

**TO:** MERA Non-Motorized Advisory Committee Members

**FROM:** Bart Barlow and Lance Coburn      2-14-10    *Draft*

**RE: Proposed 10 Year Trail Plan, MERA Management Plan**

As you review this proposal, please note the following:

1) The designation of trailheads and access points, and the naming of roads should be completed concurrent with taking action on the proposed trail plan presented here. A proposal to accomplish this is attached (See Proposed Trailheads and Access Points, attached).

2) Proposed Timelines:

Complete a written text with supporting *plan view layout* showing existing maintained trails and non-maintained trails and proposed new trails by February 15, 2010 (this document and Figures 1 and 2). Review with the Non-Motorized Advisory Committee and modify as determined to be appropriate.

In the interest of time and efficiency, appoint a subcommittee comprised of Non-Motorized Advisory Committee members and Motorized Advisory Committee members to review and provide input on the plan proposed here. This does not eliminate the requirement for the full Advisory Committee's to be a part of and approve the proposals here.

Invite the public to comment on the proposed Non-Motorized Trail Plan. Complete by March 20, 2010. Modify as deemed appropriate, following this input.

Incorporate the Proposed Trail Plan into MERA Master Plan. Complete by June 1, 2010.

Establish milestones in the Master Plan to guide trail expansion and to help with decision making.

3) The numerical section headings here are only for ease or organization and presentation. The County will re-format, etc., to meet the requirements of the MERA Master Plan...so don't panic !

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## **SECTION 1.0 NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL PLAN**

In this section, we review the goals that will govern management of the non-motorized trails within MERA for the next 10 years. A plan is provided for development of new trails within MERA as well as onto the adjacent Wallowa-Whitman National Forest (WWNF). A process is provided for determining which of the existing trails within MERA should be retained or properly abandoned within the Trails Logging Unit and the Mid Logging Unit.

The following goals shall govern management of the non-motorized trail system within MERA:

- Provide a unique and high quality experience for all MERA users—the goal is for the MERA to be recognized at least within the Northwest as a place worth traveling to for non-motorized recreation!
- Emphasize the quality of trails rather than miles of trails available.
- Provide a range of trails for all types of bicyclists, to the extent practicable, including freeride trails, cross country trails, downhill trails, cyclocross trails and Super D trails
- Construct trails within MERA using the “Stacked Loop Design” where trailhead access, terrain and available area allows (IMBA, 2004, pg 96).
- Construct trails using sustainable practices, as defined by IMBA, 2004, 2007. Trail Construction specifications and requirements are presented in Appendix A.

- Apply user restrictions, as appropriate, in order to ensure that trails are not irreversibly degraded and to reduce conflicts among users. To the extent practicable, multi-use trails shall be emphasized (bicyclists, equestrians, hikers, etc).
- Provide ongoing maintenance of trails to ensure they remain sustainable. Trail maintenance requirements and user agreements are presented in Appendix A.
- Ensure trails and trail use does not have a significant negative impact on wildlife, water quality, wetlands or the privacy of adjacent landowners.
- Incorporate safety factors into all trail construction and trail use decisions.

The trail plan presented here includes all known and maintained trails, some known and non-maintained trails, and a process for determining which trails should be maintained, reconstructed, obliterated and the area reclaimed. It also includes proposed non-motorized trail expansion onto the Wallowa-Whitman NF.

## **1.1 Trail Construction and Maintenance Standards**

In **Appendix A**, trail construction techniques and standards, trail maintenance, trail abandonment, trail numbering and naming standards, the requirement for trail maintenance agreements with users, and a protocol for dealing with trail management issues is provided.

## **1.2 Management of Proposed Trails Within the Boundaries of MERA**

In this Section, we review trails that will be only within the boundaries of the MERA. In Section 1.3, we review trails proposed for the WWNF, which have linkages to specific trails within the MERA. For each proposed trail, a timeline for construction is provided.

Two new singletrack trails will be constructed in late spring and early summer of 2010: The Flow Trail and the Indian Rock Trail. The basis for the construction of these trails is as follows:

1) In 2010, timber will be harvested from the Trails Logging Unit and the Mid Logging Unit. These areas include the majority of singletrack trails and public use within the non-motorized portion of MERA. Trail use opportunities within these areas will be limited during 2010. Following logging, there will be an excellent opportunity to determine which of the existing trails should be reconstructed, using sustainable trail construction techniques, and which trails should be closed, obliterated and the area reclaimed. This work is proposed for late 2010 (see Section 1.5).

2) Logging of the areas north and west of Igo Lane, the Baxe and Face Logging Units, is complete and most trails were destroyed or are no longer useable. Construction of the Indian Rock and Flow Trail, prior to logging of the Trails Unit and Mid Unit, will allow public use during the logging season through the early summer and fall of 2010.

The goal is to have two new trails constructed prior to logging of the Trails Unit. These trails will form a loop that will extend from Igo Lane and the Owsley Canyon Rd extension gate (see Figure 1), to the WWNF boundary on the north end. The proposed trails will be constructed by the trail users, at no direct cost to Union County (County). Trail construction shall conform to the standards and specification in Appendix A and a maintenance agreement shall be consummated between the County and the user group(s) prior to trail construction.

### **1.2.1. Flow Trail**

The proposed Flow Trail will begin near the intersection of Igo Lane and the Archery Range Rd. and will end at the WWNF at the north end of MERA (see Figure 1). The Flow Trail will be located within the boundaries of the MERA and is characterized as follows:

**Purpose:** Provide a unique trail experience extending to the Wallowa-Whitman NF boundary at the north end of MERA and that forms a loop route with the proposed Indian Rock Trail reconstruction. The Flow Trail will be aligned to allow views of the Grande Ronde Valley and to provide adequate separation from the Indian Rock Trail—to ensure user conflicts are minimized.

**Target Trail Users Groups:** Primarily mountain bicyclists and trail runners who desire a trail experience that includes a moderately fast and flowing trail with few technical obstacles and that requires good physical conditioning.

**Trail Difficulty Rating:** Blue—more difficult and technical—see Trail Rating System.<sup>(1)</sup>

**Trail Attributes:** Contour-type of trail, open and flowing design (IMBA, 2004, pg 97), with banked corners and grade reversals as needed. Side loops, constructed parallel to the main trail and up to 300 ft in length, will be constructed (tie back into the trail) that will include earthen jumps/whoops, and some obstacles—Black Difficulty rating.<sup>(1)</sup>

**Restrictions:** No motorized use year round. Seasonal closures posted on the ground and on web pages during periods deemed critical, by the County, for wildlife use and to protect trails from damage when soils are wet. Travel may be in either direction. Trail shall be maintained at all times or shall be closed to public use by the Advisory Committee.

**Trail Access Points:**<sup>(2)</sup> Secondary Trailheads—Igo Lane Upper or Lower Trailheads, Owsley Canyon Primary Trailhead, Owsley Canyon Primitive Access Point and Mt. Emily Road Primitive Access Point.

**Future Desired Use:** Primary route to the Caffeine Trail (proposed) and a secondary route the top of Indian Rock on the Wallowa-Whitman NF, via the proposed Indian Rock/USFS Trail.

### **1.2.2 Indian Rock Trail**

The existing Indian Rock Trail begins at the Owsley Canyon Primary Trailhead and extends to the WWNF boundary at the north end of MERA. Most of the trail north of Igo Lane (north

of the rock quarry) was obliterated during the logging of the Baxe Unit in 2009. No attempt will be made to salvage portions of the Indian Rock Trail located north of the rock quarry. The new or reconstructed Indian Rock Trail will begin at the rock quarry located just north of Igo Lane and will extend to the northern boundary or MERA at the WWNF boundary (Figure 1). The Indian Rock Trail is proposed to extend beyond the MERA boundary, onto the WWNF, and continuing on up to the Indian Rock Lookout-Monument (see Figures 1 and 2). As noted in Section 1.4, the Indian Rock Loop Trail is proposed from the Indian Rock Picnic Area-Monument land forming a loop back to the Owsley Canyon Primary Trailhead (see Figure 2). The Indian Rock Trail within the boundaries of MERA is characterized as follows:

**Purpose:** Provide a unique trail experience extending to the Wallowa-Whitman NF boundary at the north end of MERA that forms a loop route with the proposed Flow Trail or the Owsley Canyon Rd extension. The Indian Rock Trail will be aligned to allow views of the Grande Ronde Valley and to provide adequate separation, and therefore privacy, for landowners along the eastern boundary of MERA.

**Target Trail Users Groups:** Equestrians, hikers, trail runners and mt bicyclists who desire a less-technical type of trail experience, but who desire physical conditioning and solitude.

**Trail Difficulty Rating:** Blue and green—easy to more difficult—see Trail Rating System<sup>(1)</sup>

**Trail Attributes:** At least 2 moderately easy ascents and 2 moderately easy descents will be provided as a part of the construction of this contour-type of trail. The trail will provide a good line of site throughout its traverses and will be an open-flowing design (IMBA, 2004, pg 97).

**Restrictions:** No motorized use year round. Seasonal closures posted on the ground and on web pages during periods deemed critical, by the County, for wildlife use and to protect trails from damage when soils are wet. Travel may be in either direction. Trail shall be maintained at all times or shall be closed to public use by the County.

**Trail Access Points:** Secondary Trailheads—Igo Lane Upper or Lower Trailhead, Owsley Canyon Primary Trailhead, Owsley Canyon Primitive Access Point and Mt. Emily Road Primitive Access Point.

**Future Desired Use:** Primary route to the top of Indian Rock on the Wallowa-Whitman NF, via the proposed Indian Rock/USFS Trail.

### **1.2.3 Timelines, Construction of the Flow Trail and Indian Rock Trail**

The following timelines are proposed for construction of the Flow Trail and Indian Rock Trail:

- Complete initial layout, on the ground, of proposed Indian Rock and Flow Trails by March 22, 2010. (flagging only).
- Complete walkover with Advisory Committee Members, Non-Motorized and Motorized by March April 15, 2010. Make adjustments as agreed upon.

- Users prepare a construction plan and maintenance agreement and present them to the Non-Motorized and Motorized Advisory Committee's and the County for approval by May 1, 2010.
- Receive Advisory Committee and County approval of proposed layout and construction approach by May 15, 2010.
- Complete detailed on the ground trail alignment, routing and flagging (using flagging/wire supports) per IMBA 2004, pg 102. Complete by June 1, 2010.
- Hire contractor, mobilize users, and construct trails. Complete by July 1, 2010.
- Certify trail construction as "in substantial compliance with plans" and execute trail maintenance agreement with County by July 7, 2010.

### **1.3 Proposed Future Trails Within the MERA, 2011 and Beyond— Prioritized**

Several trails are proposed for the future and are discussed here. Construction of these trails shall conform to all aspects of the Trail Construction and Maintenance requirements—presented in Appendix A.

#### **1.3.1 BMX Track and Area**

The BMX Track/Area is shown on Figure 1 and includes about a 5 acre area. Construction of a BMX Track/Area presents significant challenges for the following reasons:

- 1) BMX trails must be constructed on nearly level to gently sloping terrain. BMX bikes are single-speed only and cannot be ridden up or down steep gradients like a mountain bikes.
- 2) BMX bikes do not have front or rear suspension and have limited ground clearance. Because of this it is very difficult and dangerous to ride a BMX bike in rocky areas.
- 3) Because most BMX riders are younger (or act like youngsters) it is important that such an area be located in close proximity to a trailhead and have good access for emergency response.

A very limited area is available that is suitable for a BMX track area within MERA. The only area that is suitable, without incurring significant costs for excavation and fill, is shown on Figure 1. The BMX Track and Area shall be constructed to conform with the following:

**Purpose:** Provide a technically challenging and fun loop, and a less challenging and loop for BMX riders. The goal is to get kids outside and away from the TV!

**Target Trail Users Groups:** BMX riders, mountain and hybrid bikers and cyclocrossers who desire a trail experience that includes a fast, technical and flowing trail with numerous earthen jumps, berms and doubles and triples, and that requires good technique and moderate physical conditioning.

**Trail Difficulty Rating:** Green, Blue and Black—easy to very difficult—see Trail Rating System.<sup>(1)</sup>

**Trail Attributes:** Earthen trail design and materials only. Wide trail(s), open and flowing design, with minimal ascending and descending. Banked corners, earthen jumps, whoops.

**Restrictions:** No motorized use year round. Seasonal closures posted on the ground and on web pages during periods deemed critical, by the County, for wildlife use and to protect trails from damage when soils are wet. Travel will be in one direction only due to safety concerns. Trail shall be maintained at all times or shall be closed to public use by the County.

**Trail Access Points:**<sup>(2)</sup> Owsley Canyon Primary Trailhead.

**Future Desired Use:** Provide logical but safe connection point to Wapiti or other nearby singletrack trail that is open to other uses.

### **1.3.2 Caffeine Trail**

The proposed Caffeine Trail will begin near the intersection of the Flow Trail and the Indian Rock Trail and will extend to the Mt Emily Rd and loop back to the the existing Super D Trail (see Figure 1). The Caffeine Trail will be entirely within the boundaries of MERA and is characterized as follows:

**Purpose:** Provide a technically challenging and rewarding trail experience with exceptional views of the Grande Ronde Valley, and a one way loop back towards the Owsley Canyon Primary Trailhead and the Secondary Trailheads on Igo Lane.

**Target Trail Users Groups:** Primarily mountain bicyclists and trail runners who desire a trail experience that includes a moderately fast, technical and flowing trail with numerous earthen and natural obstacles and that requires good technique and exceptional physical conditioning.

**Trail Difficulty Rating:** Blue, Black and Double Black—difficult, very difficult and extremely difficult—see Trail Rating System.<sup>(1)</sup> Multiple opportunities at road intersections to opt out of the trail and to head back to one of the trailheads.

**Trail Attributes:** Contour-type of trail, open and flowing design, but with distinct ascending and descending sections (IMBA, 2004, pg 97). Banked corners, grade reversals, earthen and natural jumps, whoops, gaps and some obstacles will be included. In addition to IMBA guidance (IMBA 2004 and 2007), guidance provided in Natural Surface Trails by Design will be followed (Parker, 2007).

**Restrictions:** No motorized use year round. Seasonal closures posted on the ground and on web pages during periods deemed critical, by the County, for wildlife and to protect trails from damage when soils are wet. Travel may be in one direction only due to safety concerns. Trail shall be maintained at all times or shall be closed to public use by the County.

**Trail Access Points:**<sup>(2)</sup> Secondary Trailheads—Igo Lane Upper or Lower Trailheads, Owsley Canyon Primary Trailhead, Owsley Canyon Primitive Access Point and Mt. Emily Road Primitive Access Point.

**Future Desired Use:** Loop in conjunction with the Flow Trail or Indian Rock Trail.

## 1.4 Future Trails, Within the MERA, As Yet Un-Planned

Mountain bicycling is an evolving sport with a wide variety of very specialized bicycles becoming available—many of which are for a specific type of trail. For example freeride bikes/trails, downhill bikes/trails, etc. To the extent practicable, the goal is to provide trails that cater to this wide variety of mountain bicyclists. As discussed in Appendix A, any individual, club or group may propose construction of a new trail to the Non-Motorized Advisory Committee.

## 1.5 Proposed Trails, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

Two non-motorized trails are proposed onto the adjacent Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. These are shown on Figure 2 and discussed in this section.

### 1.5.1 Indian Rock Loop Trail, WWNF

The proposed Indian Rock Loop Trail is an extension of the Indian Rock Trail located on MERA and will begin at MERA's north boundary. The proposed Indian Rock Loop Trail will extend from the north boundary of MERA to the Indian Rock Overlook-Monument on the WWNF and then loop back to MERA as shown in Figure 2. The actual location and alignment of the trail will be dictated by the WWNF. None of this trail exists at this time.

**Purpose:** Provide unique views of the Grande Ronde Valley, the Eagle Cap Wilderness and other vistas, and provide a trail of sufficient length that is would be suitable for a day long loop ride and would attract users from outside Union County. The Indian Rock Loop Trail will be aligned to minimize impacts on wildlife and provide adequate separation, and therefore privacy, for landowners along the eastern boundary of the WWNF.

**Target Trail Users Groups:** Equestrians, hikers, trail runners and mountain bicyclists who desire a moderately-technical type of trail experience, great views, solitude and an extended loop optional route.

**Trail Difficulty Rating:** Blue and Black—More Difficult to Very Difficult—see Trail Rating System<sup>(1)</sup>

**Trail Attributes:** Contour trail with ascents and descents as necessary to be sustainable and to minimize impacts on wildlife. The trail will be constructed to ensure a good line of site throughout its traverses and will be an open-flowing design (IMBA, 2004, pg 97).

**Restrictions:** No motorized use year round. Seasonal closures posted on the ground and on web pages during periods deemed critical, by the WWNF, for wildlife protection and to protect trails from damage when soils are wet. Travel may be in either direction. Trail shall be maintained at all times or shall be closed to public use by the WWNF.

**Trail Access Points:** Owsley Canyon Primary Trailhead, Owsley Canyon Primitive Access Point and Mt. Emily Road Primitive Access Point. Secondary Trailheads—Igo Lane Upper or Lower Trailhead.

**Future Desired Use:** Primary non-motorized route to the top of Indian Rock, and an optional loop back to the MERA, and a connector to the proposed Five-Points Creek (see Figure 2).

### **1.5.2 Five Points Creek Loop Trail, WWNF**

The proposed Five Points Loop Trail will begin at the Indian Rock Overlook-Monument, and will extend through the Five Points Creek area and form a loop trail back to MERA—via one of two optional routes (see Figure 2). Portions of this trail exist at this time—reconstruction of those portions may be required to ensure sustainability, and that wildlife and fisheries concerns are addressed. The general route of the proposed trail is shown on Figure 2. The actual location and alignment of the trail will be dictated by the WWNF.

**Purpose:** Provide unique views of the Grande Ronde Valley, the Eagle Cap Wilderness and other vistas, and provide a trail of sufficient length that is would be suitable for a day long loop ride and would attract users from outside Union County.

**Target Trail Users Groups:** Equestrians, hikers, trail runners and mountain bicyclists who desire a moderately-technical type of trail experience, great views, solitude and an extended loop route.

**Trail Difficulty Rating:** Blue and Black—More Difficult to Very Difficult—see Trail Rating System<sup>(1)</sup>

**Trail Attributes:** Contour trail with ascents and descents as necessary to be sustainable, to provide logical tie-ins to existing routes and to minimize impacts on wildlife and fisheries. The trail will be constructed to ensure a good line of site throughout its traverses and will be an open-flowing design (IMBA, 2004, pg 97).

**Restrictions:** No motorized use year round. Seasonal closures posted on the ground and on web pages during periods deemed critical, by the WWNF, for wildlife protection and to protect trails from damage when soils are wet. Travel may be in either direction. Trail shall be maintained at all times or shall be closed to public use by the WWNF.

**Trail Access Points:** Owsley Canyon Primary Trailhead, Owsley Canyon Primitive Access Point and Mt. Emily Road Primitive Access Point. Secondary Trailheads—Igo Lane Upper or Lower Trailhead.

**Future Desired Use:** One of two non-motorized routes on the adjacent WWNF and that provides an optional loop back to the MERA (see Figure 2).

## 1.5 Management of Existing Trails Within MERA

Many miles of singletrack trails and roads exist within the non-motorized portion of the MERA, and especially in the Trails Logging Unit and the Mid Logging Unit. Future management of the existing singletrack trails and roads within the Trails Logging Unit and Mid Logging Unit are discussed here.

We estimate that about 60% of the singletrack trails within the Trails and Mid Logging Units (on a per mile basis) were constructed using sustainable techniques and are maintained. Following logging, most of those trails will be damaged to the point that reconstruction will be required. Post logging and prior to trail reconstruction, there will be an excellent opportunity to determine which of the existing trails should be reconstructed, using sustainable trail construction techniques, and which trails should be closed, obliterated and the area reclaimed.

Trails within the Trails Logging Unit and the Mid Logging Unit that are used extensively by mountain bicyclists and trail runners are the Wapiti, Fast Twitch, Skills, Upper and Lower U-Hotshot, Super D Trail and the Indian Rock Trail. The Fast Twitch Trail, Skills Trail, Upper and Lower U-Hotshot Trail and Super D Trail were constructed by the Blue Mtn Singletrack Trails Club in accordance with IMBA Standards (IMBA, 2004 Chapter 3; IMBA 2007 Chapter 5). These trails have also been maintained by the BMSTC (see Figure 1).

The most popular trails for equestrians and hikers are the Wapiti Trail, Backcountry Rider Trail, Indian Rock Trail and several un-named trails. Portions of the Wapiti Trail were re-routed or reconstructed using sustainable practices in 2000 by BMSTC. However, none of the other trails were constructed to sustainable standards and are not maintained.

Those goals stated in Section 1.0 shall be used to determine which trails within the Trails Logging Unit and Mid Logging Unit should be re-constructed using sustainable techniques and which trails shall be closed (obliterated and reclaimed). The following approach shall be implemented in determining the future trail network within these areas:

1) An inventory of all trails and roads shall be completed, shown on a figure (plan view) and presented to the Non-Motorized Advisory Committee (NMAC). The accuracy of the trail mapping shall be 200 ft +/- horizontal.

2) A proposal shall be made to the NMAC, by a sub-committee represented by the various user groups as well as wildlife professionals, regarding which trails should be retained and reconstructed using sustainable techniques and which trails should be obliterated and the site reclaimed. A timeline for such changes should be presented.

3) Upon adoption by the NMAC and Union County, and upon execution of a trail maintenance agreement(s) with the various user groups, the proposal adopted by the NMAC shall be implemented.

**Figure 1. Plan View of Existing and Proposed Trails Within the MERA**

**Figure 2. Plan View of Proposed Trails on the Adjacent Wallowa-Whitman National Forest**

**Appendix A: Standards for Construction, Maintenance and Management of Trails, MERA**

**References Cited**

1. International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) 2004. TRAIL SOLUTIONS: IMBA's Guide to Building Sweet Singletrack Trails. pg.97,
2. IMBA 2007. Managing Mountain Biking.
3. Natural Surface Trails by Design 2004. Natureshape LLC. By Troy Scott Parker. 79 pgs.

***Attachments:***

TO: MERA Advisory Committee Members

FROM: Bart Barlow 10/17/09 Draft 01

RE: Proposed Section 3.0 of MERA Management Plan Trailheads, Access Points

### 3.0 TRAILHEADS AND ACCESS POINTS

TO: MERA Advisory Committee Members

FROM: Bart Barlow 10/17/09 Draft 01

RE: Proposed Intro, Mission Statement, Management Structure, the MERA Management Plan