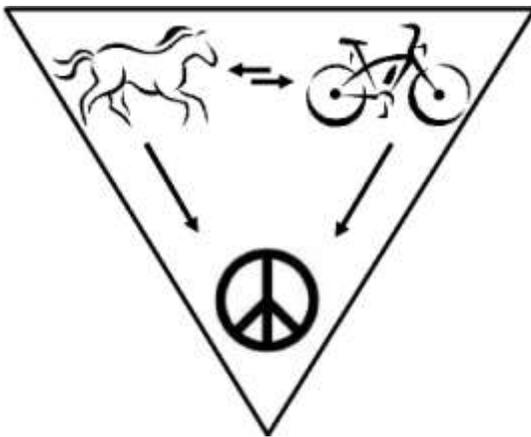




Mercer Mountain Bike Festival – Belle Mountain Race Course

Horses Are from Neptune, Bikes Are from Pluto, Rude People Are from Uranus

By Maryanne Surowiec



Can horses and mountain bikes peacefully co-exist?

During my teenage years, I spent nearly every day at the barn riding and grooming my horse to perfection. I traveled long distances for a show, or to visit a tack shop to peruse and buy something as little as horse

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JORBA Spotlight: Kevin Stout Unspoken Volunteer Extraordinaire

By Bob Birmingham

I recently spent a few days in Washington, DC at the National Bike Summit, joined by fellow JORBA member Kevin Stout. I had recognized Kevin's face from being around the Jersey mountain-biking scene, but I only actually met him a few months ago. At first meeting, Kevin is an imposing figure (*this, admittedly from a 6 foot 1 "big guy" myself*)... someone who at first glance might make you pause and think "DO NOT anger this guy"... But it only takes a moment of engaging Kevin in conversation to realize he's a friendly, good-natured, straight-shootin', no-nonsense kind of guy.



Kevin Stout (left) sharing the load

Kevin is also quite humble when it comes to serving as a volunteer. He's not one to grab the spotlight, nor is he into self-promotion. But that's OK; Kevin isn't running for public office... Kevin is a JORBA Volunteer, and an extraordinary one at that. If you've ever ridden at Bald Pate Mountain within the past 2 years, you may be familiar with Kevin's face, or at the very least his trail work. If you attended the Mercer Mountain Bike Festival on Halloween, and witnessed the awesome dual slalom racing at Belle Mountain, you saw first hand the work of Kevin Stout.

So while Kevin may not be one to talk about all the

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Vice Pres: Norm Albrecht
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Secretary: Ellen White

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Grants Admin: Mick Tormey
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Bald Pate: Contact: Kevin Stout
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Wharton State Forest: Contact: Kurt Widmaier

Director's Cut – from the Executive Director

Good Day! I'd like celebrate spring with a haiku that magically appeared in my mind when I awoke on this fine sunny morning:

Rain falling, snow melts
Our fine trails shed the water
They are sustainable!

Shortly after the massive rain storm that resulted in flooding along many of the river towns in NJ, I went for a trail run in a local park near home to check on trail conditions and see how the new trails have fared after the deluge. As you can imagine I was a bit tentative about what I might see. After all, the storm being severe, I felt this was a true test of the trail building techniques we've learned from IMBA's Trail Solutions. As it turns out, what I saw was a welcome sight: the trails have held up amazingly well. At this moment they are totally saturated with water and uber-soft but the bench cuts and erosion control measures we've designed into the trails from the outset have done exactly what they are designed to do: shed water off the trail. This is not just a local phenomenon at my local park. Other park representatives have dropped me lines saying the same thing at other JORBA stewarded parks. Sweet news indeed!

That said, before venturing out, please be wary of the softness and saturation point of the trails. If your foot sinks in at all, you should not ride. Riding in these conditions leaves an impact in the form of ruts and can create mud pits that will hold water for months. Ruts just distract our volunteers from building NEW trails (because we have to fix them) and correcting deep, wide mud pits require de-berming or nicking which is time consuming work. As always, consult the "Trail Conditions" link on JORBA.org or post up on MTBNJ.com.

It's been an amazing winter, if you enjoy snow, and although riding was a challenge in some parts, JORBA did not take much time off.

In January, JORBA held its Annual Board Meeting (which is open to the membership of JORBA) at Wharton State Park's Batsto Visitor's Center. Although the morning ride got rained out, we nearly filled the auditorium there with JORBA board members, park representatives, key development and bike fest people and concerned members. It was a productive session where we reviewed 2009, discussed new business, gave volunteer of the year awards, and tried to make a fun day out of a necessary, important meeting. As

always it's really great to see old faces and many new ones. Please if you've ever wanted to get involved, come to our annual meeting and listen in or speak out, but don't be shy. The Wookie's roar is soft and he doesn't bite. You'll meet new people of like minds and probably make a lifelong friend. Special thanks to Kirt Widmaier and Wharton State Park for hosting our meeting.



JORBA Volunteers of the Year (front row L to R): Marc Perez, "Willy" Wilbur, Rich Christiano, Geoff Lanat; (back row): JORBA President Frank Harms, Mike Confenti. (Not pictured: Pat Biskey, Alex Kochetov, John Williams)

As March rolled around and snow piled up around the state, things got busy off the bike with two Bike Summits. One held in Denville, NJ (organized by the NJ Bicycle Coalition-www.njbike.org), and another held in Washington DC (organized by League of American Bicyclists and IMBA). Both were smashing successes and JORBA was pleased to be a part of both of these events.

I won't go into a high level of detail on these, as they are going to be covered in more detail by the attendees but here's the 30K foot view of them. The First Annual NJ Bike Summit was attended by 175 advocates from around the state, and several from JORBA were in attendance (Wally Tunison, Bob Workman, Bob Birmingham, Frank Harms, et. al.) and reports are that NJ Bike did a stellar job organizing the event. Some notable speakers were present, including LAB's Andy Clarke and Bikes Belong's Tim Blumenthal and NJDOT's Sheree Davis. The intent of this summit is to bring cycling issues to the forefront in NJ's

political mind. I want to congratulate Jim, Paige and Brendan at NJ Bike for a successful event and rest assured, JORBA will be there to support NJ Bike at the 2nd Annual in 2011 as well.

The second summit, the annual National Bike Summit, held in Washington DC (organized by LAB and IMBA) was also attended by JORBA's own Kevin Stout (2nd year) and Bob Birmingham (1st year). The intention of this summit is to bring cycling issues to the fore in the minds of our national politicians. Our advocates were part of a larger cadre of advocates from NJ Bike Coalition and East Coast Greenway, et. al.). Our guys roamed capital hill, knocking on the doors of our Senators and Representatives talking about Complete Streets, Safe Routes to Schools and Wilderness access issues. I want to publicly thank Kevin Stout and Bob Birmingham for taking vacation time and attending this summit.

What's coming down the Pike? With spring begins a new round of trail work up and down the state. In addition, JORBA is trying to strengthen a weak spot in our armor: social events. With that, we will be organizing beginner's rides not only at Allaire (a smashing success for many years) but also a beginners ride series held at Ringwood State Park. Also, Maryanne "Mare" Surowiec has organized a ride schedule that rotates at many of our JORBA parks up and down the state. Information on both of these events are being fine tuned now but you can keep apprised of these happenings by keeping your browser pointed to JORBA's web site and calendar.

Speaking of social events, the biggest fund-raising and social event of the year, JORBA's 3rd Annual Bike Fest has moved to June 5th 2010. Many people have asked, why move it from September? The answer is simple: Interbike which is held in mid-September is a huge draw for the industry. Many smaller bike industry companies who would want to attend and be sponsors found they could not attend due to a commitment to Interbike. Most notably, bike manufacturers with limited demo bikes are already enroute to Las Vegas and they could not send a demo truck to NJ then turn around and race cross-country in time. So that is the main driving force behind the move. We also like the fact that June is closer to the beginning of the ride season and we felt its nice to start the season off with a festival!

So, although the date is now June 5th, the other details remain the same: the venue is the Waterloo Concert Field in Stanhope, nestled between 3 ride spots: Stephens, Deer Park and Allamuchy "north". More?

JORBA is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, non-profit organization. Donations to JORBA are tax-deductible

Visit us at www.jorba.org



P.O. Box 673, Princeton Junction, NJ
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INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN BICYCLING ASSOCIATION

Yes, please: rides will go all day long, we have new and improved food vendors, some new sponsors, some new demo trucks, a pump track (*fun for kids and adults of all ages!*), and swag for the raffle is piling up (*including 2 bikes this year*). Come on out with the whole family and join us as we celebrate NJ's great mountain biking scene! More information at <http://bikefest.jorba.org> and if you'd like to help make the event a success please contact us at festvolunteer@jorba.org.



Nothing... not even the rain could dampen the enthusiasm at last year's JORBA Bike Fest

From all of us here at JORBA we wish you all a healthy and ride-filled spring. See you at the Bike Fest!

Cheers,

Jeff Mergler
Executive Director

First Annual Brian Hahl Giveaway

On January 9th, 2010, JORBA awarded brand new mountain bikes and accessories to two students, co-winners of the 2009 Brian Hahl Bicycle Giveaway.

The bicycle giveaway essay contest was created in memory of Brian Hahl—member of JORBA, dedicated teacher, passionate mountain biker, and a dear friend to many—who passed away suddenly this past summer. Brian was a science teacher who was respected and loved by many in the community, including members of JORBA. In memory of Brian and to perpetuate his passion and sharing his love for

cycling with children, JORBA established this memorial bicycle giveaway in which 5th, 6th, and 7th grade residents of Warren and Sussex counties were invited to submit a one-page essay about why they feel that they deserve a new mountain bike and what winning a new bicycle would mean to them.

Winners of the essay contest, John Knapp of Columbia and James Vorrius of Hopactong, were both awarded new bicycles after having their essays selected by JORBA's board members. On Jan. 9, members of JORBA met with the boys and their families at the Sussex Branch Trail head in Byram to present their new bicycle



JORBA's Jeff Mergler, Karen Workman and Frank Harms present new mountain bikes to winners James Vorrius (left) and John Knapp (right)

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INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN BICYCLING ASSOCIATION

The Light Side of Trail Work: Why We Dig

by Rich Christiano

As the mists of early morning rise, the volunteer trail worker sips some last-minute coffee and eyes the day ahead. There is work to do: Erosion must be stopped. Bridges over streams must be repaired. Encroaching vegetation must be tamed. It sounds like a shopping list of drudgery, but a day in the life of a JORBA volunteer is anything but.



JORBA Treasurer Mick Tormey demonstrates the famous Crane Technique for trail building

(Photo by Jeff Conklin, GetOutsideNJ.com)

Perhaps the best-kept secret about trail work is that it's fun. This is something that casual off-road cyclists might find hard to understand... partly because mosquito bites, mud, sweat, and poison ivy are things that normal people try to avoid. Hauling loads of mulch in a wheelbarrow doesn't really produce giggle fits. We get paid zilch. So why do we do it? What drives the JORBA volunteer to pull on boots and work, when the siren song of weekend sleep is so tempting?

It's because being clean is overrated. Our working lives

are mostly civilized, polite, dry-cleaned affairs. It could be that some resentment builds when life has been polished and buffed for too long: Something tribal creeps back from our distant past. Yet we know that people will look at us oddly if we start rolling in the mud, pounding on the drums, and howling at the moon. The solution? Trail day. It's hard to shake the fussiness of civilization sometimes. Once, at the end of a trail day last year, I was playfully teased by other volunteers for trying so hard to pick the mud out of a McLeod's tines before stacking it with the others. It is, after all, a trail tool. It's supposed to be dirty.

The camaraderie on the trail sustains us; in fact, I'd say a sense of humor is vital. Animated conversations over where a new trail should go can be priceless.

"I think the trail should go that way," says crew member A.

"That's great," says crew member B, "if you want people skidding downhill, against camber, using their faces for brakes, straight into that big tree."

"Well, fine," huffs crew member B. "Where do you propose we build it?"

"Over there seems to make the most sense."

At this point, crew member B rolls his eyes. "Perfect. By the time they realize they're launching themselves into the lake, they're already airborne."

And so it goes, on and on, while the rest of the crew laughs and throws in their own ideas. Usually two opposing factions emerge in these conversations: First, the young guns who love to climb 60-degree inclines and hop through boulder farms on one flaming wheel. Then there's my group: The teetotalers with knees held together by duct tape and an over-refined sense of self-preservation. Life on the trail is always fun, but dying there is just a bummer.

The people we meet on the trail also provide entertainment. Other mountain bikers usually thank us (when they're not asking for directions). Joggers and hikers sometimes eye us warily. I can't imagine why... doesn't everyone occasionally wander around the woods with bands of mud-speckled, sweaty strangers? Sometimes the fear works in reverse. On one trail day at Mercer County Park, a guy walking an enormous dog stopped and asked if he could join us sometime. We chatted with him for a while, but I'm not sure anyone

actually made eye contact... with the man, that is. Watching the dog was a different story. It's hard to say no to someone when they have a dinosaur at the end of a leash, and it looks hungry.

I will confess to a personal vendetta against thornbushes. Anyone who has done trail work with me has seen the demented look of joy on my face when I'm handed a pair of loppers or clippers. Oh, sure, you could argue that the thornbushes are merely defending their territory when I'm riding through on my bike. But if I'm shedding tears on the trail, it's only because my forearms are covered with angry thorn welts. As a card-carrying member of *homo sapiens*, I have a right to stake my claim, too... and on trail day, it's payback time.

More comic relief at Mercer is provided by a family of beavers who seem intent on undoing our work at stream crossings. We have nothing against the critters, save for one sore point: Their dams are built with the apparent purpose of submerging our bridges. Forget about catching fish. These beavers are saboteurs. How do you win a prolonged battle against a mammal that (a) outnumbers you, (b) has engineering skills superior to yours, and (c) is always there, day and night? Well, you don't. If you remember Bill Murray's struggle with the gopher in the movie *Caddyshack*, it wasn't Bill who had the last laugh.



**The Dirty Dozen – Post-Session Group Photo
(Author standing at left)**

Who Says Size Doesn't Matter?

By **Maryanne Surowiec**



It's no secret that I am dangerously obsessed with bikes. Flash a sweet ride in front of me and I will find a way to make it mine, often without much thought. Many years ago, I anxiously walk into a bike shop with my dad to purchase my first mountain bike, filled with worry he may change his mind on buying me a bike. To me, this Mongoose Rockadile is the perfect bike because it is a mountain bike and I need something fast simply because the rims on my 12-speed are severely bent from riding it through trails. Besides, what does it matter that the new bike is too big for me? I just slam the seat down to the top tube and voila, it fits! After all, I tried my 6'4" brother's bike beforehand and if I can ride that on my tippy toes, I can ride anything.

About five years into my biking career, and with about three years of driving under my belt, I sell my car to buy a new bike, a Klein Attitude. I still know very little about bikes, yet I order it from a catalog based on a bike shop's recommendation, "This should fit you." Once it arrives, based solely on the stand over height, I am surprised I actually do fit the bike pretty good. I do not bother to pedal it before bringing it home, but I do make sure stickers are in the accompanying bag with the owner's manual and SPD plastic pedal covers.

Fast forward six years and I am ready to invest in my first full-suspension bike. I visit Inter-Bike on a mission to ride every full-suspension bike and find the one for me. I settle on a Titus Moto-Lite primarily because after two days of riding, nothing else really stands out, and this comes in pink. After waiting six months for the frame to arrive, I quickly learn the Pepto-Bismol pink machine is too small for me. I sadly sell it after only five rides for a fraction of what I paid to a man who was apparently very secure in his manhood. One year later I return to Inter-Bike with the same mission, but this time I will be certain before I fork over a chunk of cash. I find a Santa Cruz Blur XC, put on my pedals, and off I go. I instantly forget about my parched throat from the dry desert, my sunburn from the blistering hot sun, and my crankiness from fighting with my then boyfriend. I am finally having fun! This little bugger feels like an

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treats. A horse insignia was on everything important to me...socks, trapper keeper, pencils, and a myriad of other valuables. Rain made me sad if it meant missing out on a day of riding. One day while waiting at a red light on my way home from a horse show, I saw a cyclist across the street straddling his top tube, also waiting for the light to turn green. My trainer said, "Damn, look at those thighs," while I was amazed and asked if you can get muscles like that horseback riding. Her reply: "I doubt it." And so began my fascination with biking and my quest to reduce the jiggle in my thighs.

A few years ago I spent Easter Sunday putting together a new bike. Every major holiday, bike related items fill my list. I drive far to bike, ride in extreme conditions, and chances are pretty good that if someone is in my life, they are interested in biking to some extent. I revolve my weekends and vacations around biking. My point is this: equestrians and cyclists are the same – we are both very passionate about our hobbies, both spend enormous amounts of time and money on our hobbies, and we both meet up on common ground to enjoy our hobbies. Oh, and we both like carrots and sugar cubes, so you see, we are more alike than you realize, yet much conflict exists between us. Let's face it, horses have been spooked by cyclists and equestrians have gotten hurt. Cyclists have all ridden through mounds of manure, and some of us have been yelled at by equestrians. And, boy, we all have heard the argument about who does more damage to the trails. I hope with some understanding, the relationship between equestrians and cyclists will improve.

A Bit About Horses:

Each horse has an individual disposition, just as humans do, from blasé to hotheaded. Horses see, hear, and smell much more acutely than humans do. They are a prey species, cautious and scared, approaching things as harmful until proven otherwise. They protect themselves by biting, kicking, and running. Horses have a very large field of vision, but they do have blind spots between their eyes, directly behind them, and under their nose. Being heard animals, if one horse spooks and runs, the rest of the heard takes this as a sign of danger, following the spooked horse to safety. When a horse reacts to a potential threat, it is often instinctual, not a result of their owner's inability to control their animal.

We all cannot be experts on animal behavior, but we

can learn from our experiences. An experienced equestrian from northern New Jersey has been actively involved in the horse community for thirty years. While riding one day with her friend, they had several unpleasant encounters with cyclists. The first triggered her friend's horse to buck while the cyclist rode off oblivious to the fact that rider was left on the ground with multiple pelvic fractures. As the woman moved her friend's horse to the side of the trail to prevent any further injury, another cyclist rode right up behind the horse and was extremely rude, stating his disapproval of the horse on the trail. They tried to talk to him, but he stated since he does not have a horse, he does not need to know the rules. There was not even a chance to warn the cyclist or explain anything before his verbal attack. The cyclist rode off while other people gathered to help, waiting for the EMS to arrive. **Despite horrifying experiences, equestrians are eager to build relationships with cyclists with hopes to prevent future injuries from occurring.**

If you've ever had a bad trail user experience (or heard of a horror story), you can understand why these two worlds tend to be defensive when they encounter each other on trail. However, we can improve our trail experience and prevent potential injury through *simple respect* for the other trail users you encounter. Although avid cyclists tend to know the rules and practice them, the newer cyclist may not have been exposed to the rules. This is where your peers can help teach and make responsible trail users out of the new cyclist. In that light, and in order to better understand each other, let's look at the common (mis)perceptions and responsibilities of equestrians and of cyclists

(continued on next page)



Common (Mis)perceptions and Responsibilities

Cyclists' Perception Towards Equestrians:	Equestrians' Perception Towards Cyclists:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equestrians are rude and anger easily. Often cyclists are in a zone, turn a corner, and there is a horse! By the time we realize you are there, you are already angered and yelling. • Cyclists do not enjoy riding through manure, clogging our tires with it, or having it fly up to hit us in the face. At the very least, manure should not be left in the lot. • Equestrians do not participate in trail maintenance.* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyclists are rude, disrespectful, and ride up quickly behind horses without warning. • Cyclists do not understand the multi-use trail yield sign. • Cyclists do not understand that equine digestion causes frequent elimination. If you come across a pile here or there, bunny hop it.
Equestrians' Responsibilities:	Cyclists' Responsibilities:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owners can and should do their best to desensitize their horses if they plan to take them on the trails. At the barn, mimic threatening trail encounters by walking your horse up to a bike, then have someone ride a bike up to your horse. Take the horse to the trail and do the same thing, gradually increasing the speed of approach and amount of noise. Spend as much time as needed doing this on the ground with your horse before you try this mounted. Take responsibility for training your horse and do not ride an animal you do not feel safe on. • Turn and move to the side of the trail if cyclists come up behind you so the cyclist can be seen by your horse. • Ask cyclist to stop if they do not on their own. • Dismount if necessary to protect yourself from being thrown. • Be polite and communicate with cyclists about your horse's behavior and how to pass safely because you know best how your horse will react. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep your eyes open for horses. • If coming up on a horse from behind, stop and verbally let them know you are approaching. Do not ring bells or squeal brakes as this can scare a horse. • If approaching head-on, stop. • Ask the equestrian how to proceed and offer to dismount. • While approaching, talk to the horse. Remember, they are afraid and hearing your voice means you are a human and humans, after all, supply food and treats. • Keep in mind that with years of training, a horse can still spook and hurt themselves, their owner, and cyclists. • Ask before you pet a horse. Remember, they do have blind spots below their nose and between their eyes, the two areas we are inclined to reach our hands out to.

** Some equestrians have indicated that they don't participate in trail maintenance because a) horses cannot remain tied up without supervision while their owners work, and b) weekends are the only time they have to ride on the trails. I do understand and respect this point of view, but the same is true of cyclists: when we participate in trail maintenance, we are giving up ride time too, and for many of us, the weekends are the only time we can ride. Although we can lean a bike against a tree at a trail work session, often, we leave our bikes home, or if we do bring our bikes, we get so wrapped up in working that we do not allow time to ride afterwards. Trail maintenance sessions are typically scheduled in 3-4 hour blocks of time, but volunteers are not obligated to stay the whole time unless they choose to. Finally, trail work is scheduled nearly every weekend (and some weeknights) at various parks which makes it easier for anyone to participate*

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Spotlight: Kevin Stout

work he's done for JORBA over the past years, I am happy to. In addition to serving as JORBA Treasurer, Kevin has invested hundreds of hours of his personal time, tirelessly working to bring mountain biking to the Lambertville area. Here's a brief look at some of Kevin's contributions.

Bald Pate Mountain: Lesson in Partnership



One of many singletracks at Bald Pate

It's hard to believe I've lived in Central Jersey for over 20 years, and I had never heard of Bald Pate Mountain until I joined JORBA. That should tell you something. There are plenty of places in NJ like Bald Pate that may remain virtually undiscovered, unless there is some group, or someone dedicated to making it known to the public. In the case of Bald Pate, that group is JORBA, and the person is Kevin Stout.

Kevin has been leading the Bald Pate JORBA chapter for 2 years now, and already he has begun to breathe new life into the 12+ miles of trails that traverse Kuser Mountain, the park's backbone. Kevin (through his

long time involvement with Mick Tormey at Mercer County Park) has also established excellent working relationships with the Mercer County Park Commission (MCPC) as well as the local community (*including the equestrians, who have been riding horses at Bald Pate for years*). Further evidence lies in the volunteer turnout for the Bald Pate Trail Maintenance Days that Kevin organized since forming the JORBA chapter, along with praise from locals for the trail crew's IMBA-based trailbuilding skills.



Bench cutting a trail the IMBA way

I shouldn't be so surprised by this, but I found myself skeptically questioning Kevin about the relationship with the local community. After all, Kevin has been a familiar face around Bald Pate for years, and is well-known in the mountain biking community. But the mere fact that he represents the mountain biking community deep within horse country had me scratching my head. "And they're OK with what JORBA is doing?" I would ask, as if to suggest I was expecting him to be giving me only one side of the story. Even Kevin himself seemed pleasantly surprised by how well the local community has embraced JORBA's presence. But in the end, this really should come as NO surprise, because THAT is precisely what the mission of JORBA is all about: Establishing partnerships. Kudos, Kevin!

Funny thing, Kevin never actually intended to lead the Bald Pate chapter, but you know how the story typically goes... A fellow JORBA rider asked him to start working with the Mercer County Park Commission and a local conservationist on maintaining the trails at Bald Pate. At first, Kevin played the role of observant volunteer, but soon felt compelled to demonstrate the proper way to construct a well-built, sustainable trail. After a few months of waiting for the right opportunity,

Kevin approached the MCPC and pitched the idea of establishing a JORBA chapter at Bald Pate. By this time Kevin had gained the respect and trust of the MCPC and the other volunteers, who liked the idea. Kevin had also approached the board members of JORBA, who after a tour of the park required no further convincing from Kevin. The JORBA Bald Pate Chapter was born.

Presently Bald Pate has between 12 and 16 miles of rideable trails. There's a 250-foot elevation change between the Fiddlers Creek parking lot and the top of Kuser Mountain, providing lots of climbing opportunities. According to Kevin, many of the trails were constructed along the fall-line, where erosion naturally becomes a maintenance problem. But Kevin and the JORBA crew are addressing these issues one trail at a time, and hopefully one day soon all the trails in the park will provide a great opportunity for biking, hiking and horseback riding, while requiring far less trail maintenance. Ultimately Kevin's vision is to establish a trail that will take full advantage of the natural beauty of the mountain, flowing from West to East, gradually undulating over the length of mountain, in contrast to the steep fall-line trails that currently comprise the park's trail network.

Once the ground dries out this spring, I will ask Kevin for a proper tour of Bald Pate. It lies in a beautiful region of the Hopewell Valley, bordering on the Delaware River. I hope others will join me and see what the buzz is all about. Come visit Bald Pate Mountain, and meet Kevin Stout. He's a great guy and a valued JORBA volunteer. Thanks, Kevin!



Kevin on QC Inspection duty at Mercer County Park

Mercer Mountain Bike Festival at Belle Mountain: Oct 31, 2009



Belle Mountain Ski Area's former double chair lift

"You guys oughta do a dual slalom race at Belle", he said. "I can help to make it happen"...

That's supposedly a conversation that took place a few years ago between a County Park insider and Pete Garnich of Knapps Cyclery in Lawrenceville. Pete had grown up around Belle Mountain (*when it was a small ski area*), and he expressed a desire to see it used again (*after it was shut down in the early 90s, eventually earning an undeserved place in the pages of "Weird NJ Magazine"*). Then Pete supposedly transplanted the same seed in Kevin Stout's head, and from that point on the Mercer Mountain Bike Festival began to gradually take shape. With the help of pro rider and racing coach, Jim Dellavale of Mad March Racing (*and co-designer of the Highbridge Park, NYC Pump Track*), the once far-flung notion of hosting the region's first ever dual slalom race was suddenly within reach. Some time in August of 2009, the Festival team (*with the blessing of Mercer County Executive Brian Hughes*) set their sights on a date in September (*which soon had to be changed to Saturday, Oct 31st to allow for more prep time*). The bar had now been set: All these guys had to do was to clean up and prepare the site, design a 2-lane race course from the top of the mountain, construct the course using heavy earth-moving machinery, hire a group to actually run the race and then promote the heck out of the event to get racers and spectators to participate... all within about 2 months! That's when Kevin sprung into action.

(continued)

“It started with a massive cleanup at Belle”, Kevin told me... Groups of volunteers (*at least half provided by JORBA*) under Kevin’s direction spent the first month or so picking up trash, and clearing invasive plant species to beautify the area, making the site more attractive for future use (*long after the event was over*). The volunteers also removed any unsafe remnants from the old ski area.

Then Jim D set to work designing and building the slalom course, which featured 2 side-by-side racing lanes bee-lining down the face, cutting across the former ski slope into the woods, then emerging back into the open, down to the finish line. This required heavy equipment, including a bulldozer and backhoe (*provided by Greg’s Landscaping in Pennington*).



Building the race course: tougher than it looks

After all, constructing a course to keep racers on the track at high speeds would require several banked turns (*berms*), and literally tons of earth to be moved and sculpted. In addition to a massive crew with hand tools, this tremendous task required Mike Meloor (*under Jim D’s direction*) to skillfully operate the backhoe and bulldozer alongside the crew. Despite being supported by heavy machinery, the job required an intensive amount of manual work to sculpt, pack and put the finishing touches to the race course. The challenge was nothing short of colossal, and the effort from the volunteers, herculean.



Race course construction crew

The project did encounter a few unexpected challenges along the way, however. A local businessman/ resident made it quite clear he was angered by the mere sight of heavy machinery, or even that this event was taking place at all. Kevin and crew used diplomacy to deal with this individual as best as possible, and struck an agreement to hold the event during the morning hours, ending it early in the afternoon of the 31st so as to not interfere with this person’s business.

Also, balancing the crew’s zeal for removing invasive species against working with a regional naturalist brought about another unexpected encounter. The cleanup crew was busy removing invasive plants from around a pond that had been visually choked-off from view. Kevin and crew naturally thought they were doing a service by restoring the pond to the viewscape (*for all to view and enjoy*). The Naturalist didn’t quite see it the same way... she indicated the plants had been intentionally left to grow around the pond to actually discourage ducks from landing in and nesting around the pond. This of course came as a surprise, but also as a valuable lesson learned: Things may not always be as obvious as first glance.

The course was completed just in time for the festival on the 31st. Rain from previous days had left the course muddy in several places. The race organizers (*G4 Productions*) decided to convert the race to a time trial format, since it would be nearly impossible to ensure neither race lane offered an advantage over the other. The race itself attracted 65 racers, and over 300 spectators, some from as far away as 100 miles. The race began at 10 AM and continued for the next 3 hours, each rider being given 3 chances to ride their fastest time over the course.



First air at Belle since skiers left town

By all accounts the festival (*and especially the race*) was a big success. The race went off without a hitch (*except for the format change*), and winners walked away with trophies, merchandise, and bragging rights to Belle Mountain's first dual slalom mountain bike race. The event ended shortly after the awards ceremony, and volunteer crews quickly cleaned up the site and disassembled tents and equipment (*as agreed*). The event had clearly ended on a high note.

Then came the call to Pete a week later from Mercer County Park Commission, ordering him to remove the race track from the face of the ski area. This came as a shock to Pete, Kevin and the race crew. After all, they had received permission to host the race, without any prior discussion about having to remove the race course after the race. As far as Kevin and the other organizers were concerned, they were expecting to leave the course intact throughout the year (*for free public use*), with hopes of hosting an annual event at Belle Mountain. It suddenly became apparent that there was some strong underlying opposition to the whole idea (*perhaps from someone of influence in the area*). Pete called in the Greg's Landscaping crew once again, but this time to actually *destroy* the course they had created for the race. Within a day the course was virtually eliminated, with only a few remnants in the dirt to remind people of the passing event. Kevin shared his disappointment with the events that

unfolded in the aftermath of the festival. He personally had devoted several months of his personal (*and unpaid*) time volunteering and preparing for the event, only to have all the positive effects last for a few short hours before being virtually snuffed out. I asked him if there were to ever be a 2010 or 2011 Mercer Mountain Bike Festival at Belle (*including a race*), what would it take? He said it would first require the county, state and/or local people who each have an interest or stake in Belle Mountain to agree that this event could take place, thereby avoiding any potential backlash similar to what they received during and after construction of the course. Also there would need to be recognition and agreement up front exactly as to what kind of site improvements the MCPC was expecting, including buy-in and assistance from the necessary NJ State DEP with regard to such improvements.

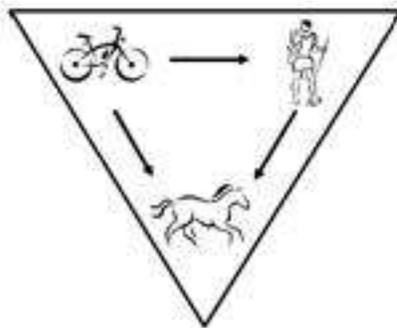
Perhaps the biggest disappointment to Kevin was the fact that despite all his good intentions (*and he remains adamant that EVERY action taken was intended only to leave a POSITIVE impact on the park*), the backlash left him feeling a bit stung, as though the MCPC, who had fully supported this event, had done an about-face and quickly withdrew their support, siding with the late opposition.

But true to form, Kevin understands (*and acknowledges*) that being a JORBA volunteer can be a thankless job, and he's not looking for a pat on the back... he's merely looking to make Bald Pate and Belle Mountain great places to mountain bike. That's OK, because I, along with Kevin's many JORBA friends would like to say THANK YOU, KEVIN, for all the amazing and unselfish work you did to make this awesome event happen. The Mercer Mountain Bike Festival (AND race) was mostly considered a GREAT SUCCESS in the public's eye, let's not forget that. So let's KEEP dreaming up great ideas like this, learn from the experience and keep forging ahead. JORBA stands with you and salutes you! Thank you!



What We Can ALL Do:

- Be polite to encourage positive relationships. Making eye contact and smiling certainly helps. People are always more receiving of kindness than a person who is hostile and defensive.
- Be patient and willing to move aside. It may be necessary to find a wider spot on the trail before passing.
- Communicate what you can do or what you need the other person to do.
- Both of our sports are fun, but remember there is an inherent risk for injury that comes with our sport when riding solo, crossing paths with anyone we encounter, or even crossing paths with a tree. Each of us is responsible for doing our best to be safe.
- Learn the meaning of the multi-use trail yield sign:



- Cyclists YIELD to Hikers & Equestrians
- Hikers YIELD to Equestrians

There *are* rude equestrians and cyclists, but that is not enough reason to assume all are rude. If you have an unpleasant encounter on the trail, recognize that it is in isolation. On your next encounter, try to be open-minded by greeting giant quadrupeds with a smile and friendly words. I have been biking for nearly eighteen years, “bumping into” many horses, and to this day I have had very pleasant interactions with them. I just wish one would take me serious when I ask to swap our mode of transportation for the day! Hopefully with efforts to co-exist peacefully, we will “bump into” each other more because in the end, there *is* enough room for horses and bikes on the trail.



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extension of me and for the first time I feel what it is like to be on a bike that truly fits. I march over to the Santa Cruz booth to notify them of my new love: “I want this bike, but your reputation is not that great and I will not wait 6 months for the bike.” The frame practically arrives to New Jersey before I do and I remain crazy about this bike until...until...well, I am still crazy about it, but I enter a world of polygamy as I fall in love with 29ers.

For years I assumed 29ers are too big for my 5'4" frame, yet I find myself willingly coerced into trying a 29er through the trails at JORBAfest. WOW! Who would have thought a hardtail could feel this good? A sweet 29er has been flashed in front of me and I have to find a way to make it mine. A few months later I bring home Freckles, a Salsa Mamasita. As with my other bikes, I take it to Round Valley for the maiden voyage. I ride over rocks in amazement as I think about what upgrades I can make because this bike has quickly worked its way up to my primary bike spot. If I can ride this at Round Valley, I figure I can ride it anywhere, right? I have not been riding much these days, so these darn hills hurt more than usual, but I am having one of my best rides! Well, minus the chainsuck issue that develops on my final climb out causing lovely gouges on my new frame, but whatever...I just pedal and smile. It is no myth that 29ers roll over things easier. It is a fact! The jury is still out as to whether or not I will keep this chainsucking bugaboo or throw it off of a cliff, but I am thrilled with the feeling of riding a 29er and I am proud to say I have opened up my world to 29ers.

Oh, and if one more person tells me I do not know how to shift, or I need to adjust my derailleur, I will throw them off of a cliff too. Move over guys because girls are going to take over the 29er world and we do know how to shift.



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Upcoming Events, Meetings & Miscellaneous Dirt

Two months of horrid weather have wreaked havoc on our parks: Trees and branches scattered, rivers overflowing, not to mention the snow melt in our northern parks. Obviously there is a tremendous amount of work to be done. Please volunteer at your local park as we try to clean up the mess, because without volunteers like you, it won't get done. Now that Daylight Savings Time is here, we are all itching to get back to our favorite trails. Before you venture out, please be conscious of trail conditions because we can leave some hefty ruts in the mud. I know we're "preaching to the choir" here, but we might want to invite our buddies out for some road rides until the trails dry out.

http://www2.jorba.org/index.php?title=Trail_Conditions

Only 3 months until the Bike Fest! Here's a word from our Festival Queen, Karen Workman:

2010 JORBA Bicycle Festival Moves to Spring!

The 3RD Annual JORBA Bicycle Festival will take place on Saturday, June 5th, 2010 at the Waterloo Village Concert Field in Stanhope, NJ. This annual celebration of mountain biking in New Jersey will be a fun-filled day for everyone. The day's events will include scheduled group rides for kids, beginners, intermediate and advanced riders on some of the nicest trails NJ has to offer. Self-guided mountain biking loops will also be available. Festival participants can choose from all sorts of fun activities, including:

- **Demos** - Try out a bicycle from one of the on-site demo trailers
- **Pump Track** *(new!)* - Take a spin on our new pump track, and discover firsthand why pump tracks are the latest rage!
- **Skills Clinic** - Brush up on your bike-handling abilities by participating in a skills clinic
- **Adult Goof Race** *(new!)* - Compete in this wacky, fun race for those who believe competition and silliness go hand-in-hand
- **Food** - After working up an appetite, you can satisfy your hunger at one of several food vendor stands
- **Swap-Fest** *(new!)* - Got old bike parts sitting around the garage that you need to get rid of? Looking for bike parts? Got bike projects that ain't goin nowhere, and the wife is ready to toss YOU and your project? Register for Swap-Fest (swap

meet). Set up your own space/table for a small registration fee, and let your junk become someone else's treasure.

- **Swag!** - Raffles will be held throughout the day... We've got lots to raffle, including several large-ticket items!

Admission to the JORBA Bicycle Festival is still FREE, although a donation to JORBA is much-appreciated.

Volunteers Needed! If you are interested in volunteering at the Festival, please email me at: JORBAFestVolunteer@embarqmail.com

Thanks, see you at the Fest!

Karen Workman (*Festival Queen 2010*)

Upcoming rides

- March 27th Wharton Group ride 10am
- April 9th Wharton Night Ride
- Stay tuned for Ringwood State Park Bi-monthly Beginner Rides on Wednesday evenings

Coming soon to a park near you!!!

JORBA welcomes Maryanne Surowiec as our Events Coordinator. Mare, as she is more commonly known, has been posting our activities all over the place and has announced the JORBA ride schedule. These social paced, no-drop rides will be a great chance to meet people, and just have fun.

April 18 th	Ringwood State Park
May 2 nd	Bald Pate
May 31 st	Clayton Park
June 12 th	Jungle Habitat
June 19 th	Washington Valley Park
July 17 th	Hartshorne
July 31 st	Allaire State Park
October 9 th	Allamuchy State Park
October 16 th	Six Mile Run
November 12 th	Wharton State Forest

JORBA needs you!

JORBA is in constant need of volunteers at every level. Work, household chores, family responsibilities, social obligations – it's hard enough to fit in a ride, let alone find time for building trails. However, if you are unable to make it to monthly trail maintenance, there are lots of other options for giving back to the sport we love. Fortunately, many of them don't involve traveling any

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farther than your computer. Here are some of the skills we are in search of:

- Reporters for our super-informative, witty, somewhat (ir)regular newsletter. We need your help gathering content, generating ideas and creating articles for "The Dirt". One specific need is a "Beat" Reporter who can interview the park reps for ongoing happenin's and interesting tidbits at the parks. (Contact development@jorba.org)
- Grant Researchers: We need people to monitor grant sources by scanning the internet for bicycle or trail related grant opportunities. Our main source of grant money is the RTP program, but we do need additional sources for bike park projects, trail marking, equipment, etc. from other grant sources.
- Volunteers to help our Estelle Manor volunteer group. Ken Seebeck, who was recently transferred to South Jersey, will be taking the reigns of this group and will help revitalize Estelle Manor Park.

If you are interested in volunteering, please email us at: development@jorba.org.

Please support our JORBA park leaders as we work to maintain our access at parks throughout the state. With your help we were able to log over 5900 volunteer hours in 2009 and we are setting our sights even higher for 2010.

Here are some of the upcoming trail maintenance dates. Start times and other detailed information are available on www.jorba.org.

- March 27th Ringwood, Hartshorne, Wash Valley
- April 3rd Wharton
- April 4th Bald Pate
- April 10th Huber,
- April 11th Jungle Habitat, Six Mile, Sourland

Remember, JORBA continues to grow and we need your continued support more than ever. You dig? We do!

If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact me at allaire@jorba.org and please pass this e-mail on to your friends and riding buddies.

Sincerely,

Frank Harms

JORBA President

JORBA-sponsored Pump Track in Hunterdon County – First for NJ !

(press release by Lisa Fortunato)

After seven months of negotiations and planning, the Jersey Off-Road Bicycle Association (**JORBA**)'s Hunterdon County chapter received the news that the construction of New Jersey's first publically available pump track was approved for Alexandria Park in Alexandria, NJ. Groundbreaking on this highly anticipated project will begin this spring with completion expected on June 5, 2010, Alexandria Park's Annual Community Day.

A pump track is one of the fastest-growing attractions in biking. It is a continuous dirt loop of rollers and insloped turns, reminiscent of a BMX track but smaller in scale, which can be ridden by cyclists of all ages and skill levels. A pump track can be placed in a small footprint, requires little maintenance, and teaches riders essential riding skills while building fitness, all in a low-risk environment. Alexandria Park's pump track will provide a new challenge for New Jersey's growing cycling community.

Following guidelines set out by the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA), **JORBA** will construct the pump track in the rear section of Alexandria Park. The pump track will be adjacent to the athletic fields, walker's path, and disk golf. Both **JORBA** and the Alexandria Park Commissioners are eager to add the pump track to the park's growing number of recreational features.

Since publically accessible pump tracks are hard to come by and the course at Alexandria Park may be a first for many cyclists, **JORBA** will be offering clinics throughout the summer to provide instructional assistance on proper use and technique for riding a pump track. Clinics will also emphasize bicycle safety, maintenance, and proper riding etiquette.

JORBA is seeking volunteers and supplies for what will no doubt be an exciting and challenging project. To help, please visit <http://www.jorba.org> or contact roundvalley@jorba.org.

JORBA Sponsors

JORBA thanks its sponsors for their continued support and hopes that you will, too, by supporting them.

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- [*Cycle Craft \(Parsippany & Long Valley, NJ\)*](#)
- [*Cycleworks \(Route 206 Stanhope, NJ\)*](#)
- [*Marty's Reliable \(Morristown, Randolph & Hackettstown, NJ\)*](#)
- [*Bicycle Pro \(Bordentown, NJ\)*](#)
- [*Subaru of Mt. Olive/Saturn of Denville, Livingston and Mt. Olive*](#)
- [*Action Bicycle*](#)
- [*Montclair Bikery \(Montclair, NJ\)*](#)
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- [*Bicycle Hub of Marlboro*](#)
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Clean Fill – Bike Summit Wrap-up



The Freshman

By Bob Birmingham

I guess the term “freshman” may be misleading; after all, I AM 51 years old and have for many years skillfully played the role of the half-committed, semi-serious volunteer. But the events of the last 2 weeks have so humbled and excited me (*like a first-day student*), I truly feel like a freshman. And I can already sense that my life is about to change in a big way. But this story isn't only about me; it's about all of us. It's about the fact that we're being handed a great opportunity to transform our society and improve our lives where we all live and work. I honestly feel in my heart that we're standing on the threshold of a new era in America.

I'll try to keep the recap of the 2 summits brief; there will be plenty of other material on the web that you can read if you'd like more details. Instead I'd just like to replay the highlights as I saw them, and hopefully share some of the same excitement that is STILL making my head spin. *We (that is, we bicyclists in America)* may be on the verge of something remarkable ... I say “may”, because it all depends on whether or not we rise to this opportunity. But first, the quick recap:

NJ Bicycle Summit, February 27th Denville Municipal Complex



A packed courtroom in Denville, you could almost hear the buzz

The NJ Bicycle Coalition was formed in 2009 by a group of NJ cyclists and advocates, following a series

of unfortunate accidents and mishaps that compelled them to come together as a unified voice for bicyclists. They quickly established their agenda of unifying concerned cyclists across the state, to reach out to government, land managers, and other stakeholder groups to make NJ a safer and better place to ride bikes (*and ultimately, to live and work*). The Coalition held the very first NJ Bicycle Summit on a Saturday in late February (*after the big snowstorm of 2010*), but that certainly didn't discourage the attendees; the summit sold out in advance and was packed to capacity.

The Coalition assembled a fantastic lineup of speakers for the summit (*a virtual “who's who” of cycling advocates*), including Andy Clarke, President of the League of American Bicyclists, Tim Blumenthal from Bikes Belong, and Jeff Miller from the Alliance for Biking and Walking, among others. The theme of the day seemed to focus on recent successes in the US and NJ, in addition to opportunities for making bicycling safer and more prevalent in America. JORBA members in attendance included Frank Harms, Bob Workman, Marc Perez, and longtime advocate Wally Tunison, who was recognized for his many years of service as an advocate for NJ bicycling and trail access.

Key takeaways for me:

- I met several key people who I know I can reach out to for assistance with several local projects in my community, both for off-road and on-road biking. In the span of 5 minutes I had conversations and requests for follow up with LAB President Andy Clarke, Sheree Davis of the NJDOT, and Mike Kruimer of the East Coast Greenway... WOW, my head is still spinning.
- JORBA's presence at the summit was critical. Jim Nicholson, President of the NJ Bicycle Coalition met with me prior to the summit, and expressed his strong interest in uniting the mountain and road biking communities for the common cause of promoting cycling, period. JORBA already has established itself as a great advocacy group, and the Coalition clearly recognizes this, and would like our help.
- There is a great deal of bicycling advocacy support out there for us to utilize. We REALLY have a great opportunity to make bicycling a big part of our daily lives in NJ and there are OTHERS out there who also want this and are willing to help us; we simply need to take advantage of the opportunity.

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JORBA President, Frank Harms and Bob Workman, representing.

What struck me most about the day's events was simply the buzz and energy of the attendees, and the sheer excitement and enthusiasm shared by all, from advocates at the national level to grass-roots organizers of municipal bike coalitions, to the mayor of Denville... EVERYONE was so jazzed about bicycling, and about making cycling a more central component where they live and work, it was awesome. Saturday, February 27th, 2010 was a GREAT day for bicycling in NJ. Remember this day; this is just the beginning.



Andy Clarke, League of American Bicyclists President, holding court in Denville

National Bike Summit, Mar 9th -11th, Washington, DC.

I was so pumped to be attending this summit, and was anticipating it to be such an extraordinary experience, that I decided to totally immerse myself, including riding my bike to the summit... well, sort of. I envisioned rolling out of my garage on my fully-loaded

touring bike, pedaling down to Princeton University along the D&R Canal, and rolling onto the Dinky (*shuttle train*) to the main line, where I'd pick up an Amtrak train to Washington, DC... a great idea, or so I thought. Unfortunately Amtrak policy doesn't allow full-size bikes to "roll onto" their Northeast Corridor trains. Instead Amtrak requires disassembling one's bike and checking it in as baggage at one of their major station stops, like NY or Philly... (*You can already see where I'd LIKE to take this discussion, but I'm going to save that for a future rant, once I make better "sense" of this "non-sense".*)

So in the mean time I resolved to "transport my bike by car" to the National "Bike" Summit (*hello, what's wrong with this picture?*), ditch my car on the outskirts of DC and ride into town. Fortunately my company (*J&J*) has an office in Rockville, MD, so I could easily drive to Rockville on Monday, spend a day in the office, leave my car and bike down to DC on Tuesday, mostly along bike trails. I made hotel reservations a short bike ride from the Reagan Center, where the summit would take place.

The National Bike Summit is split into 3 days, with an optional Congressional Ride on the 4th day. The Ride was described to me as something between a Critical Mass Rally and the NYC Five Boro Tour... sans any assemblance of order. So my plan was to skip out of town Friday morning. The first day of the summit begins late in the day, and is little more than registration and a pep-rally. The second day consists of a general session to review the key issues, breakout sessions, a town hall meeting, a state caucus and IMBA wrap-up (for IMBA members). The third (and pivotal) day is spent on Capitol Hill, meeting with Representatives from Congress and the US Senate to "ask" for their support of the key legislation that is the central focus of the Summit agenda.

There was a fair amount of upfront preparation required, including several teleconference/webinars, and homework assignments to research this year's issues and pending legislation that would become the focus of our meetings with Congressional and Senatorial staff. We identified specific House and Senate Bills which we would be "asking" for support on Capitol Hill.

My arrival in Washington was marked by spectacular weather, which was indeed a blessing, following the particularly harsh winter experienced in the Capitol. The ride down was wonderful; I rode the Bethesda

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Trolley Trail, which consists of a mix of sidewalks, safe street routes and converted rail trail sections from Rockville into Bethesda, through the scenic campus of the National Institutes of Health.



Capitol Crescent Trail - A nice way to travel

In Bethesda I picked up the Capitol Crescent Bike Trail, a beautiful 2-lane bike and pedestrian path that continued down to the outskirts of Georgetown along the river, and merged with the C&O Canal Towpath and continued all the way to the National Mall. (BTW the C&O Path itself runs all the way from Washington to Pittsburgh!) The ride to DC was a pleasure, but since I had gotten a late start out of Rockville, I would be too late to catch the “First-timers Session” at the Summit. I rolled up to the Reagan Center, which is located near the White House, and parked my bike in the underground, locked bike-parking room (which EVERY building should have). I made the Opening Reception with plenty of time to spare, and met up with fellow JORBA member, Kevin Stout and several members of the NJ Bicycle Coalition.

Our New Jersey delegation numbered close to a dozen, and was led by Jim Nicholson of the NJ Bicycle Coalition, who ensured meetings had been arranged with Senators Lautenberg and Menendez, as well as our Congressional Representatives from each of the 13 NJ Districts. We were unable to arrange appointments for every District, but we managed to cover most. This would at least give me a good idea of how citizens lobby their Congressmen and Senators.

This year’s “asks” included:

- Full funding of The Land and Water Reauthorization Act (Senate bill 2747), which dedicates up to \$900 million for land and water

conservation, including land for mountain biking use.

- The Active Community Transportation Act of 2010 (House bill 4722), which establishes funding to communities to complete active transportation networks (including bike trails and paths).
- The Complete Streets Act of 2009 (House bill 1443, Senate 584), which requires state and local transportation agencies to ensure all road users (including bicyclists and pedestrians) are included in the design of any transportation facilities built with federal dollars.
- The Safe Routes to School Reauthorization Act (Senate bill 1156, which includes grade and middle schools), and The Safe Routes to High Schools Act (House bill 4021), which increases funding for safe access (including bicycle routes) to grade, middle and high schools.
- The Urban Revitalization and Livable Communities Act (House bill 3734), which authorizes \$445 million annually for development and revitalization of urban and community recreation infrastructure (including bike trails and bike parks).

The opening address by League President Andy Clarke on Tuesday night was more like a pep-rally.



LAB's Andy Clarke stirring up the crowd

He indicated this was the 10th year of the summit, and attendance had finally grown to the point where we were at near capacity in the Reagan Center. The balance of the evening was spent networking and meeting people. I stopped over to say hi to Andy, who remembered me from the NJ Summit (I was pleasantly surprised), and I bumped into Jeff Miller, President of the Alliance for Biking and Walking (who also

remembered me from the NJ Summit, and who immediately invited Kevin and me to a party that the Alliance was hosting at a local restaurant)... Wow, I thought...this was totally cool! We attended the Alliance party, and I ended the evening with a fun ride through DC back to my hotel.

The next morning I hopped back on the bike and enjoyed a nice, 10-minute commute down 15th Street (which is what every commute should be) to the Reagan Center. After sharing a cup of coffee with Dirt Rag Publisher (*and college friend*) Maurice Tierney, we headed off to the general session, which was highlighted by keynote speaker Congressman Earl Blumenauer from Oregon. Earl Blumenauer has been a tireless advocate for bicycling and livable communities in the US, and has served as Congressional mentor for the Bicycle Summit for the past 10 years. Listening to him speak, it's difficult to not get pumped up about bicycling advocacy... He's a true dynamo, and one of the nicest people I've ever met.

The remainder of the day was packed with breakout sessions, ranging from jump starting local and state advocacy, promoting livable communities, combining recreational and transportational aspects of bicycling, to applying for grants for projects. At the end of the day the New Jersey delegation got together to review our meeting schedule for the next day's assault on Capitol Hill, and to ensure we were clear on our collective message (ie our "asks"). I pulled my bike out of parking and joined a few instant-friends (I had just met moments before) in a bike-cade over to the IMBA party several blocks away. There I met Kevin and we shared a table with a few new faces; an IMBA trail-building expert named Jill, and Dave Watson, Executive Director of MassBike... again, more connections with some awesome bike advocates.

Thursday arrived, and I started getting nervous about our meetings. As a constituent of NJ Congressional District 7, I was on point to lead the discussion with Congressman Lance's staffer. Although I was somewhat familiar with the issues, I still felt woefully ill-prepared. At least I would have a few warm-up meetings before my district's meeting in the afternoon.

I first sat through (and participated in) a full-group meeting with Rep. Rush Holt's staffer, who with each ask assured us we had a friend in Congressman Holt. This was GREAT to hear. I hoped all meetings would

be as friendly and positive. Fellow delegate Brendan Poh led the discussion and did an outstanding job of queueing up the issues.

Our next meeting was with Rep. Steve Rothman's staff, which took place literally in the standing area of the office. The staffer listened politely and jotted down the names and numbers of each bill, but I somehow wasn't convinced our message was important to him (or to Congressman Lance), although I could be wrong. I got a similar impression when we later met with Congressman Lance's staffer, which I came to understand was not uncommon... Jim Nicholson and Mike Kruimer assured me that's how these relationships develop; First year you might not even GET a meeting; next year you might get 5 minutes outside in the corridor (as we did with Rep Lance's staffer), and then the third year you might actually get a 30 minute, sit-down meeting with a very interested staffer. The lesson learned... DON'T give up. Advocacy takes perseverance and thick skin... I'm OK with that.

Our final meeting of the day took place over in the Senate office buildings (across Capitol Hill). We met with staff members from the offices of Senators Robert Menendez and Frank Lautenberg. This was a 30-minute sit-down meeting in Sen Mendendez's office, and again we were on very friendly turf. Each staffer assured us that his boss was very much in support of the legislation we brought forward. They even asked us to prepare additional information on the economic and job impact of bicycling in NJ, which will help bolster the Senators' positions during Senate debate about bicycling-friendly legislation. It was great to know that we can actually help THEM. That was an empowering feeling.



NJ Delegation, including JORBA rep Kevin Stout (far right) standing next to me



Congressman Earl Blumenauer, Bicycling's Beacon on Capitol Hill

We ended the day with a Congressional party, held in an empty Senate chamber. We mingled among several hundred guests, including US Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, who delivered a brief, upbeat speech by shouting to the crowd from atop the Senate desk, and then (*led by his huge bodyguard*) vanished into the crowd. I had the privilege of shaking Congressman Blumenauer's hand and thanking him for being such a great friend to bicycling. I also couldn't help eye-balling a slightly out-of-place guy standing a few feet away, dressed in an absolutely outrageous steampunk roadster outfit from the 1920's. After staring for a few moments I realized he was none other than mountain biking legend Gary Fisher. I immediately approached him to shake his hand, and as we posed together for a brief photo, I quietly thanked him, not for being a mountain biking pioneer, but for something he wrote which gives me dailiy inspiration. (*See Parting Shot*) He just smiled and nodded...

Early the next morning as I pedalled out of town before dawn, a light rain was falling over Washington.



My generator light cut a narrow swath through the early morning blackness along the Crescent Trail, guiding me past the Georgetown University campus, up through Bethesda, and eventually into Rockville as the motorized commuting world began to awaken slowly.

As I rolled across the caged pedestrian bridge over Interstate 495, I was totally awestruck (*and almost horrified*) by the sight, sounds and smells of the hundreds of cars and trucks thundering beneath me with great ferocity, like dozens of speeding locomotive trains. I paused briefly trying to fathom the significance of this moment. Here I was, a lone cyclist, emerging from a peaceful bike lane across this virtual gorge, barely above the raging torrent of cars and trucks that roared past the skinny pillars with such force, it felt as though I would be swept away. And while admittedly I am part of a similar parade every morning during my daily commute by car, there was something very different, witnessing it like this...sitting atop my bicycle, this moment rattled me to my core.

Some 30 minutes later I found myself drinking coffee in my office, talking calmly to a colleague about my commute. I told her I had a really nice bike ride to the office, 18 miles in a light rain, which took me about 90 minutes at a very leisurely pace. I was smiling and content. Trying in vain to hide her frustration she replied: "Well MY commute was ALSO 90 minutes, and I travelled 15 MILES... BY CAR"...

It was incredible to hear that, and yet not so surprising. *We have much work to do...*

Mud in Your Eye – Parting Shot



**Trading fashion tips with living bikon
and trend-setter, Gary Fisher**

Strange... most people might thank Gary Fisher for his contributions to mountain biking. Instead I thanked him for authoring my favorite quote of all time, which I told him hangs on the wall over my desk, and which I frequently share with others.

It reads:

*The body, stronger. The mind, sharper.
The air, cleaner. The grass, greener.
The pretzels, crisper. The beer, colder.
The weekday, shorter. The weekend, longer.
The sun, brighter. The sky, bluer.*

LIFE... is better... when you ride bikes.

*Never have so few words said so much about bikes.
Thanks, Gary.*

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