



INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN BICYCLING ASSOCIATION

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# TRAIL NEWS



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## THE FOURTH ANNUAL FREERIDE GUIDE

The emergence of bike parks, overcoming objections to freeriding and more.

Plus, three new IMBA Epic Rides!

Fall 2006



INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN BICYCLING ASSOCIATION

# Out of the Shadows

Richard Cunningham

Editor-at-Large, *Mountain Bike Action* magazine

Years ago, hardcore mountain bikers disappeared into the rainforests of the Pacific Northwest to build log rides and ladder bridges over the tangled forest floor. The sport of freeriding has since emerged from the shadows, and mountain biking is much richer for it. All of us, at least once, have been swept by the burst of exhilaration that follows the first successful passage of a once-impossible section of trail. Freeriding provides unprecedented opportunities for that experience.

Mountain bikers have always pushed the boundaries of what can be ridden on two wheels. Who hasn't paused at the edge of a precipice, however small, to watch a better bike handler give it a go, or mustered the courage to ride a section that we once walked. Freeriders have honed the sport's challenging aspects into a lifestyle. The risk and intensity may exceed anything that the average rider would choose to face, but the core experience is the same. Well, almost.


"Freerider" also describes a professional cyclist in jeans and a T-shirt, upside down, 30 feet above a televised crowd, gapping the space between wooden towers plastered with advertisements. It can be argued that daredevils jumping highways, or launching from obscenely huge stunts aboard 10-inch-travel monster bikes have as much in common with exploring the woods on a hardtail as the Stealth Bomber relates to a crow. When ladder bridges corkscrew around tree trunks, and hump and jump across the forest, 10 feet above the ground, can we still call it a trail — or is it a theme park? Where is the tipping point? When does an offshoot become an entirely new sport?

Within our ranks, we segregate into freeriders, downhillers, dirt jumpers, trail riders and racers. But to outsiders, we're identified by our knobby tires as mountain bikers, one and all. It's a lot harder to sell trail access to land managers, now that the word is out that a "mountain bike-friendly" trail system might include a wooden roller coaster and an assortment of log rides and rock drops. We also have to explain away unauthorized trailbuilders who exchanged their Pulaskis and Mcleods for chainsaws and lag bolts.

While there can be no doubt that freeriding's secret-stunt period created a trail-access nightmare in some regions, the trend is reversing. Enthusiasts are buying lighter, better pedaling freeride mounts, and trailbuilding techniques are emerging to produce safer, more sustainable trails and features. Freeriding is producing some surprise benefits for mountain bikers.

For starters, technical trail features have been honed to near perfection by freeride trailbuilders. Because of their efforts, we now have historical data that supports the use of bridges for traversing sensitive habitat or difficult terrain. We can demonstrate that boulders, logs and other natural features can be incorporated into trails safely, and with minimal impacts. On the more playful end of the spectrum, freeriders have shown us how to take an unused three-acre plot of land, pack it full of obstacles and jumps and turn it into a technical fun zone.

In the beginning, all freeriders wanted was to escape the confines of organized competition, and pedal around in the forest all day. In the end, after all the Red Bull Rampages and Crankworx festivals are written in the history books, we'll all meet back in the woods again. Thanks to freeriders, the trails will be a lot more fun to ride.



Looking for more information on freeriding? Visit [imba.com/resources](http://imba.com/resources).

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*IMBA protects, creates and enhances quality trail experiences for mountain bikers worldwide*

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## A Note From



The current freeride movement, and where it all began, is the subject of many a post-ride debate. We used to just call it mountain biking. At some point, wooden structures appeared, built to elevate us above wet terrain. Ironically, many difficult, nasty, muddy and root-infested technical lines were taken away by structures built to circumvent them.

The original, easily navigated bridge designs didn't last long, as pioneering builders incorporated skinnies, drops, teeter-totters — and now things like hamster wheels and spiral ramps. The new style of riding and trails spurred a trailbuilding movement unto its own.

Kona was fortunate to be located near the North Shore, one of the epicenters of the modern freeride movement. We set out to make bikes for the new demands of mountain bikers, and we fielded team riders to help us make them right. One of the first in that line was Kona Clump Team Rider John Cowan. Not only has he helped us design bikes that handle the abuse but also dirt jump parks and slopestyle courses at Kona Bike Parks around the world.

New trail designs demanded rapid advances in bike technology but they weren't keeping pace with something equally as important: mountain bike trail access. It was then we targeted funds raised at our annual Kona-IMBA Buck-A-Bowl Funraiser to the Kona/IMBA Freeride Grants and other freeride and dirt jump projects

In a recent update from one of the many grant winners, John Eichner, leader of the SORBA freeride chapter said, "I just wanted you to know how much the Kona Freeride Grant has helped us. Without it we would be nowhere near where we are today." [Turn to page 8 to read more about the Kona/IMBA Freeride Grants.]

Kona would like to add that without IMBA — and their vision and commitment to freeriding — we all wouldn't be where we are today. We're pleased to enter into yet another partnership with IMBA, and we offer a big thank-you for their continued effort to advance the sport.

— Mark Peterson  
Kona Advocacy Director



## Building Bulldozer-Proof Trails

In the early days of freeriding, “dig first, ask questions later” was the mantra by which many unauthorized trailbuilders lived. Truth be told, some great freeride areas emerged from this method — but countless others have been razed by concerned land owners, and future trail access has been jeopardized.

To avoid watching your perfectly sculpted dirt jumps crushed by a 50,000-pound Caterpillar, it's vital to obtain permission before building. Many, perhaps most, freeriders assume that approaching a land manager will only result in frustration. However, a growing number of trailbuilders are finding it's possible to gain authorization and build the kinds of trails that put smiles on freeriders' faces.

“Most riders have the potential to be good trailbuilders and partners in the fight for access, but too few of them build legally, or help with legal trailbuilding projects,” says Judd de Vall, a former pro rider, now a freeride bike advocate. “Here in Victoria, we've had four great jump spots plowed this year,” says de Vall.

So, how does a freeride trailbuilder get permission to create a bike park, or technically demanding trails?

According to Rick Sokoloff, president of the Stowe (VT) Mountain Bike Club, the key is to build local partnerships. “At first, the freeride community was trying to do things on their own. Once they became involved with the club, there was a lot more weight behind their ideas,” says Sokoloff. By forging partnerships with local officials — including the Stowe Recreation Department, the town's Conservation Commission, the Select Board and local landowners — the Stowe Mountain Bike Club was able to obtain permission to build the Mayo Farm bike park.

The park was an instant hit with riders, as well as the larger community. “We've seen an awful lot of positive energy from all sorts of people in town, from young riders to older guys like me, and also from local business owners who think it's a great addition for a ski town,” says Sokoloff.

Shortly after the park was built, a small number of local landowners with abutting properties asked town officials to remove or modify the bike park, claiming it was an eyesore and a legal liability. Sokoloff says the club's adherence to a pre-approved plan, and the attention to detail they used in construction, saved the park. “Our proposal was very detailed, and we followed it to the letter during construction. We were able to show that everything was in order, and that we were following through on what we promised.”

De Vall agrees that an established bike club is a freerider's best resource. “I serve on the South Island Mountain Bike Society (SIMBS) Board of Directors, where I help with freeriding issues,” says de Vall. Although the club still faces many challenges with getting freeriders involved, SIMBS has earned some solid results, and recruited new members.

The crucial step, says de Vall, is to bring locally prominent freeride trailbuilders into the fold. “We reach out to the top riders, who are also usually the leading builders, and ask them to work with us on things that will help gain authorization for their projects. We advise adding roll-able lines and progressive difficulty for jumps — features that will convince land managers that these trails enhance local recreation opportunities.”

“I want to help boost the legal freeride scene in our area,” says de Vall. “I'd like to get more kids into jumping and racing downhill, and to have cool spots where kids can ride without seeing their trails plowed every few months.”

To learn more visit [stowemtnbike.com](http://stowemtnbike.com) and [simbs.com](http://simbs.com).



*Creative trailbuilding is almost as much fun as riding, but gain permission first to be sure your creations will survive.*

# Overcoming Objections to Freeriding

**M**any landowners believe freeriding equals reckless riding and off-trail rampages. They frequently oppose it and cite potential lawsuits, environmental damage and conflicts with other trail users as their reasons.

The good news is that mountain bikers can create challenging trails and bike parks that defy prejudiced views. Let's break down the arguments that are used against freeriding, and look at effective strategies for countering them.

## OBJECTION: FEAR OF LAWSUITS

Landowners have valid concerns: In our litigious society, safety and exposure to liability cannot be taken lightly. The solution lies in careful planning and attention to risk management — taking a systemized approach to incorporating safety into the riding experience. A risk management program prevents injuries in the first place, builds your “defendability” in a court of law, and shuts down lawsuits before they start. Visit [imba.com/resources](http://imba.com/resources) for a host of tips including a step-by-step program for writing a risk management plan.

## OBJECTION: ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Mountain biking, like all outdoor recreation, impacts the environment. Fortunately, there are techniques that help minimize these impacts. The solutions lie in environmentally sustainable trail planning, design, construction and maintenance, along with diligent visitor management techniques. To overcome environmental concerns, study the strategies collected in IMBA's trailbuilding book *Trail Solutions* (available at [imba.com](http://imba.com)) and come to the table prepared with answers.

## OBJECTION: USER CONFLICT

Examples of tension among those who recreate are easy to find: snowmobiling vs. cross country skiing; canoeing vs. motor boating; and skiing vs. snowboarding are just a few. The bottom line is that in most cases, the social conflicts involving mountain bikers and other trail users can be effectively managed. Bringing trail users together in the planning, building and management of trails is a powerful tool that will improve respect, tolerance and understanding. This cooperation will reduce conflict and may also yield higher quality trail designs and more successful management decisions.

## OBJECTION: LACK A PROFESSIONAL PROPOSAL

People will take you and your proposed trail or freeriding facility more seriously when you present your ideas in a thorough, professional document. An effective trail proposal clearly outlines your goals and the benefits the project will bring to the community. Successful proposals also anticipate and answer questions that the community may have regarding your project.

## OBJECTION: INCREASED INJURIES

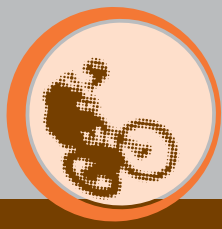
Technically challenging trails may lead to bumps and bruises — or worse. Mountain biking is an inherently risky sport. The goal is to manage the risk, not eliminate it. Address concerns about injuries with careful trail design to reduce injury frequency, severity and consequences. Plan for emergencies and offer regularly scheduled skills clinics. Check [imba.com/resources](http://imba.com/resources) for more tips to manage risk with trail design.

## OBJECTION: BUILDING WITHOUT PERMISSION

Before you can consider building a trail or adding technical features to an existing trail, you need to secure permission from the person who owns or manages the land. Be warned — gaining permission can be a complex and time-consuming process, but it yields great dividends for mountain bikers. The key is creating a cooperative relationship with the land manager and the local community based in mutual trust and respect.

*This skinny at Florida's Santos trail center was described in a detailed proposal before it was installed.*





## The Emergence of Bike Parks

In just 20 years, mountain bikes have progressed from clunkers to hardtails to huckers, and our most heralded places to ride have changed from Marin to Moab to Whistler. So what's next? By our guess, bike parks are the hot ticket.

Also known as bike skills parks, freeride parks or challenge parks, these playgrounds are popping up all over, and riders are loving them. IMBA counts more than 30 purpose-built public bike skills parks in the U.S. and Canada, and many more in the U.K., Australia and beyond. Most have been built within the past two years. And this figure *doesn't* include the hundreds of ski areas who've been offering mountain biking since the 80's, nor privately owned bike parks such as the innovative Ray's Indoor Park, in Cleveland (OH).



*The bike park in Breckenridge, CO, energized the riding community.*

So, what's a bike park? While there doesn't seem to be a set recipe, the ingredients usually include a variety of natural obstacles such as rocks and logs, imaginatively constructed features like teeters and ladder bridges, and dirt jumps — all collected in a small setting. Picture a skateboard park or snowboard park, but designed specifically for mountain bikes.

Sport-specific parks are nothing new. Ski resorts have embraced skiing and snowboarding terrain parks for more than a decade and many ski areas offer multiple parks scattered around the mountain; mega-resort Vail offers five. Skateboarders rip on more than 1,000 skate parks in the U.S. The newest kid on the block is white-water parks for paddlers — 34 in the U.S. at last count.

The emergence of bike parks is fueled by both riders and public land managers. Riders seek more challenging terrain, jumps, constructed obstacles, and a place to hone their skills. Managers want to reign in unauthorized trailbuilding and provide new recreation options in a central, easily managed location.

While these parks come in different shapes and sizes, they share the common thread of helping make technically challenging mountain biking more readily available to the public — especially kids. They usually accommodate a wide range of abilities, with opportunities for skill building and progressively difficult challenges. Riders return to these parks again and again to session the obstacles and improve their riding.

Bike parks do much more than mimic terrain found in nature. They also offer unique obstacles that stretch the imagination. They're not a replacement for traditional trails. Rather, they serve as an additional outlet for riders, one that's technically oriented, convenient, controlled — and a whole lot of fun.

*Bike parks promise to expand and evolve and keep our sport fresh and fun. For a list of bike parks and tips for designing and building them, visit [imba.com/resources/freeriding](http://imba.com/resources/freeriding)*

*The Bruce Peninsula Mountain Biking Adventure Park in Ontario includes more than 30 technical trail features.*



# Freeride Success Story: Oregon's Black Rock Trail System

**J**ust outside Salem, Oregon, in the rural logging town of Falls City, lies the Black Rock trail system. This killer freeride area, located on a 1,000-acre tract of State Forest Land, is maintained by volunteers from the Black Rock Mountain Bike Association (BRMBA). Their story yields good answers to freeriding's hard questions: Where do we build? How do we build? Who will do the work? Most importantly: Can we get permission?

In the 1970's and 80's, the trails of Black Rock were nothing more than a few hill climbs burned in by motorcycles. Mountain bikers started riding the area in the 90's, and wanted more. In 2001, local rider Leo Kowalski took the first step. He picked up the phone and called the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF). John Barnes, the ODF Public Use Coordinator, remembers the conversation. "Leo called me out of the blue and asked what he had to do to build some freeride trails. I told him to get a bunch of guys together and form a club. Once the club is up and running, we'd write an agreement, set some construction guidelines, and start building some trails." Leo said, "Is that it?" And I said, "That's it." He said, "That's too easy!"

Kowalski started what would become the BRMBA, and created two important documents with land managers: a partnership agreement and trail management plan. The partnership agreement spells out how the partnership works and who performs what services at the facility. The trail management plan is more technical in nature, and includes trail construction, maintenance and management guidelines adapted from the Whistler Trail Standards and IMBA's trailbuilding resources.

Trail construction and maintenance at Black Rock is an all-volunteer effort. In just a few years, these diehards have built a vast catalogue of skinnies, drop offs, dirt jumps and inspired singletrack. Black Rock trailwork parties attract as many as 40 volunteers from as far away as Portland and Eugene. "When it comes right down to it, it's the riders who organized and built these trails. Individuals have got to step it up and engage their passion for the sport. That's the only way stuff like this happens," says Rich Bontrager, current BRMBA President.

Funding for Black Rock has come from individual donations and fundraising led in part by nearby Santiam Bicycles, in Salem (OR). Since Black Rock's inception, Santiam has helped raised over \$12,000 through raffles, movie premiers, map sales and cash donations — not to mention co-owner Troy Munsell's tireless volunteerism. Most recently, the group raised \$1,500 in a shuttle day fundraiser by providing riders a lift to the top of the trail system. Future plans include a new trailhead and a Rails-to-Trails project.

Both ODF and BRMBA have systems in place to manage risk and defend against potential lawsuits. Strategies include the legal shelter of Oregon's Recreational Use Statute; written trailbuilding guidelines; detailed record keeping; clear signage; and an easy to understand trail difficulty rating system. The club is also starting a new mountain bike patrol — another solid addition to a great area.

*To learn more about BRMBA, or to download their partnership agreement and trail management plan, visit [brmba.org](http://brmba.org)*

*Thanks to contributing writer Jim Skakel.*

*Signage clearly states that Blackrock is a gnarly riding area.*





## Kona/IMBA Grants Fuel Freeriding

COPMOBA rider Elke Brutsaert enjoying the trails.



**T**hanks to the Kona Bicycle Company's support, seven IMBA clubs received \$1,000 cash grants in 2006. Awarded on the basis of detailed applications, the grants help create new freeriding and dirt jumping opportunities in North America. Nineteen grants have been awarded since the program started in 2004.

Funding for the program comes from Kona founders Dan and Jake, and the Kona/IMBA Bowling Party, an annual Las Vegas fundraiser held during the Interbike trade show. With the help of many a committed bowler, the event has generated over \$30,000 in grants awarded all across North America. The program's goal is to support the development of freeriding opportunities on public land.

Here's a look at the 2006 winners:

### Black Hills Mountain Bike Association Rapid City, South Dakota

BHMBA gained permission from Rapid City Parks and Recreation to construct a dirt jump park in an underutilized, heavily shaded cottonwood grove on city land. The club has cleaned huge amounts of trash and will assist the city with a controlled burn to prep the area for the construction and control invasive plant species.

### Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association Grand Junction, Colorado

COPMOBA undertook the design and construction of the first purpose-built downhill trail in the Grand Junction area. The trail design provides for shuttle access and will include a number of freeride play areas.

### Discovery Velo Club Hood River, Oregon

"Disco Velo" is leading the charge in developing the Hood River Bike Park, a gravity-fed jump trail within a small municipal park that will also meet specifications as an American Bicycle Association BMX track.

### Hoosier Mountain Bike Association Anderson, Indiana

Working with the managers of Rangeline Nature Preserve, HMBA has already built a great cross country trail system and are now ready to add some spice to the trails with the addition of optional freeride features within the existing trail corridor.

### Kingdom Trails Association East Burke, Vermont

Kingdom Trails Association is developing plans for a progressive skills area that will initiate youth and novice riders to berms, jumps and narrow bridges in a controlled environment that minimizes risk of injury and allows for active instruction.

### Pipeline Bike Club Council Coquitlam, British Columbia

Pipeline Bike Club Council has partnered with the city of Coquitlam, British Columbia, to build a dirt jump park. The park consists of a pump track, several dirt jumps and a racing track. Construction in 2006 will include a new rhythm section for the racetrack and intermediate and beginner jump lines.

### Surrey Off-Road Cycling Enthusiasts Surrey, British Columbia

SORCE is working with Surrey Parks Division to transform an unused open field into a high-skill, low-risk bike park within the city limits, accessible via the Surrey Transit system and local trails and bike lanes.

*For more information on the Kona/IMBA Freeride Grants program, visit the "Grants & Funding" pages at [imba.com](http://imba.com).*

# Great Places to Freeride on Public Land

Whistler Bike Park, Diablo Freeride Park, Ray's Indoor Bike Park — all are great freeride venues. Freeriding on public lands, however, is a very different story, with a wider variety of visitors, different liability concerns and fewer resources for upkeep and maintenance. That's not to say it can't be done. Check out these freeride centers, where mountain bike clubs have helped develop outstanding freeriding on public lands. Better yet, in most cases the only thing you'll pay for when you visit these areas are your post-ride beverages.

**Bootleg Canyon**  
 Boulder City, Nevada  
[bootlegcanyon.org](http://bootlegcanyon.org)

Offers an extensive network of downhill and cross-country mountain bike trails, including the ultra-steep Ginger and the venerable Snakeback trails.

**Bruce Peninsula Mountain Biking Adventure Park**  
 Wiarton, Ontario  
[naturalretreat.com/mountainbiking](http://naturalretreat.com/mountainbiking)

Features more than 30 technical trail features — including rock drop-offs, elevated boardwalks and suspension bridges — all in a pristine setting.

**Central Park Advanced Skills Course**  
 Forsyth County, Georgia  
[ridesofa.org](http://ridesofa.org)

An outstanding challenging course, built and maintained by SoFa, the freeride chapter of SORBA, the Southern Off-Road Biking Association.

**Kamloops Bike Ranch**  
 Kamloops, British Columbia  
[city.kamloops.bc.ca/bikeranch](http://city.kamloops.bc.ca/bikeranch)

Built in partnership with the Kamloops Bike Riders Association (KBRA), the City of Kamloops' Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department has completed the first phase of their Bike Ranch project, and it's already a success.

**Legend Park**  
 Clayton, North Carolina  
[trianglemtb.com](http://trianglemtb.com)

Allen's Trail offers a 150 feet of elevated goodness, with options and drops. A skills zone near the parking lot offers multiple skinnies, graduated ladder jumps and a 3-pronged drop stunt. Legend is also home to "Hucksville," where riders can hit gaps, tables and drops of 15-plus feet.

**Mount Work/Hartland Road Mountain Bike Park**  
 Victoria, British Columbia  
[simbs.com](http://simbs.com)

The only designated mountain biking area on Vancouver Island boasts a huge variety of trails and a well-crafted "Technical Training Area" with progressive challenges.

**Post Canyon**  
 Hood River, Oregon  
[gfra.org](http://gfra.org) and [camba.info](http://camba.info)

Serious challenges await freeriders who venture onto Post Canyon trails, including oodles of North Shore-style stunts, big drops and the occasional road gap jump.

**Santos Trail System**  
 Ocala, Florida  
[omba.org](http://omba.org)

With the Vortex freeride area, a deluxe skills park, and scads of cross-country trails, Santos is quickly emerging as a must-ride destination for mountain bikers across North America.

**South Surrey Bike Park**  
 South Surrey, British Columbia  
[sorcebikeclub.org](http://sorcebikeclub.org)

Features a 7.5-kilometer forested trail network of beginner and intermediate singletrack with technical features, plus a central freeride area which includes dirt jumps, a trials area and a drop zone.

**USACE Farmdale Reservoir Recreation Area**  
 East Peoria, Illinois  
[pambambt.org](http://pambambt.org)

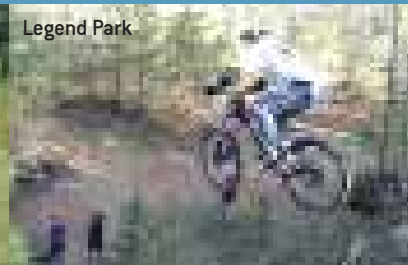
Looping singletrack connects areas with stunts, steep descents and natural drop-offs. More riding, and more challenge, than you thought you'd find in Illinois.



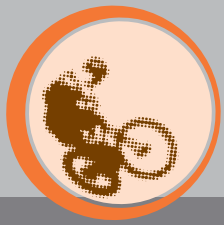
Surrey



Central Park



Legend Park



## Epic Rides: Now Infused with Freeride Flavor

The IMBA Epic Rides program has celebrated the best in mountain biking since 1999. As mountain biking evolves, the “best in mountain biking” continues to get better. IMBA Epic Rides will always be about the ride, but the concept of an Epic Ride expands in 2006. • This year we honor a trail system with a state-of-the-art freeride park, a technically challenging backcountry ride and an 80-mile adventure. The sky’s the limit to the experiences that the Epic Rides program can embrace. Like the sport itself, the definition of an Epic Ride will continue to evolve. • One theme remains unchanged: the criteria for the Epic Ride designation is quality — quality trails, a quality experience — something worth celebrating, making a special trip. Whether you are into flowing singletrack, hang time, or a mega challenge, the 2006 IMBA Epic Rides feature something for everyone.

### 2006 IMBA Epic Rides



**SANTOS TRAILS:** A model trail system  
Ocala, Florida

Santos breaks the mold. It’s not just one trail, but a whole trail system that IMBA is recognizing with the Epic Rides designation. Designed and built for mountain bikers by mountain bikers, Santos offers a model for the world to follow — it’s that good.

The system contains easily navigated swoopy singletrack in the southern pine forest for anyone who likes to spin their wheels on perfect dirt. Other sectors feature comp-only rock drops up to 20 feet, a challenging freeride park, and several skills areas to warm up or make sure you’re ready before attempting the next level of challenge.



**COMFORTABLY NUMB:** Technically challenging singletrack  
Whistler, British Columbia

The longest and most physically challenging singletrack ride in the Whistler valley. Envisioned, designed and built by Chris Markle (a Whistler trailbuilding legend), Comfortably Numb is a must-ride for technically advanced riders.

Long climbs, challenging rock faces, elevated bridges and spectacular views combine for a continually thrilling experience. Punctuated by ladder bridges and steep descents, the trail meanders in and out of old growth primeval Coastal Western Hemlock ecosystems and granite rock gardens, finally plunging into the valley bottom at Lost Lake Park.

By itself, the trail is worth the trip. Combined with whole Whistler scene — incredible trail experiences for every rider — it’s the perfect icing on the best cake to feed your riding appetite.

*IMBA Epic Rides program is a celebration of the best in mountain biking. These rides, now 35 strong, have made us better riders, converted thousands of newbies and helped build a constituency of 32,000 IMBA members — all committed to building a better future for mountain biking. Epic Rides are at the heart of the mountain biking movement. Stay tuned to [imba.com](http://imba.com) as current rides are updated, new info is added, and some older IMBA Epic Rides fall from glory.*



**HIGH COUNTRY PATHWAY – Long Live LONG Rides  
Vanderbilt, Michigan**

Fitting the classic definition of an IMBA Epic Ride, the High Country Pathway is an awesome 80-mile ribbon of tight trail that runs through the heart of elk country. The first IMBA Epic Ride in Michigan will take you far into the backcountry with beautiful lowlands, Midwestern panoramas in the highlands, and a rugged trek. Be sure to outfit for self-support, as you may not see another human on this soul searcher.



*Think your trail, bike park or freeride area is worthy of the IMBA Epic Ride designation? Each year IMBA selects a handful of great riding experiences for this special honor. We consider many factors, including input from IMBA staff, field reps and mountain bikers everywhere. Nominations for next year's selections should be submitted by Dec. 15, 2006. Visit [imba.com/epics](http://imba.com/epics) for more information.*



## Air Controllers

Imagine heading off to work on a downhill bike, wearing body armor and a full-face helmet. For the 11 professional bike patrollers at the Whistler Bike Park, it's a daily reality during the summer season.

Whistler has become the epicenter of freeriding, and its bike patrol has adapted to serve over 1,000 riders per day. With so many people out on the trails, inexperienced riders inevitably get in over their heads. Patrollers watch for inappropriate gear — department-store bikes or inadequate helmets — and help novices find a safe route to the bottom.

When an accident occurs, the patrol is prepared with a fleet of emergency vehicles that can quickly cover the mountain, thanks to a well-developed system of access roads. The patrol relies on consistent signage, effective communication and a friendly, non-enforcement approach to make aggressive terrain as safe as possible.

Signs are placed at every trail junction and include trail names, difficulty ratings and emergency contact information. Each major drop-off, jump or structure is marked and described. Alternate lines are indicated, and takeoffs and landings are flagged. The patrol is equipped to close sections of trail quickly to route traffic around damaged trails or an incident.

If a rider is injured, anyone with a cell phone can call the bike center's frequently posted emergency number, or ride down the hill to alert park staff. Trail junctions are numbered, allowing emergency crews to quickly locate the scene of an accident. A dispatcher will then contact the rest of the patrollers via radio to coordinate assistance. The Whistler patrol can perform rescues with ATVs, trucks and even helicopters. Most of the trails are close enough to the access roads to facilitate quick and relatively easy evacuation.

The patrollers have credibility, since all are capable of riding the area's most difficult terrain. That, combined with their well-informed, customer-oriented approach, helps earn the respect of visitors and the Whistler freeride community alike.

Patrolling in a freeride area is a unique challenge, but the Whistler Bike Patrol demonstrates that basic protocols and an attention to detail are cornerstones of patrolling no matter where you ride. For more information on the National Mountain Bike Patrol, visit [imba.com/patrol](http://imba.com/patrol) or contact program coordinator Spencer Powlison ([spencer@imba.com](mailto:spencer@imba.com)).



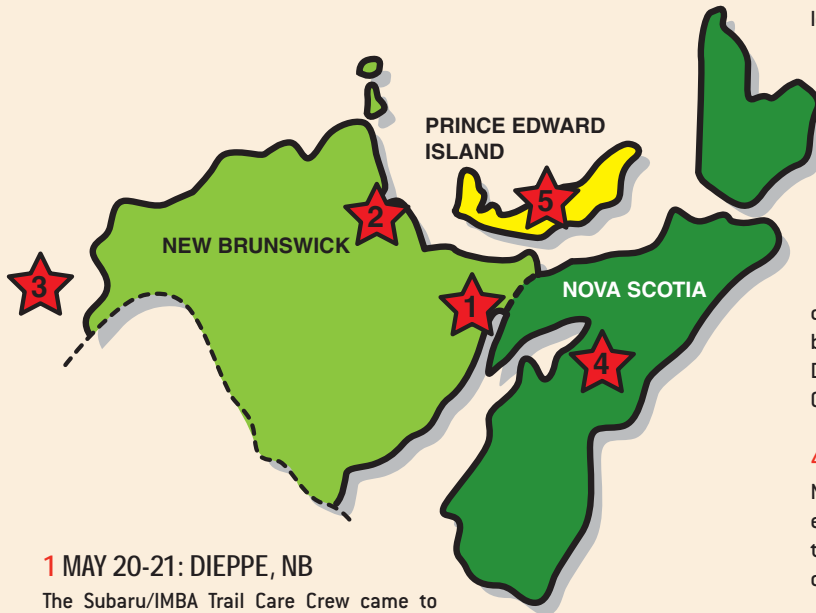
*Patroller Shawn Beaudoin, stoked after assisting with a successful helicopter evacuation.*

## FIVE TIPS FOR PATROLLING FREERIDE AREAS

Advice for bike patrols that serve freeride areas, courtesy of Claudia Bulgrin of the Ocala Mountain Bike Association Patrol, in Florida, and Jamie Wolter, of Colorado's Winter Park Bike Patrol.

- 1 You don't have to become an ace freerider to be an effective patroller, but you should be friendly and open-minded. You can increase your patrol's credibility by recruiting a couple riders from the freeride community to join your efforts.
- 2 At the scene of an accident, have a bystander or fellow patroller stop traffic well before the incident site to prevent collisions. Communication is critical. Many common injuries, like dislocations, can compromise circulation. When this happens, swift care is imperative, as nerve and tissue damage can occur if not treated promptly and properly.
- 3 Have a clear-cut plan for contacting your local emergency professionals, and work with them to plan for extractions that involve serious injuries.
- 4 Immediately report any jumps or structures that need repair. Take the initiative to close trails or features that need major work. Accident prevention is sometimes a patrol's most important task.
- 5 Many patrollers have concerns about their personal liability in a high-risk environment. Look into your state's Good Samaritan Laws, and decide what level of exposure you're willing to undertake.

# IMBA Canada Takes Eastern Tour



## 1 MAY 20-21: DIEPPE, NB

The Subaru/IMBA Trail Care Crew came to assist the Canadian Cycling Association and local mountain bikers with their tricky trailbuilding conditions at the Atlantic Cycling Centre in Dieppe's Rotary Park.

## 2 MAY 22-29: KOUCHIBOUGUAC NATIONAL PARK, NB

IMBA Canada's Mark Schmidt and Lora Woolner spent eight days in Kouchibouguac National Park, educating more than 40 Parks Canada employees, and a handful of local volunteers, on the art and science of sustainable trail management. The park boasts 60km of cycling paths, including the Major Kollock Creek mountain bike trail – a popular stretch of singletrack in need of repair. Known as “the mud trail” to

locals, park officials were prepared to close the trail to mountain biking. However, thanks to IMBA Canada's growing relationship with Parks Canada, IMBA was given the opportunity to share proven trailbuilding techniques in an effort to save the singletrack. Still a work in progress, the Major Kollock Creek mountain bike trail is seeing major improvements and will reopen to riders in the summer 2007.

## 3 May 27-28: Coaticook, QC

Energy oozes from mountain bikers in Québec, who want to see more legal riding in their region. As proof, close to 50 bikers united at Parc de la Gorge de Coaticook for “Mission Coaticook” — a fun weekend geared to give riders an opportunity to learn quality trailbuilding techniques and show some love to one of Québec's most beautiful pieces of singletrack. The event was organized by the Association pour le Développement des Sentiers de Velo de Montagne au Québec (ADSVMQ), an IMBA Canada affiliate that is having great success in Canada's largest province.

## 4 JULY 29: GORE, NS

Nova Scotia was the last stop on the MEC/IMBA Canada Trailbuilding Tour for 2006, ending on a high note at the annual “Gorefest” mountain bike festival. More than 30 trail enthusiasts and professionals came out for the one-day workshop, organized by Nova Scotia's Ministry of Health Promotion and Protection.

## 5 AUGUST 2: CHARLOTTETOWN, PEI

IMBA visited Canada's “Gentle Island” for some riding that proved to be anything but gentle. After an IMBA Canada slideshow at Charlottetown's Smooth Cycle, local riders set out to show off the mountain bike trails at Brookvale Provincial Park. With only about 50 avid mountain bikers on the whole island, the challenge facing local trailbuilders is the lack of manpower available to maintain the province's fun singletrack.

For more pictures and information on IMBA Canada's work in the Eastern Provinces, go to [imba.com/Canada](http://imba.com/Canada).

Before



After



The Major Kollock Creek mountain bike trail is seeing major improvements thanks to an IMBA Canada Sustainable Trails Training at Kouchibouguac National Park, NB.

## Attention Canadian Retailers

All of IMBA Canada's work supports one clear goal: making sure Canadians have great places to ride. Ask your local shop to join the mountain bike movement by supporting IMBA Canada with a retailer membership. An investment of only \$50 CAD will go a long way to creating, enhancing and preserving riding opportunities coast to coast. After all, more trails equals more sales. Go to [imba.com/Canada](http://imba.com/Canada) to JOIN!

### What do you get?

- Your shop's name, address, phone number and website link will appear on the IMBA website.
- IMBA supporter sticker for your storefront.
- You'll receive IMBA *Trail News*, plus other regular mailings that describe our progress and highlight special programs in Canada.
- IMBA brochures for your customers, so that they may also become part of the IMBA community.



Photo by Gibson Pictures

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## RACING SHOX

### Are You a FOX/IMBA Hero?

IMBA and corporate supporter FOX Racing Shox are pleased to announce the FOX/IMBA Heroes project. The program honors trail advocates who advance mountain bike access in their communities.

*All FOX/IMBA Heroes receive a new FOX Racing Shox fork of their choice, and an assortment of gear and clothing, courtesy of FOX.*

### FOX/IMBA Hero: Mike Vitti

Mike Vitti is a longtime leader in the IMBA-affiliated Concerned Long Island Mountain Bikers (CLIMB), assisting municipal, county and state parks on Long Island develop trails for Islanders and Big Apple residents alike. Whether serving as a one-man trail crew, public spokesman, advocate for mountain bike access, or volunteer supervisor, this soft-spoken leader has never been shy about making his passions part of his life's work. And what is there to do when you and your club have created an outstanding riding community from scratch? For one, you could expand into NYC. The City is now developing its first legal mountain bike trails and parks in Highbridge Park, in Manhattan, and Cunningham Park, in Queens. Care to guess who's holding the lead Pulaski? Hopefully a new fork from FOX will make the landings as soft as the lonely sofa in Mike's living room.



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