

Friday, November 12, 2010

Submission on

**National Parks and Wildlife Service
Cycling Policy Review and
Sustainable Mountain Biking Strategy**

From the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Inc.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the National Parks and Wildlife Service's Cycling Policy Review and Sustainable Mountain Biking Strategy.

The NSW Confederation is the peak body for New South Wales bushwalking and outdoor clubs and represents approximately 10,000 members from 62 member clubs.

As you can appreciate, the views of the member clubs on this topic are very diverse, however the points in this submission represent views on which some consensus has been reached.

- The Confederation represents a broad spectrum of interests, from those who would like to see mountain biking access strictly restricted and generally discouraged from national parks, through to those who would like to see strong and active promotion of mountain biking in national parks.
- The Confederation is generally supportive of the concept of an overarching mountain biking strategy, given the increasing popularity of mountain biking, the diverse views amongst park users and bushwalkers, and potential for significant impact if mountain biking is not managed appropriately. The existence of a mountain biking strategy would provide direction to each Park's Plan of Management which should of course address the impact of all recreational activities including MTB based on local circumstances.
- The Confederation submits that issues of walker and other user's safety must be addressed by the strategy. And we are supportive of the development of a mountain biking code of conduct that addresses safety and minimum impact issues.
- The strategy and planning process should attempt to reduce conflicts between different users, both in the bush and during consultation.
- Off-track mountain biking is not acceptable in high conservation value areas.
- Providing suitable access in low conservation value areas is viewed by many as a good compromise to cater for mountain bikers, and to minimise user impacts on high conservation value locations.
- High impact construction, such as jumps and ramps, is inappropriate in national parks and we would be opposed to such construction.
- Where possible, mountain biking should utilise existing roads and fire trails. Off-track mountain biking should be strongly discouraged. There may be

opportunities available to link together various management trails with minimal work, providing long, continuous riding in a bush setting.

- If areas are closed to mountain bikers, information should be readily available, explaining the reasons for the closure, and potentially providing suggested alternatives, to increase voluntary compliance with closures and restrictions.
- Conversely, if new work is undertaken to accommodate mountain biking, information should be readily available, including environmental impact analysis explaining the benefits of the planned track construction in reducing overall impacts, and examples of locations that will likely benefit from the work being undertaken. Any work undertaken should be conducted to the highest conservation standards and information regarding the planned work released and transparent and plans available for comment to the public.
- Management trails are generally considered to be suitable locations for mountain biking, providing that suitable care is taken by riders to ensure that the safety of walkers is not jeopardised.
- Riding off a formed track or trail should not be acceptable in national parks. However, on some occasions, carrying a bicycle short distances may be acceptable.
- The Confederation would like to have the opportunity to provide input, or facilitate input from local member clubs, when future works or activities may impact on members.
- The Confederation would like to see that any strategy promotes conservation of natural values in national parks, while allowing for self-sufficient and low impact enjoyment of natural values, for any activity that is promoted within national parks.
- The Confederation would like to see recreational activities whose main focus is recreational with lower value placed on the enjoyment of a Park's natural values occur in other areas such as State Forests or other Crown land where conservation values and pressures may be not as great.
- As the representative body we have a published position on mountain biking usage. Point 2 of our Bicycle Code states "*As far as possible leave no trace. Avoid cycling conditions in which you will leave traces such as on damp or muddy soils shortly after rain. Avoid heavy braking and skidding in order to protect track surfaces. Stay on the track and don't create any new ones. Walk your bike over a track obstruction rather than creating a new track around it. Stay on zigzags and don't cut corners. Carry out what you carry in.*" This policy statement corresponds with a responsible bike riding policy as outlined in the International Mountain Bicycling Association's rules of the trail under its "Leave No Trace" clause.

We note that several of our member clubs have made submissions and we would welcome attending any workshops or the opportunity to make further submissions on this important issue.