

SURFCOAST TRAIL GROUP NEWSLETTER – NOVEMBER 2013



Welcome to the first newsletter of the Surfcoast Trail Group. In this issue, we aim to get everyone up to date with how the group came about and what we are aiming to achieve.

Background

The Eumeralla mountain bike trail network is an unofficial set of trails in the Anglesea area that has been developed over time by local riders. As the trails developed, word spread and the area has become increasingly popular. The area actually involves multiple land managers including Parks Victoria, Eumeralla Scout Camp, Great Ocean Road Coastal Committee, Surfcoast Shire & Alcoa. A large majority of the single track sections are found in the Great Otway National Park which is managed by Parks Victoria. This area was formally known as Eumeralla Flora Reserve (hence the trail networks' name) and was gazetted as a National Park in 2004.

In late 2012, Parks Victoria commenced an audit of the trails bounded by Hurst Rd, the Great Ocean Rd and the Eumeralla Scout Camp. Dirt Art, a team of mountain biking trail designers, was employed by Parks Vic to assess the current network of trails and to put forward a proposal to Parks Victoria for consideration. Posted online in February by Simon French from Dirt Art was the following:

"There is NO intention from the land manager to close the area to mountain bikes, and this will certainly not be a recommendation from Dirt Art. The project scope is to engage the public to gain feedback on the most desirable trails in the area, audit the existing trails, and recommend retaining and upgrading the most appropriate trail network. A small volume of trails will likely be rehabilitated to ensure the network is, safe, sustainable and rationalised- ultimately our aim is to improve the venue for riding (we are riders ourselves!). At this point in time we have been asked to aim for a total single track volume of approximately 10-12km. We are playing a challenging mediation role between the common rider opinion of 'leave our trails alone', and the land managers need to have a safe, sustainable and manageable public asset. It needs to be recognised that the alternative (and far more common) response from the land manager would be to simply close and rehabilitate ALL unauthorised trails, so this should ultimately be seen as a positive move. The land manager is actively spending money on formalising and improving a mountain bike resource! "

Who are we?

The Surfcoast Trail Group is a collection of passionate local trail riders who came together during this audit recognising that if we want to have some input into the outcome, we need to put forward a unified, professional front.

What do we want to achieve?

Our goals are to act as a trail advocacy group and to liaise with Parks and other land managers in order to retain a varied and interesting trail network in this area. When and where permission is granted we will endeavour to keep the network well maintained and sustainable for the enjoyment of riders. We are currently mapping all of the trails in the area. We are keen to have the support of as many trail users as possible. The larger our group, the louder our voice will be. We will keep all Eumeralla trail users informed of the current situation by monthly newsletters and via our Facebook page.

How do we aim to achieve our goals?

We will liaise with all the relevant land managers and attempt to build relationships with each of them. We will favourably promote MTB riding as a healthy, environmentally responsible pastime enjoyed by many in our region and carries significant local economic benefits. We will articulate to all concerned that the Eumeralla trail network is vital to the future of mountain biking in our area.

Current situation

Dirt Art has completed their recommendations and submitted those to Parks Vic. We understand that the recommendations were favourable for us. Parks Vic are obligated to act within their "Public Land Mountain Bike Guidelines" published in May 2013. These are the new guidelines under which MTB trails will be administered in the future. This also requires a natural values assessment and a cultural assessment of the area. We understand that the latter is yet to be submitted to Parks Vic. All of these reports will be collated and recommendations will subsequently be made by Parks.

Our trails and the trails at Arthurs Seat on the Mornington Peninsula are the test cases for these new guidelines. There is a possibility that the final report may include recommending the closure of some trails for a variety of reasons. If this happens we will lobby strongly for a useable network to be retained. We are happy to take responsibility for the long term sustainability of the trails. Members of our group have previously attended trail building courses and more of us will do so in the near future. We are hoping that we will have Parks recommendations sometime in the New Year.

One of the land managers is the Eumeralla Scout Camp. From discussions with the camp managers it was discovered that they have had some safety concerns with the usage of some of the trails in the camp. Our group met with camp management to discuss their concerns. This has resulted in some diversion works around high risk areas. We will always attempt to make any diversions more interesting to ride than the original trails.

What you can do to help?

- Please help us to extend our voice!
- Like our [Facebook Page](#).
- Get friends to sign up to our monthly email update database [here](#).
- Forward this email to interested friends.
- Watch out for any future working bees.
- When riding in the Eumeralla area please adhere to the standard MTB riding principles:
 - Keep to the established tracks
 - Don't make new trails
 - Take home all litter
 - Follow signage
 - Minimise wet weather riding
 - Respect other trail users
 - Don't ride through camping areas in the scout camp.

Next Issue

We'll aim to include:

- Further updates in the auditing process
- News from the recent IMBA trail building workshop that many of us attended
- A profile or two of some of our committee members.

If you have any enquiries please email surfcoasttrailgroup@gmail.com

Happy riding..... Surfcoast Trail Group