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I·M·B·A

International Mountain Bicycling Association

Trail News

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Special
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making **freeriding** work



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"The role of mountain biking in promoting fitness and countering obesity, particularly in children, can't be overestimated."

Strength in Numbers

Watching the Tour de France on the Outdoor Life Network last month, I was happy to see Lance Armstrong appear in a League of American Bicyclists membership ad. Lance has unmatched credibility among cyclists that is enhanced every July. His prominent support of the League and IMBA helps both of our organizations grow and do more for bicycling.

Of course Lance isn't the only asset we have. To boost mountain biking and improve trail access, we need to connect effectively with the variety of societal trends and statistics that affirm the value of our sport.

By now, most Americans have probably heard about U.S. President Bush's new effort to promote physical fitness and active lifestyles. The president has increased his training regimen and is encouraging all Americans to join him. **The role of mountain biking in promoting fitness and countering obesity, particularly in children, can't be overestimated.** It is one of the powerful societal benefits of our sport. When we describe our programs and our organizations, we need to emphasize this. (And let's not overlook the physical benefits of trailwork, either.)

The power of mountain biking in enhancing tourism is important, too. An increasing number of communities in diverse locations recognize this and are developing effective campaigns to promote their trails and supporting facilities. Mountain biking brings millions of dollars a year into ski towns such as Vail and Winter Park (Colorado), Mammoth (California), West Dover (Vermont) and others. Our sport has become an indispensable economic engine in less obvious locations such as the Cable/Hayward region of northern Wisconsin and also Medora, North Dakota. Appealing trails attract mountain bikers and boost adjacent lodging, food and retail businesses. We need more up-to-date studies that summarize the economic benefits of trail tourism and we need to recognize that almost any town or region can become a mountain biking destination.

Bicycling employs lots of people. Bicycle manufacturing and retailing is nearly a \$6 billion-per-year U.S. enterprise. While most bikes are built abroad, domestic companies employ thousands of people and pour huge dollars into the economies of California, Wisconsin, Colorado, Tennessee, Illinois and other states. Former IMBA board member Felix Magowan realized long ago that the status of bicycling in Colorado would be enhanced by putting a value on it. That figure – about \$800 million a year – continues to turn heads in state government. It has enhanced the voice of Bicycle Colorado in the halls of the state government. Other state and national groups should follow this lead.

Nearly every IMBA affiliated club performs hundreds or thousands of volunteer hours each year. Many of our clubs do a thorough job of tracking this contribution to the public good, but other groups let the numbers slip away. **A volunteer hour of trailwork or cleanup is worth at least \$10 to any government agency. In some states, the value is calculated as high as \$17 per hour.** So here's the task: track volunteer hours carefully, calculate their value by multiplying the number of hours by a per-hour dollar figure, then publicize the product as a donation to the community.

Good Health. Active Kids. Beneficial Tourism. Clean Business. Valuable Public Service. Mountain biking contributes to all of these important societal goals. We need to do a better job of letting the public know what we're doing and how it helps everyone. This will solidify our place on the trails. - TB



Subaru's VIP Partners Program

IMBA members are encouraged to take advantage of Subaru's VIP Partners Program, which allows them to purchase or lease any new Subaru vehicle at dealer invoice cost. Savings range from \$1,300 - \$3,000 off the manufacturer's suggested retail price, depending on model selected. To take advantage of this benefit, IMBA members must contact the IMBA office BEFORE shopping for a Subaru. Our staff will arrange to have a letter of confirmation mailed to you as well as to your pre-selected local dealer. The letter will indicate that as an IMBA member you are eligible to purchase or lease the car at dealer invoice cost. You must be a member of IMBA for 6 months before you qualify for the VIP Partners Program. This offer is not applicable if you have already taken delivery of your new Subaru. Please contact Heather Szabo at the IMBA office for program details, 303-545-9011 or heather@imba.com.

Limited time offer - subject to change without notice. Terms and conditions apply. Certain models maybe temporarily excluded subject to dealer availability.

IMBA creates, enhances and preserves trail opportunities for mountain bikers worldwide.

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IMBA Sprockids Thrives

Ten years ago British Columbia educator Doug Detwiller started a mountain bike club at his school with a half dozen kids. Known as Sprockids Coastriders, this group continues to thrive and serves as a model for nearly 100 other Sprockids clubs that are bringing the joy of mountain biking to thousands of kids around the world. IMBA now coordinates and promotes the Sprockids program worldwide.

"Sprockids is about kids—kids having fun on mountain bikes and building self-esteem," Detwiller says. "Kids today want to be part of something and they want to be active. Sprockids gives them something to belong to and reaches out to kids our schools might miss with their more traditional sports offerings."

One active Sprockids club is based in Finale Ligure, Italy, and is run by 1999 European downhill champion Bruno Zanchi.

Sprockids Blu Bike has more than 60 kids who regularly attend its clinics and fun rides. The club is also helping to build a local mountain bike park on the edge of town. The park is easily accessible via bicycle and will give kids a place to practice their skills in a positive environment. In Italy, soccer is king. But among the kids in Finale Ligure, mountain biking is becoming popular, too.

Another successful Sprockids club got its beginning in Durango, Colorado — one of mountain biking's true Meccas. The mountain town supports a thriving youth mountain biking scene.

The Sprockids Explorers launched their program in the spring of 2001 with a kids mountain biking festival. Organized by the Fort Lewis College (FLC) Cycling Team, the event featured a number of local pro mountain bikers and attracted more than 150 kids.

Following the festival, about 20 kids started doing weekly rides, led by the FLC team. Escalante Middle School and Durango Parks and Recreation now work together to keep the Explorers spinning. During the school year the middle school runs the club as an after-school activity, and during the summer six-week classes are offered through the parks and recreation department.

Sprockids Blu Bike and Sprockids Explorers are good examples of how varied the Sprockids program is. Sprockids clubs have been integrated into classrooms, organized by adult cycling clubs or simply led by a cycling enthusiast. They all have one important thing in common: smiling kids on bikes.

IMBA Sprockids is sponsored by Ben & Jerry's Homemade, Giant and SRAM.

For more info email Sprockids coordinator Dirk Vinlove at dirk@imba.com.



1 IMBA Welcomes New Trail Care Crew

35°58 N; 75°54 W



Scott Linnenburger and **Aaryn Kay** of **North Carolina** became the newest **Subaru/IMBA Trail Care Crew** in late May. Both bring exceptional environmental science experience to their new IMBA positions. For the last four years, Scott worked as an environmental consultant dealing primarily with wetlands, water quality and endangered species issues. He coordinated projects such as a 400-acre wetland restoration and recovery of a 1,000-foot severely damaged stream segment. Scott worked with land managers in private and public forestry operations in North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama. He also conducted environmental assessments for the North Carolina Nature Conservancy to help direct their land acquisition programs. Aaryn worked for the last five years at Duke University's Center for Environmental Education, first as a research assistant, then as K-12 coordinator, and most recently as the Director of Community Education. Aaryn co-chaired the Durham Earth Day Festival in 2000 and 2001. She also worked with the Nature Conservancy as a naturalist, leading hiking and kayak tours and volunteer trailwork projects. Scott and Aaryn both received Masters in Environmental Management degrees from Duke University in 1998. After living several years in flat, coastal North Carolina, they look forward to riding more variable and challenging terrain. They will travel the East Coast in search of trailbuilding challenges, motivated volunteers and the perfect singletrack.

2 San Francisco Hot Spot Success

37°46 N; 122°13 W



IMBA clubs teamed to promote 12 days of focused advocacy work in the **Bay Area July 10-21**. This coordinated effort was part of **IMBA's Hot Spots program** that focuses on improving urban trail access and inspiring new mountain bike advocates. IMBA staff, the Subaru/IMBA Trail Care Crew and local advocates conducted a series of high-level meetings with land managers, community leaders and other conservation and recreation groups to discuss ways to create better riding opportunities in the Bay Area. San Francisco outdoor enthusiasts also attended a host of different events, including a Trailbuilding School, trailwork days, rides and a party. Two more IMBA Hot Spot campaigns are scheduled for 2002: **Cleveland, August 8-18** and **New York City, September 19-29**. Thanks to Hot Spots sponsor **Clif Bar**. For more info visit imba.com/hotspots.

3 Comment on California Wilderness

39°33 N; 120°40 W



IMBA asks **California** mountain bikers to contact their congressional delegation and local newspapers to help preserve access to important trails. **U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer** recently introduced the **California Wild Heritage Act of 2002** in the U.S. Senate. The bill, S. 2535, proposes to add 2.7 million acres to California's 14 million acres of federally designated **Wilderness**. Elements of this bill put mountain bikers in a difficult position. We care deeply about the environment, strongly support conservation, and will support new Wilderness designations. We also want to protect roadless lands from road construction, mining, logging, dams and drilling. But bicycle use is prohibited in all Wilderness areas and this bill proposes Wilderness status for trails in popular mountain bike areas such as **Lake Tahoe** and **Donner Pass**, around **Mammoth Mountain**, in the **northern Coast Range** and **southern Sierras**, and north and east of **Los Angeles**. IMBA's goal is to help shape a bill we can support. But at this time, roughly 20 percent of the land proposed for new Wilderness protection overlaps significant bicycling opportunities. IMBA is calling on cyclists to write and call their California congressional delegation to help protect their favorite trails with a different classification than Wilderness. For a list of problematic areas included in the bill, talking points for your phone call or letter, or to find out the name, address and phone numbers of your congressional delegation or local papers, check out the full story at imba.com.

4 College Researchers Wanted

40°01 N; 105°15 W



Attention young bright minds of the mountain biking universe! IMBA is looking for graduate or undergraduate college students to conduct their theses or professional projects on mountain bike advocacy, trail science, the economic benefits of cycling tourism, and other issues that impact our sport. Our requirements: motivated, self-sufficient students with a penchant for detailed research and clear writing who are willing to tackle a project and see it to completion. IMBA will publicize projects that are well done. If you're interested, email dan@imba.com.

5 September 28 is Public Lands Day

38°54 N; 77°00 W



IMBA-affiliated clubs across the U.S. are encouraged to schedule volunteer projects for **National Public Lands Day** and enter the **IMBA/BOB Trailer Trailwork Challenge**. This one-day celebration of public land will be held **Saturday, September 28, 2002**. Register your project on the IMBA website. We'll record mountain biker contributions to the nationwide effort and enter your group in a drawing for a 2003 BOB IBEX Suspension Trailer with trailwork tool racks (\$500 retail). Whether it's new trail construction or routine maintenance, involving your group in National Public Lands Day will help solidify mountain biking's prominent position in the trails community. Trailwork projects that involve other trail groups or creative partnerships with the public/private sector are encouraged. IMBA is proud to be a member of the coalition promoting National Public Lands Day. For more information contact Jenn Dice at jenn@imba.com.

6 IMBA Partners with Rivers & Trails

32°46 N; 108°16 W



A new agreement signed by IMBA and the **Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance program** of the **National Park Service** assures that mountain biking will have a strong presence in community trail projects. The five-year agreement calls for IMBA and Rivers & Trails to work together on four to six trail projects annually. 2002 projects are located in **Salt Lake City, Utah; Roanoke, Virginia; Los Angeles County, California; Spring Mountains, Nevada; and Silver City, New Mexico**. The agreement also promotes mountain biking as a healthy family activity, encourages the design of trail systems with broad appeal, promotes mountain biking success stories and advocates for the development of a model "Urban Trails Park" concept. Last year, Rivers & Trails helped develop more than 700 miles of trail, protect 1,000 river miles and preserve 30,000 acres of open space. To learn more about the IMBA/Rivers & Trails project, visit imba.com.

7 Federal Employees Donate to IMBA

38°54 N; 77°00 W



IMBA would like to thank the hundreds of federal employees who gave to IMBA through the **Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)**. So far this year we have received more than \$9,000 and the donations continue to roll in. 2001 was the first year IMBA became eligible to accept payroll deductions from federal employees, and we have already been approved for the 2002 campaign. Federal employees will receive the 2002 CFC eligible donor listing later this year. More info: **Erik Esborg, IMBA finance director, erik@imba.com**.

8 IMBA/Koobi Club Assistance Grants

38°51 N; 104°45 W



Koobi, an innovative bicycle saddle manufacturer based in **Colorado Springs, CO**, recently became IMBA's newest above & beyond corporate supporter. Koobi and the Koobi Freedom Foundation are sponsoring a new IMBA Club Assistance Grants Program that will award eight \$500 trail project grants to IMBA clubs this year. Four summer and four fall award winners will be selected. The summer grant application deadline is August 12. The fall deadline is September 16. To apply, visit imba.com/resources/grants. For more details on Koobi's exceptional IMBA support see p. 14.

9 West Coast Summit in Sierras

39°19 N; 120°12 W



Pacific region mountain bike advocates from **California, Oregon, Nevada** and **Washington** are invited to attend the **2002 IMBA West Coast Advocacy Summit** for three days of advocacy training, roundtable discussions, and riding on high Sierra trails. The summit will take place at the Auburn Ski Club training center at **Donner Summit, California, September 8-10**. The registration fee is \$65, which includes food and materials. Participants are responsible for their own lodging. The IMBA summit follows on the heels of the California Trails and Greenways Conference slated for September 5-8 at nearby Lake Tahoe. For more info email **IMBA California Rep Jim Haagen Smit** at jimhs@jps.net.

10 Clif Bar Grant Winners Announced

51°10 N; 115°33 W



IMBA is pleased to announce the second round winners of 2002 **IMBA/Clif Bar Trail Preservation Grants**. Six \$500 grants have been awarded to support projects that preserve and enhance trail access, promote environmental education, and inspire conservation in the mountain bicycling community. 2002 IMBA/Clif Bar Trail Preservation Grant second-round winners are: **Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists, Twin Cities; Kentucky Mountain Bike Association, Louisville, KY; Tarheel Trailblazers, Charlotte, NC; Webmountainbike, Frederick, MD; Southern Virginia Mountain Biking Association, Danville, VA; Bow Valley Mountain Bike Alliance, Banff, Alberta, Canada**.

11 NMBP Launches eNewsletter

40°01 N; 105°15 W



IMBA is proud to announce the release of the first edition of IMBA's **National Mountain Bike Patrol eNewsletter**. The monthly email brings the latest Patrol news to NMBP members. Sharing success stories, patrolling tips and news is just one of the ways Kevin Stein, IMBA's NMBP coordinator and other patrol leaders are working to bring the patrol community closer together. For more info visit imba.com/nmbp.

making freeriding work

FREERIDING

what is it? how do we make it work?

When mountain biking began in the mid 1970s, it was all about freedom. Many of the pioneers were free-spirited Northern California road racers, looking to escape the rules, regimented training, and black-shorts-only conformity of sanctioned road competition.

Riding down Marin County's highest peak, Mt. Tamalpais, they dressed as they wanted, modified their bikes as needed, and basically answered to no one. They stayed on the trail and generally pushed their 50-pound bikes uphill, but were otherwise unconstrained.

Mountain biking has evolved so much since then. What started as a downhill sport evolved into an up-and-down one – labeled "cross-country" as a racing format. Spurred by new suspension technology, downhill began to make a comeback in the early '90s. Technical riding was originally popularized as formal competition – trials – but soon rode the wave of full-suspension into broad appeal.

Somewhere along the way, the term freeriding became popular, particularly after Cannondale latched onto it for their bike marketing. **Soon, freeriding became controversial – particularly when it was associated with off-trail riding – a type of pedaling that provoked the ire of conservationists, land managers and mainstream mountain bikers concerned about maintaining reasonable access.** The debate about freeriding was fueled by the distribution of videotapes that portrayed bold, high-speed riding down sheer scree fields and huge leaps of faith off towering cliffs. To this day, much of the discussion about the appropriateness of freeriding flows quite simply from the way freeriding is defined...and there are as many definitions as there are places and styles of mountain biking.

To some, freeriding is simply an attitude: fun-loving, creative riding that sets a positive mood. To others, it's all about technical challenge: finding bold new environments for pushing their personal limits.

Whatever it is, freeriding is big, getting bigger, and very much on the minds of mountain bikers and land managers everywhere. At the April IMBA Summit in Moab, an after-dinner Freeriding discussion attracted 70 or 80 people. The session raged well past midnight and might have stretched until sunup if we hadn't cut it off. Since the Summit, an IMBA Freeriding working group has been talking about the key issues and helping us refine an IMBA position and strategies.

In a nutshell, IMBA's outlook on freeriding is this: Our sport needs to embrace and support all riders, particularly young ones. **We need to create ways to provide the types of riding that people want.** At the same time, we've always got to protect the environment and respect the experiences of all outdoor recreationists.



Through innovative trail management, energetic volunteer work and a conscious effort to be inclusive and imaginative, we can achieve all of these goals.

From its beginning, one of the best things about mountain biking has been its spontaneity and the ways it makes you feel free. We follow basic rules, but we're free to make decisions about who we ride with as well as what, when, and where we ride. Let's keep that spirit – that tradition intact.

In the articles that follow, we offer a variety of perspectives on freeriding. Like the sport itself, this is a discussion that will evolve. What seems most relevant today may not even be a factor a decade from now. One thing won't change over time: **IMBA will always work to bring out the best in mountain biking.**



IMBA's Guide to Freeriding Solutions

IMBA's Position

1. Freeriding is a style of mountain biking that celebrates the challenges and spirit of technical riding and downhill.
2. IMBA supports freeriding as long as it's responsible and sustainable. We are committed to helping develop trails and riding areas that appeal to all mountain bikers. We are developing written and visual educational tools to help land managers, clubs, and individual riders develop sustainable, appropriate freeriding options.
3. The future of all aspects of mountain biking depends on cooperation with land managers and our collective commitment to protect the natural environment.
4. Young mountain bikers identify with the challenges and spirit of freeriding. By recognizing and supporting this connection, IMBA will help assure the future of mountain biking.
5. IMBA supports downhill racing. We develop and recommend sustainable course construction techniques.
6. IMBA supports off-trail riding only in appropriate, designated special use areas.



To Minimize Resource Damage:

1. IMBA's network of trailbuilding experts are developing effective trailbuilding techniques to achieve one central goal: keeping users on the trail while keeping water off it. IMBA's website includes a section devoted to advice on building challenging trails.
2. Water control structures, rock armoring, and carefully constructed technical trail features will help reduce resource damage. Use existing natural features (rocks, logs, exposure and elevation change) to increase technical challenge.
3. Off-trail freeriding may be appropriate in some sacrifice areas such as skills parks, ski areas, quarries, open-air mines and other disturbed areas. These areas must be carefully selected, managed and evaluated.



To Minimize Liability:

1. Mark trails clearly. Trailhead signs that alert visitors to severe technical challenges are helpful and may reduce liability.
2. Built technical trail features well. Both natural and non-natural additions to trails must be durable, predictable and designed to minimize injuries when trail users fail to negotiate them properly.
3. When constructing or implementing natural or manmade technical obstacles, make sure to offer easier alternate routes that avoid the feature.
4. Understand your state and federal recreation use liability laws. Consider enlisting a local lawyer/mountain biker (who may work for free or provide advice at a highly discounted rate) to clarify land agency and private property liability issues.
5. Visit IMBA's website for updated information on liability.



To Maximize Safety:

1. Don't surprise trail users with unexpected technical trail features. Challenging trails should be properly signed. Make sure that people can see technically challenging trail sections well in advance. Don't put advanced technical challenges on trails designed for beginners or intermediates.
2. Make the entrances to technical trail features difficult. This will prevent less-skilled riders from overreaching their abilities.
3. Designing proper flow into trails is important. Abrupt transitions from open and flowing to tight and technical may increase the chance of injuries.
4. Offer technical riding skills clinics. In addition to riding techniques, include tips on responsible, low-impact, safe riding.

Management Issues Related to Freeriding:

1. Resource damage.
2. User conflict.
3. Safety.
4. Liability.
5. Communication and partnerships.

solutions



To Reduce User Conflict:

1. Trailhead education signs and clear communication among clubs, freeriders, land managers and other trail visitors will keep relations positive.
2. Work to develop a large, varied trail system that disperses visitors and reduces user conflict.
3. Produce accurate trail maps and signage that give visitors a clear sense of what to expect.
4. Take advantage of the ability of cyclists to cover more distance by developing technical trails away from crowded paths that are close to the trailhead.
5. Locate freeride trails away from areas that are most popular with other users such as viewpoints, campgrounds, lakes, and heavily traveled trails.
6. IMBA generally supports shared-use trails. However, a purpose-built freeride trail will be more successful if it is single-use. This type of trail is unsuitable for horse use and may not provide an enjoyable experience for hikers.
7. Ski areas can be ideal locations for freeriding trails. Ski areas usually have the elevation change, equipment, labor force, and controlled environment to establish, manage and maintain sustainable, technically challenging trails. Ski area trails are relatively easy to manage as single-use.
8. Mountain bike parks akin to skateboard parks can provide highly technical riding areas that are relatively easy to manage.
9. Where new trails aren't an option, get creative: use signage, clinics and collective problem-solving to improve trail harmony.



To Improve Communication and Partnerships:

1. Freeriders should be encouraged to participate in mountain bike club activities and decision-making.
2. By consulting with freeriders and incorporating their suggestions into trail management decisions, planners can develop trail systems that have broader appeal. This effort will also reduce unauthorized trail construction.
3. Bust the stereotypes! Recognize the common ground of all mountain bikers--and, in fact, all trail users. Be positive...and inclusive. Broad-based partnerships are stronger and last longer.

**IMBA
Special
Report**

making freeriding work

what's freeriding to you?

Travis Brown - Trek-Volkswagen Racing Team, 2000 Mountain Bike Olympic Team Member

"The greatest beauty of the mountain bike is the original intent for it to be a true all-terrain bike – the freedom to ride anywhere. I feel free on my bike when I can ride right from my driveway to trails, free from the necessity of using my car to get there. I feel free when my rig works well on a 5,000-foot climb and can still handle a descent with wheelie drops – or riding 20 minutes of bike lane to grab a burrito. To me, freeriding is the simplicity of one bike to get you through everything. Freeriding is freedom."



**Judd de Vall, Pro Santa Cruz Downhill Racer,
Former IMBA Staff**

"Freeriding is not about racing and it's not about going fast. Freeriding also isn't about five-hour epics in the mountains; that's cross-country riding. Freeriding is dirt jumping, trials, urban, downhill, shorestyle, etc. It's about pushing the limits of technical mountain biking. It's about going bigger and throwing style. It's about going out to the jumps and having fun riding with your friends. More than anything, it's about pushing the envelope and developing your personal style."



ride

Kristina Holly, Lexington, MA – Former president, New England Mountain Bike Association

"To me, freeriding means pushing the limits on the technical end of the mountain biking spectrum. This can be done responsibly, or irresponsibly. The lines that separate freeriding from other types of riding are fuzzy, and it's not really useful to define it exactly. What is important is that we recognize there are different riding styles out there and find ways to accommodate them, ideally with a varied network of marked trails. The key is to get all types of trail users, including freeriders, involved in the process to incorporate their ideas."



Paul Turner – Founder of RockShox, owner of Maverick American, former IMBA board member

"Freeriding is not about what you ride or where you ride. It's about your attitude. The free in freeride means your mind is free. It means you do it all. You don't only pedal to the top. Your bike setup is not dictated by the pros. You don't only covet singletrack. And, most important, you have your own style."



**Cimarron Chacon, St. George, UT
BLM Landscape Architect**

"When I first started my job I had a very bad impression of freeriders. However, as I began to talk to them, I realized they just wanted to be involved. They are a group land managers have to pay attention to. They are extremely committed to their sport, and can be a great asset to a land manager"





Dropping-In to More Technical Challenge

Looking for a way to add technical challenge to a trail? Try adding a drop-off.

Sustainability is the key to all trails we build and is especially important when it comes to constructed features. "Build it right, ride it forever" is IMBA's motto. Work hard to ensure that the drop-off you build today will be in the same condition five years from now. Careful design and quality construction can increase safety and reduce legal liability, too.

If you've never built a drop-off before, it's a good idea to start small and work your way up. Regardless of the size of the drop, be it six inches or four feet, several key ingredients should be incorporated into all designs.

First, make sure the drop-off is appropriate for the trail's style. Technical trail features must blend with the trail flow, level of difficulty, and mix of users. As always, be sure to get land manager permission before doing any trailwork.

Start with a **grade reversal** – a brief change in the trail grade that helps divert water off the trail. We recommend building subtle dips – or rises – before and after the obstacle. This will prevent water from damaging the trail and feature. Frequent grade reversals or rolls keep the trail dry and are fun to ride. An added benefit is that they help curb the speed of the rider, so that by the time they reach the drop-off, they're in control and prepared for the challenge.

Following the grade reversal, you'll want to include some type of **choke** – a narrowing or **corral** that forms a **gateway** to your drop-off. Rocks, logs, trees or other obstacles staggered on either side of the trail serve as physical and visual cues to slow down and alert the rider to more technical features ahead. Make sure the narrowing flows naturally with the trail – otherwise people will find it annoying instead of interesting, and may create a new route around it.

The **set up zone** is a straight piece of trail, one to two bike-lengths long, with no obstructions and good sight lines. This section should be relatively flat, so riders can see the feature and prepare.

The **drop** itself can be made of rock or wood. Incorporating existing natural features like large tree roots and rock outcrops are excellent ways to use the terrain, but take care to protect roots by covering them with dirt, or armoring with rocks. Make sure rocks and logs are securely anchored and that wooden structures are solidly built.

Be sure to design the drop-off as the most convenient route and the obvious line – otherwise trail users may create a new path around it leading to trail-widening or a

second trail. A solution is to include an easier line within the tread by burying a **chock stone** to form a ramp. Also, make sure you **frame** or **corral** the drop-off with trees, bushes, rocks, or logs to keep users on trail.

Special attention must be given to the **landing zone** or fall zone. This is an area one to two bikes long, and almost as wide, that slopes downward from the drop-off any-

where from five to 15 percent. Be sure to clear all obstacles from the tread, remove sharp rocks and root wads, and cut back any branches that are in the trail corridor. The corridor and ceiling should be cleared to a greater width and height than the rest of the trail in order to provide a clear view of the landing area and allow for various drop distances. By adding a challenge to the trail, we are increasing the chances of a fall, so it is important to build safety into the design.

To help the landing zone stand up to repeated drops, scrape off all organic material (vegetative matter, roots, leaves, etc.) from the surface of the trail tread, and expose the good hard mineral soil. If you're building a particularly high drop-off, or one that's going to receive a lot of use, you may need to armor the landing with flat-sided rocks.

The end of the landing zone is another good place to put a **grade reversal**. It will help to shed any water that collects after the drop, and will check the speed of the rider before they hit the rest of the trail.

The entire **drop-off zone** should be anywhere from 30 to 50 feet long depending on the size of the drop. It is very important that this whole section has good sight lines, for both the dropper's benefit, and for the trail users approaching from the other direction. It's hard to slow down when your wheels are off the ground, so make sure that riders coming off the drop have a clear view of what (and who) is below. We want to create more fun, not more conflict.

Because a drop is a constructed feature, it is likely to require more maintenance than a simple trailbed. However, a little bit of maintenance is a small price to pay for a lot more fun. Clearing the corridor and keeping sight lines open, removing any dangerous roots or rocks from the tread, and fortifying the drop and landing zone may be necessary once in a while.

Once you're comfortable with the basics, it may be time to go big. Increasing the size of the drop by using larger rocks or constructing a platform will add greater technical challenge. Just remember the core elements, make sure the trail is appropriate and make safety a priority.

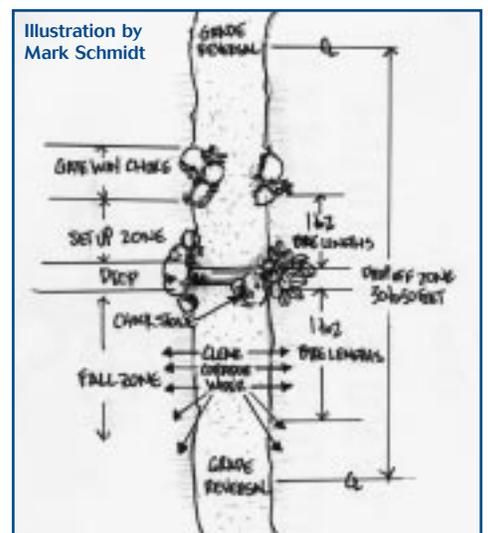


Illustration by Mark Schmidt

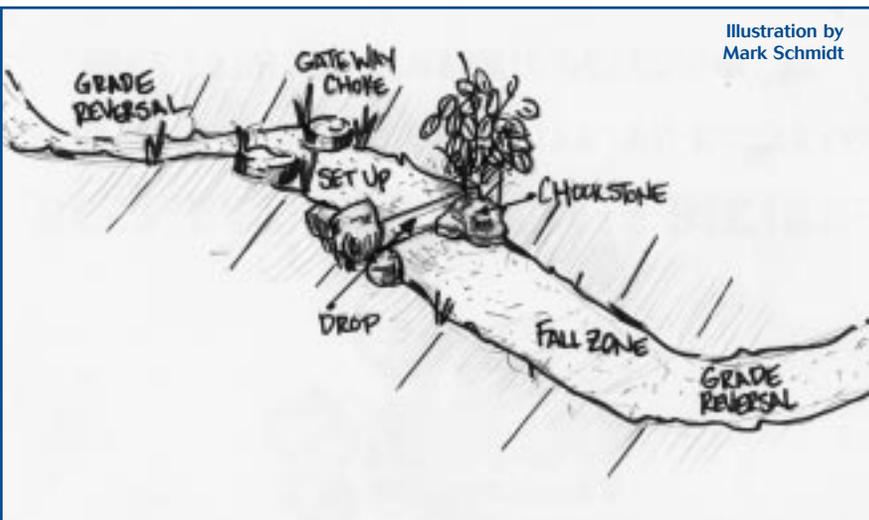


Illustration by Mark Schmidt

– Mark Schmidt and Lora Woolner
Subaru/IMBA Trail Care Crew

making freeriding work

NEMBA & Trail Crew Build Model Freeride Trail

The New England Mountain Bike Association has developed an innovative partnership between the Lynn Woods Reservation land management team and a hardcore group of Boston-area freeriders who call the popular Lynn trails home. The partnership has led to new trail constructed this May during a NEMBA/IMBA trail clinic. The new route is highly technical and incorporates slickrock, chutes, drop-offs, and plenty of gnarly granite all linked with hand-built rock-armored trail.

"This is the most technically challenging trail we've helped build to date," said the Subaru/IMBA Trail Care Crew's Rich Edwards. The trail will serve as an access route to a new riding area that NEMBA is designing in conjunction with hardcore riders from Boston bike-builder Sinister Bikes and others in the freeride community. The next phase will include the construction of a three-mile technical trail envisioned as the most challenging ride in the park. The IMBA Crew will add their design expertise to the trail's layout. The long-term goal is to tie together about 30 granite outcroppings with sections of rock-armored trail. Each granite dome will offer both expert lines and slightly easier go-arounds.

"Working with the freeriders is key," said NEMBA's executive director Philip Keyes. "They know what they want to ride and what they can ride, and NEMBA and IMBA have the expertise to help build it in a sustainable fashion."

Lynn Woods has seen a proliferation of unauthorized trails built to satisfy freeriders' need for highly challenging rides. Some of these trails have caused significant resource damage. The freeride community has agreed to remove unauthorized man-made stunts

and help shut down illegal trails as part of the new expert trail system's development. It's a partnership that will dramatically improve technical riding opportunities in the park, answer the concerns of Lynn Woods managers, and allow freeriders to legitimize their trail-building creativity with NEMBA's and IMBA's help.

Does your group have a freeriding success story to share? Email info@imba.com.



Want to learn more about technical trailbuilding? Check out the Subaru/IMBA Trail Care Crew at an upcoming visit. For more info visit imba.com.

August 1-4
August 1-4
August 8-11
August 8-18
August 22-25
August 22-25
August 31- Sept. 1
September 5-8
September 5-8
September 12-15
September 12-15
September 19-29
October 3-7
October 17-20

Bristol, OH
Silver City, NM
White Mountains, AZ
Cleveland, OH
State College, PA
Munising, MI
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Trailbuilding School
Hot Spot Visit/Trailbuilding School
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Trailbuilding School



9 Ways to Involve Freeriders in Your Club

As mountain bikers develop their skills and technology advances, more riders are seeking highly technical trails to test their abilities. Mountain bike clubs will benefit by getting freeriders involved with their groups. Freeriders are some of the most passionate cyclists around, and they can give a club a great boost of adrenaline. Here are nine tips to help.

1. Embrace Technical Trail Projects

Freeriders want technical trails and are willing to build them to suit their needs. The recent growth of unauthorized trail construction with added stunts, drops and other technical trail features proves this. If your club builds technical trails – with land manager permission, of course – you’ll attract freeriders to trailwork days and other club events.

2. Work with Land Managers to Create Special-Use Technical Trail and Stunt Areas

Narrow bridges, teeter-totters, log rides and other technical trail features are becoming increasingly popular with mountain bikers. Most of the time, however, these features are constructed without authorization. For liability and other reasons, land managers have concerns with these structures on popular trails. However, many land managers are open to the idea of having special use zones or playgrounds for these types of stunts, similar to skateboard or snowboard parks. Work with freeriders and your local land manager to create these opportunities. Many land managers are also open to the idea of designing trails with a variety of options, allowing experts to take one line while offering others an alternative.

3. Use your Club to Open Communication between Freeriders and Land Managers

Lack of communication is typically the the root of unauthorized trail construction. Often, mountain bikers don’t think land managers will listen to their requests. This is especially true with freeriders. The fact is, land managers are reasonable folks who are looking for solutions. The savvy land manager knows the benefits of finding an area for freeriders, rather than the never-ending battle of chasing poachers or closing unauthorized trails. Use your club to create an open relationship between freeriders and land managers.

4. Listen, Don’t Criticize

The easiest thing to do regarding freeriding and unauthorized trail construction is to criticize and separate your club from this element of our sport. This approach will only fragment the cycling community. Freeriders are enthusiastic mountain bikers. Listen to their ideas – you’ll gain their respect and learn something in the process. In turn, they’ll be more willing to listen to you.

8. Use Freeriders to Increase your Club’s Membership

While certainly not the rule, freeriders are often young. They may have a different perspective on what types of riding and social events will attract the public riding community. Pay attention: if a freerider suggests that your club’s next fundraiser be a thumping techno dance party, perhaps they’re onto something.

9. Invest in Freeriders

Not with money, but with time. Take a freerider on a ride. Let a freerider take you on a ride. Freeriders are part of the future of our sport and your club. By taking the time to work with them and sharing your knowledge and experience, you can be sure the future of mountain biking will be in good hands.

5. Include Freeriders in Club Leadership

It’s one thing to get freeriders to come to a meeting or two. It’s another to give them the opportunity to have a significant voice in the club’s decision-making process. Work to enlist a freerider or two in your club’s leadership or board of directors.

6. Liven it Up, Brah!

Club meetings need not be events that challenge C-SPAN for dynamic entertainment value. Keep meetings fun, lively and snappy. Show cycling videos, provide good food and drink and keep the agenda moving. These elements appeal to all mountain bikers – not just freeriders.

7. Shop Talk

Freeriders tend to be passionate mountain bikers, and many spend a lot of time in local bike shops. Use these shops to get freeriders involved in your club.

Put up flyers for meetings or better yet work to host club meetings or parties at a shop.





Northeast



Two IMBA-affiliated clubs, MORE and MAMBO, co-signed a legal brief in support of **Maryland's** recreational immunity law, which protects public and private landowners from liability if they allow free public access to trails. In 2000, MORE successfully pressed the Maryland state legislature to add coverage to public lands, trails and bicycling, but the law came into question when a jogger sued a landowner. However, on June 21, Maryland's highest court turned down the jogger's claim, and according to IMBA Rep and lawyer, David Scull, "Park managers, utility companies and others worried about liability can now truly breath easier. Mountain bikers have taken the lead on this; as a result, landowners have protection they can take to the bank." Delaware Valley Mountain Bike Patrol continues to perform monthly trail maintenance the fourth Saturday of every month in **Philadelphia's** Wissahickon Valley Park, and they need volunteers. Check dvmp.org for details. The **Jersey** Action Riders Mountain Bike Club is celebrating its fifth anniversary by holding monthly beginner riding clinics. To register go to jerseyactionriders.org. Another NJ IMBA-affiliate, Save Mercer and Ride the Trails (SMART) is completing a mapping project of Mercer County Park in West Windsor, and will be posting the new map and IMBA's Rules of the Trails on local kiosks. The **New England** Mountain Bike Association has signed an MOU with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (DEM) to train and support Trail Guides on many DEM properties. The guides will offer assistance and education to trail users and report problems to local land management.

– Philip Keyes, Dirt Rag/NEMBA



Southeast



Louisiana is successfully working to boost last year's IMBA report card grade (a D+). The **Baton Rouge** Area Mountain Bike Association (BRAMBA) is developing Louisiana's first National Mountain Bike Patrol unit and has already enlisted 20 members. The East Baton Rouge Parks and Rec Department has a new tractor to aid their work on the Hooper and Comite Trail Systems thanks in part to funds provided by a Recreational Trails Program grant and BRAMBA. Louisiana cities **Lake Charles** and **Baton Rouge** are teaming for a cross-state race series. Jolly Rogers Bike Club in Lake Charles is sponsoring their race in Sam Houston State Park and BRAMBA is hosting the Baton Rouge event. **South Carolina's** Palmetto Trail continues to grow thanks to the leadership work of the **Palmetto Conservation Foundation**. The 425-mile cross-state trail is about halfway complete and will soon grow by seven miles with a new section in Spartanburg County. More info: palmettoconservation.org. In nearby **Gaffney**, South Carolina, the Overmountain Victory Trail has a new three-mile section open to bikes. This National Historic Trail will eventually include 10-plus miles of great mountain biking. **Eureka Springs, Arkansas**, hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially honor mountain bike trails at Lake Leatherwood City Park on June 1, National Trails Day. The Mayor of Eureka Springs, the Eureka Springs Parks Administrator, and the Arkansas State Trails Coordinator were on hand to recognize the volunteer efforts of the Ozark Off Road Cyclists. More info don_west23@hotmail.com.

– Jay Franklin, SORBA



Midwest



Utah watch out! The newest mountain biking destination may be the humble state of **Illinois**. Our source? Mountain Bike Midwest, a new book by Richard Ries and Dave Shepherd (published by Menasha Ridge Press, menasharidge.com) that highlights many miles of trails once known only to locals. Pumped by the book's descriptions of the slickrock of southern Illinois and its "heart-bursting hillclimbs," the Shawnee Mountain Bicycling Association (SMBA) will continue its work with Shawnee National Forest managers, with an eye toward an October Subaru/IMBA Trail Care Crew visit. SMBA will also continue work on the Lake Glendale, Cedar Lake, and Lake Kinkaid regions. In **Northern Illinois**, the Springfield Area Mountain Bike Association (SAMBA) celebrated the May opening of a new 17-mile multi-use trail in the Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area, which SAMBA first suggested in 1999. The trail winds around a lake, through woodlands and open prairies, and was designed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Panther Creek now offers the longest mountain bicycling trail in Central Illinois. Directions to this new trail from Springfield: take Route 125 (West Jefferson St.) 20 miles west through Ashland. Two miles past Ashland, turn right (north) onto Newmansville Road. After seven miles, the entrance to the Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area will be on the left. You can check out the latest from SAMBA at www.cityscape.net/~samba. Got Midwest access news you want published? Email it to dirk@imba.com.

– Dirk Vinlove, IMBA Staff



Rockies



Forest fires are burning throughout southern portion of the Rocky Mountain region. Large tracts of public land in **Arizona**, **Colorado** and **New Mexico** are closed to public use due to the wildfire danger. Please respect these closures and be sure to ride only where you know the trails are open. On June 1, National Trails Day, the **Denver-based IMBA affiliate Trail Conservation Services** and the **Parker-Elizabeth Riding Club**, an equestrian organization, worked on the Indian Creek trail system in the Pike National Forest. The groups removed debris from several homestead buildings on the property, and revitalized an eroded social trail. The **Arizona Trail Association**, **Mountain Bike Association of Arizona**, **Sonoran Desert Mountain Bicyclists** and **Volunteers for Outdoor Arizona** are working to create a work crew leader certification program. The program will ensure that trailwork is done safely, properly and effectively. **IMBA continued its partnership with the Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance arm of the National Park Service with two Subaru/IMBA Trail Care Crew visits. The crew hosted Trailbuilding Schools in conjunction with the Basin and Range Trail Advocates of Las Vegas, Nevada, and the Silver Spokes Bike Club in Silver City, New Mexico this summer.** Editor's note: Special congratulations to IMBA's Trail Care Crew coordinator and Rocky Mountain Backyard scribe Jody Flemming and his wife Elizabeth on the birth of their first child, Owen Cade Flemming. Tests reveal that Owen Cade has a high VO2 Max and lactate threshold limit, making him an early favorite for the Tour de France in 2028.

–Jody Flemming, IMBA Staff

Pacific



The Angeles chapter of the Sierra Club in **Los Angeles** approved the formation of a mountain biking committee. **Randall Danta** is a mountain biker, hiker and mountaineer – he's climbed Everest – who spearheaded the campaign to create the committee and is its first chair. The committee will conduct outings and work to promote the interests of mountain biking within the Sierra Club decision making process. Another goal is to improve communication between the Sierra Club and the mountain bike community. This summer the Central **Oregon Trail Alliance (COTA)** is partnering with the Boys and Girls Club of Central Oregon to build new singletrack. The partnership adds a new dimension to COTA's highly successful trail program, creates a constructive and educational experience for the kids, and completes an important link in the Bend trail system. **The Forest Plan revision process for the four southern California National Forests continues to progress, but is running behind schedule. Draft Environmental Impact Statements are now expected early next year with the next round of public meetings to occur after the release. Contact your local USFS ranger district or visit www.r5.fs.fed.us/sccs to stay informed.** IMBA still needs information on riding opportunities in several proposed Wilderness areas in **California**. Check the IMBA website for specific locations and contact your local State Rep. Please send contributions for this column to mtbchuck@cox.net (this is the correct address – not the one published last issue).

–Chuck Anderson, California Rep

The World



The University of Urbino, one of Italy's most respected schools in the Marche region, is teaching trailbuilding techniques in its environmental science program. The school also plans to form an IMBA affiliated patrol. **The Subaru/IMBA Trail Care Crew will visit northern Ontario September 5-15 as a follow-up to IMBA's presentation in February at the 2002 Eco-Nord conference in Sudbury.** Northern Ontario has an outstanding network of dirt roads and trails and is one of the most naturally scenic areas in the world. Thus far, however, the region has had only moderate success attracting mountain bikers. **The Crew will lead two Trailbuilding Schools. For more info, email northern Ontario IMBA rep Hendrik Weigeldt at hweigeldt99@hotmail.com.** IMBA trail design and management experts will spend much of August and September in the **United Kingdom**, working with our partner UK Forest Enterprise and supporting the organizational development of UK mountain bike advocates. This will be IMBA's fifth focused work stint in **England, Scotland and Wales**. The visit will include a mix of trail assessments, site reviews, Trailbuilding Schools and presentations to UK land managers. We plan to meet with leaders of the fast-growing, energetic UK advocacy movement. Visit imba.com for additional details. **A new IMBA Sprockids club has started in Costa Rica. More info: darrell@latitude10.com.** IMBA is building a presence in Scandinavia by appointing **Mattias Lindstrom** as **Sweden IMBA rep**. Email him at mattias.lindstroem@siemens.com. **Please send any global advocacy news to dan@imba.com.**

–Dan Vardamis, IMBA Staff

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Minnesota Cyclist

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Corporate Update

Saddle Maker Koobi Launches Generous IMBA Support

By making a bold two-year commitment to IMBA's National Mountain Bike Leadership Fund and a grassroots trail grant program, **Koobi** has established itself as a prominent bicycle advocacy supporter.

In 2002 and 2003, Koobi will help IMBA strengthen its influence in Washington, D.C. by committing \$24,000 to IMBA's National Mountain Bike Leadership Fund. Also during the next two years, IMBA and Koobi will award \$500 cash grants to 16 IMBA affiliated clubs from around the world.

Colorado Springs-based Koobi is an innovative maker of high-performance bicycle saddles. The company's latest creation is a saddle with "tunable suspension." The grant comes to IMBA from The Koobi Freedom Foundation, which was established this past year to fund various advocacy projects.

Created in 2001, IMBA's National Mountain Bike Leadership Fund helps insure mountain bikers are at the table when important federal public land and recreation decisions are being made. It pays for IMBA staff and leaders to travel to the nation's capital and also underwrites professional support.

IMBA/Koobi Club Assistance Grants will help IMBA clubs enhance, preserve and maintain trail opportunities for mountain bikers. See p.5 for details.

"Koobi is taking a significant leadership role in supporting mountain bike advocacy," said IMBA executive director Tim Blumenthal. "This two-year grant stands as one of the largest cash commitments ever made by a bike industry company to support IMBA's important work."

Phil Schweizer, Koobi owner and CEO said, "IMBA leads a growing and well-crafted effort to protect our trails and open spaces through its advocacy programs and long-term strategic vision. Koobi's support of both grassroots and national projects will hopefully improve riding opportunities for mountain bikers everywhere."

Other Corporate News

Many thanks to **John Mueller**, head of **Sutter Equipment Company**. John recently donated to IMBA a new **Sweco 480 Trail Dozer**. The Sweco will live at **Tony Boone's Arrowhead Trails** facility in Salida, Colorado, and will be put to work at IMBA Trailbuilding Schools and trail consulting visits.

Corporate member **Performance** recently helped two IMBA-affiliated mountain bike clubs raise money for their local advocacy efforts. The **San Diego Mountain Bike Association** and the **Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts** benefited from two in-store promotions at nearby Performance locations. At both events, a percentage of the day's sales were donated to the club and a check was presented during trailwork events the following weekend.

Special thanks to **mtbREVIEW.com** and **Cannondale** for conducting IMBA individual membership drives via their websites and email lists. The successful campaigns attracted more than 300 new IMBA members.

Welcome to IMBA's newest Corporate Members: **Bittergravity.com**, **Bouldercycling.com**, **Deuter USA**, **Epic Adventures**, **Lab-Gear**, **Panorama Mountain Village**, **Panorama Trails LLC**, **Sports Express**, **Titus Cycles**, **Vail Mountain Bike Camps** and the **North Carolina Outward Bound School**.

IMBA Board of Directors 2002 Election

Five volunteer IMBA board members are up for re-election this summer. The other five directors are serving terms that will expire in 2004. We're asking you to support the recommendations of IMBA's board by voting for the following slate of directors. Each will serve a four-year term (2002-2006).

Please mark your ballot and return it by mail as soon as possible. It must arrive at IMBA headquarters by September 1, 2002. Or, vote on the web at imba.com using your IMBA member ID # that appears in the address area of this newsletter.

On September 1, we'll tally ballots and conduct a membership meeting at our office in Boulder, Colorado, at 2 p.m MDT.

Although this board election has no contested seats, IMBA remains a membership-based organization. Help us affirm the democratic process by voting. Thanks !

As always, feel free to contact us with your comments and concerns.

Best wishes,

Tim Blumenthal, executive director

Please vote for five candidates. While this election is uncontested, your vote is important. IMBA is a membership based organization. You can also vote online at imba.com

For two-year terms (2002-2006):

Chris Distefano, Irvine, CA. Chris is the public relations manager of Shimano America Corporation.

Hill Abell, Austin, TX. An IMBA vice president. Hill owns two Bicycle Sport Shops in Austin.

Steve Anderson, Tucson, AZ. Steve is IMBA's president and serves as Pima County's Trails & Open Space Coordinator.

Ashley Korenblat, Moab, UT. Ashley owns Western Spirit Cycling, a mountain bike touring company.

Thomas Clyde, Woodland, UT. Tom is a professional writer, a former city attorney for Park City, Utah, and helped established the Mountain Trails Foundation.

Write-In _____

Current IMBA Board Members (not up for election)

Carl Birkelbach, Chicago. IMBA's treasurer, Carl founded the Midwest advocacy group, RIDE. He owns Birkelbach Investments.

Jay Franklin, Woodstock, GA. Jay helped form SORBA, a leading southern advocacy group. He's an engineer with ATAC Associates near Atlanta.

Jim Hasenauer, Woodland Hills, CA. An IMBA director since '88, Jim served as president between 1991-96.

Chris Kegel, Glendale, WI. Chris owns four Milwaukee area bike shops. He serves on the Bikes Belong and League of American Bicyclists boards.

Mary Monroe, Boulder, CO. An IMBA vice president and former NORBA trustee, Mary is the development director for E-town, a nationally syndicated radio program.

Return this ballot or vote at imba.com by September 1, 2002.



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