

Baltimore City Reservoir Watershed Property Recreational Trail Use



“...responsible enjoyment of these magnificent lands.”
– Baltimore Department of Public Works (DPW), December 10, 2009

INFORMATION PACKET

Loch Raven Trail Users Committee

October 24, 2010

"Trails are a necessary infrastructure"

–John Griffin, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) at the Maryland Trails Summit, October 19, 2010



"Trails are social necessities"

– Rick Potts, Chief, Conservation and Outdoor Recreation, National Park Service (NPS) at the Maryland Trails Summit, October 19, 2010



OVERVIEW

The Department of Public Works (DPW) intends to greatly restrict access to single track trails on watershed property.

The user generated trails and woods roads on the reservoir lands lack proper design and management. The condition of these trails range from good to poor.

Even without proper design and management, DPW's reports show that water quality has remained high and has not degraded over the years that trail use has been taking place. Existing sediment problems are in the far upper reaches of the reservoir, away from the majority of recreational single track trail usage.

The mountain biking user community, other trail users, residents, and local businesses care about the environmental impact of these trails.

DPW is being asked to partner with organized volunteer groups to help maintain the trails. Mid-Atlantic Off Road Enthusiasts (MORE- 5000 local mountain bikers, 950 volunteer hours at Loch Raven this year, maintains trails in over 30 parks), International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA), Bike Maryland, local businesses, local schools, the boy scouts and the citizens who use the trails want to help to correct poor trail conditions to protect the environment and our municipal water supply. These well organized groups have expertise in building sustainable trails, provide a substantial volunteer base to maintain a world class trail system, and have a history of achieving results.

MORE delivered a comprehensive draft "Recreational Trail Use Plan" to DPW on September 20, 2010.

DPW states that limiting trail use is needed because it impedes forest renewal (i.e., new growth). However, single track trails only account for approximately a tenth of a percent of the land use. The DPW knows that the deer population and invasive plants are the real threat to forest renewal.

To not take advantage of this great resource of ours is a disservice to the people our government serves.

Availability of recreational opportunities adds value to our communities and the quality of our lives. Current recreational activities taking place on watershed property include hiking, biking, running, bird watching, fishing, boating, and golfing.

VISION

“A sustainable trail system that addresses the needs of all trail users while meeting the objectives of the City of Baltimore.”

Access

Equal access among all users, including organized evening access.

Signage

Signage and maps that identify trail networks, trail difficulty, and emergency information.

Education

Comprehensive and multifaceted public education outreach program to improve awareness and compliance.

Enforcement

Courteous and consistent enforcement program consisting of community based support, volunteer patrols, and watershed ranger enforcement.

Group Meetings

Recreational user group meetings working as a sub-group of the Reservoir Watershed Coalition along with annual Task Force meetings to review recreational trail user activities.

Implementation 2010 to 2015

MOU, Education, Construction, Maintenance, and Enforcement



Science

Reservoir Reports

Reservoir reports show water quality has held steady or improved under current conditions. Bathymetric studies of Loch Raven have shown that the major contributions to sedimentation have been farming and development. Much of this is visible from the Warren Road steel bridge. The resolution of the data from these studies cannot even 'see' recreational activity.

Reservoir Water Quality Assessment Report (DPW, 2009)
Total Maximum Daily Load Report (MDE, 2006)
Reservoir Program Technical Report (Baltimore Metropolitan Council, 2004)
Total Phosphorus in Three Baltimore City Reservoirs (KCI, 2004)
Forest Management Plan (DNR, 2003)
Bathymetric Survey and Sedimentation Analysis (MGS, 2000)
Sediment Accumulation and Water Quality Report (USGS, 1999)
Watershed Action Strategy (2005, Progress Report 2006 to 2009)
DPW Drinking Water Quality Reports (2006, 2007, 2008)

Significant Watershed Impacts

The most significant threats to the viability of the watershed are development, invasive plants, and deer. While responsible recreational use is important, it is only a small piece of the impact picture.



Best Trail Management Practices

- ❖ Build sustainable environmentally responsible trails
- ❖ Construct trails only wide enough for the intended use
- ❖ Route trails around floodplains and wetlands
- ❖ Avoid sensitive environmental resources
- ❖ Protect water quality
- ❖ Prevent off trail use
- ❖ Discourage trail use during wet and muddy conditions
- ❖ Education, Education, Education



Support

Mid-Atlantic Off Road Enthusiasts (MORE) is willing to support trail maintenance, education, and volunteer patrols.



- 501.c3 non profit
- Represents 5000 mountain bikers
- Put in over 3000 hours of trail maintenance in 2009, 08, 07
- Maintains trails in over 30 parks

Black Hill Regional
Cabin John
Cedarville State Forest
Cosca
Fairland
Frederick Watershed
Gambrill State Park
Greenbrier
Hoyles Mill
Little Bennett
Rockburn Branch

Muddy Branch
Patapsco State Park
Rosaryville
Schaeffer Farms
Seneca Greenway
Upper Rock Creek
Loch Raven
Robert E Lee
Gwynn's Falls
Leakin Park
Colt's Neck

Conway Robinson
Elizabeth Furnace GW
National Forest
Fairfax CCT
Fountainhead
Lake Accotink
Laurel Hill
Locust Shade park
Riverbend
Wakefield
Fort Dupont

Local shops and groups willing to support trail maintenance and education:



Mountain Biking Trail Success Stories



"The key to providing mountain biking in state parks, even in sensitive watersheds and river valleys like Patapsco, is designing and building sustainable trails," says Nita Settina, superintendent of Maryland State Parks and a mountain biker who has ridden at Loch Raven.

Settina, who cut her teeth building better trails for the state, says the science has evolved in the past several years as designers figured out why some dirt paths fell apart at the first hint of mist while others have withstood hundreds of years of pounding feet and rain.

"As land managers, we hated trails. They were always failing. They used up precious resources. They were eyesores," she says. "But instead of continuing to throw money at failing trails, we close them down now and build better ones, sustainable ones."

Settina praises groups such as MORE and the International Mountain Biking Association for helping lead trail-building workshops. – Baltimore Sun Article, 12/19/2009



The York Water Company
Since 1816

"I wanted to tell you of our experience at The York Water Company and lend our support for the concept of working with MORE to keep open the mountain bike trails at the Baltimore City owned reservoirs.

The York Water Company has a long term lease arrangement with the York County Park system for public use of the land that encompasses our Lake Williams and Lake Redman reservoirs. The park is known as the William H. Kain County Park as well as other county parks. YAMBA's efforts have had a positive impact on trail maintenance and control of erosion through well planned and maintained trails on our watershed. The volunteer effort they have put forth has demonstrated that using our land for recreation is only part of their commitment to be true stewards of our land. YAMBA realized that to keep the trails open for their use they need to be part of the effort to maintain the trails.

"I would encourage you to work with MORE in keeping the trails open at the Baltimore City Reservoirs." – John H. Strine, Vice President-Operations, The York Water Company