBC in partnership with Parks Victoria carried out a number of working bees to close 4 trails, identified by Parks Victoria as being recently developed without approval and/or through highly environmentally valued areas. The closure of these trail was directly linked to the 2018 Golden Triangle EPIC event permit as course markings had been placed to indicate the event would utilise these trails.

We have worked extremely hard to build our relationship and trust with Parks Victoria. Our commitment to Parks Victoria was to see these trails closed and natural cover reinstated. Since the closure of these trails' individuals have been actively trying to make these alignments rideable again. This unapproved activity is illegal and does nothing more than damage the reputation of the broader mountain biking community.

We ask that mountain bikers respect the environment, the land managers and the broader mountain biking community by not creating trails on public land without the appropriate approvals in place.

The BMBC are in regular contact with Parks Victoria on-ground rangers and senior managers of the service. We also correspond with local Councilors and play an active role on various committees such as the Spring Gully Recreation Reserve committee and the Goldfields Track committee. Additionally we actively pursue engagement with our members of parliament.

### **What can you do?**

The BMBC was informed that council proposes to not endorse the Spring Gully Trail Network Master Plan but rather pass on sole responsibility of the master plan to Parks Victoria. We are extremely disappointed with this approach, believing it is short sighted and non-inclusive of our community.

However, the proposed council position does not change the Bendigo Mountain Bike Club's vision for a sustainable trail network for Bendigo forests that protects the environment, supports the significant established and growing mountain biking community and provides health and wellbeing outcomes for the Greater Bendigo community.

**Write to your Ward Councillor** - We encourage you write or email your ward councilors and ask if they support their local mountain biking community, if so, how they intend to show this support as a Councillor?

[www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/About/Council/Current-Councillors](http://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/About/Council/Current-Councillors)

Please ensure any correspondence is polite and respectful, Councilors are members of our community performing a community function and must be shown the respect we would expect to be shown to ourselves.

**Write to your local Member of Parliament** – Without the support of our Local Members of Parliament any plans for a lasting solution to approved sustainable trails on public land will struggle to attract the significant funding required to implement the Spring Gully Trail Network Master Plan.

The recent strong performance by our local members in the Victorian election was supported on campaign of “Delivering for all Victorians” and with strong policy statements regarding recreational access and use of public land for an active and healthy Victoria.

<http://www.jacintaallan.com/>  
<http://www.mareedwards.com.au/>  
<http://www.lisachesters.org/>

As with our Councilors please be polite and respectful of the positions of public office with any correspondence.

**Become a member of the Bendigo Mountain Bike Club** – There are many membership options available to become a member of the club. From Non-Riding, Recreation, Family and Race there is more to being a member than racing. Membership of any form helps to support advocacy for you as a mountain biker irrespective of skill, time or reason being on a bike and in the bush. Join now and help us show the strength in numbers of participants out there.

[www.mtba.org.au/membership/](http://www.mtba.org.au/membership/)

If you have any queries please contact our club by email [info@mtbbendigo.com](mailto:info@mtbbendigo.com)

**Yours faithfully**

**Stuart MacGregor**  
President

**David Richardson**  
Vice President

**Dave Macaulay**  
Treasurer

**Barry Floyd**  
Secretary

**Bendigo Mountain Bike Club Inc.**

To reiterate our position, we provide the following:

#### **Correct use within Victorian parks**

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) have made it clear through the 2001 Box Iron Bark recommendations and the 2017 draft Central West Investigation that mountain biking can be accommodated in national and regional parks.

#### **General recommendations for national parks permit the following activities:**

(v) mountain biking and cycling on formed roads and vehicle tracks, and on other tracks and paths specified by the land manager

#### **General recommendations for regional parks permit the following activities:**

(v) mountain bike riding and cycling, ... on other tracks and paths specified by the land manager

This is recognised and supported locally, by Parks Victoria and also supported across the state in parks and forests for which Parks Victoria are the land manager.

#### **Future users**

Contrary to some views, the proposed Spring Gully Trail Network Master Plan is not about extreme activity or racing. A sustainable trail network is aimed at supporting health and wellbeing outcomes through active living and engaging with the environment.

Research presented at Australia’s inaugural Bicycle Tourism Conference held in Bendigo by Dr Anthony Burton PhD, MPIA provided an insight on what mountain bikers want - Nature, scenery, and sightseeing, with a mix of highly accessible and more remote scenic and unique environments was a core part of the cycling experience.

The mountain bike segments shown to be most supported are Family and Leisure - Emerging confidence seekers and Beginners and Active Socialisers – Enthusiasts and trail riders. This is the area of engagement that occurs most within the Bendigo region due to the rolling nature of the terrain.

### Environmental benefits

The Bendigo bushland environment is a precious resource for the entire Bendigo community, and is highly valued by our members, and like-minded recreational users. The adoption of the Spring Gully Trail Network Master Plan provides a forward direction to ensuring that this environment is protected and enhanced through the planned alignment of trails and professional construction, thus eliminating unapproved activity and any future impact on biodiversity of the area.

### Partnership

The investment in mountain biking infrastructure as outlined in the Spring Gully Trail Network Master Plan is very importantly a partnership between Community, Local, State and Federal Governments. Parks Victoria, as the land manager, is part of that partnership at a state level and City of Greater Bendigo is a vital player providing the link between community and the state.

As identified and supported by the Spring Gully & Surrounds Recreation Plan 2014, which was developed after extensive consultation with active sports clubs, stakeholder representatives and the wider community with interests in the Spring Gully area, mountain biking across the Greater Bendigo area, and the broader region, is a community that has grown and will continued to grow significantly.

### Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC)

#### What can you do in national parks, conservation parks and regional parks?

Many recreational activities such as four wheel driving, trail bike riding, mountain biking, horse riding and camping can take place in national parks as well as in conservation parks, regional parks and state forests. The rules for four wheel driving and trail bike riding are the same across parks, forests and other public land.

National parks are a key part of Victoria's protected area (or conservation reserve) system. Other protected areas in Victoria include nature reserves, conservation parks and bushland reserves. Protected areas in Victoria and around Australia use an international definition that requires them to be managed mainly for the conservation of nature and associated ecosystem services (such as protecting water catchments) and cultural values. National parks are managed mainly for protection of the natural environment and nature-based recreation.

Because national parks are managed for conservation and compatible recreation, activities that extract natural resources such as recreational prospecting, firewood collection and hunting are not usually allowed. Other activities such as car rallies and horse riding on formed roads and tracks are often allowed, but controlled to reduce the impacts on the natural environment or on other recreational users. Dogs on leads or in cars may be allowed in restricted areas.

The conservation parks provide more scope for some activities than do national parks while still being managed primarily for conservation as part of the protected area system.

Victoria's regional parks are not protected areas according to the international definition as they are managed mainly for informal recreation for large numbers of people in natural or semi-natural surroundings. A wider range of activities is allowed than in national parks including recreational prospecting, and activities can also include some harvesting of minor forest produce such as domestic firewood. Dogs and horses are allowed. Hunting is not allowed as it conflicts with use by large numbers of other recreational users.

