

Trail Bike Initiative

Project Information

October 2007

Trail bike riding in Victoria's State forests and other public land is an increasingly popular recreation enjoyed by many.

The Victorian Government wants to ensure that trail bike riders can continue to enjoy riding in the bush whilst also balancing this with the legitimate needs of rural residents and other forest recreational users.

Escalating sales of trail bikes and the increasing number of riders in the bush is beginning to seriously impact on the quality of life for residents living close by. The most common concern is excessive noise.

Trail bikes are also causing environmental damage in areas where they are ridden illegally off the official roads and tracks. Safety concerns relating to motorcycle riding by unlicensed and under-age riders also need to be addressed. In some popular multi-use areas, conflict between trail bike riders and other forest users (bushwalkers, horse riders etc) has arisen.

To help achieve the objective of getting trail bike riding in State forests onto a long-term sustainable footing, the Victorian Government, as part of its \$200 million *Environmental Sustainability Action Statement*, has committed funding of \$5 million over four years.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is now working with trail bike riders, regional communities, the Victorian Motorcycle Advisory Council (VMAC) and other agencies (VicRoads, Victoria Police, the EPA, Department of Justice, Parks Victoria and the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries) to help realise this objective.

It has been clear from the outset that there is no single, easy solution to the trail bike conflict issues on public land and the Trail Bike Initiative will be addressing a range of areas including:

- rider information and education
- improving rider facilities
- improving rider compliance with existing laws (particularly requirements for registration, licensing and noise emissions), and
- repairing environmentally damaged areas of forest (to protect flora, fauna and water quality)

What does this mean for trail bike riders?

Victoria has an extensive network of forest roads available for trail bike use. Trail bike riding is a legitimate recreational pursuit and as with other recreationalists, trail bike users have rights. To ensure that this use is balanced with the needs of local residents and other recreationalists however, some changes are required to reduce current levels of conflict and environmental damage.



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What's in it for trail bike riders?

- **Improved information for riders.** Riders are sometimes unaware about exhaust noise regulations and where they can legally ride. Better information and signs will help ensure riders know where they can ride, and their responsibilities regarding exhaust noise.

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- **Provision of purpose built trail bike unloading areas in the forests:**
 - Located and designed with local rider input
 - Designed specifically for trail riders
 - Picnic facilities, toilets and a shelter to be provided at major riding locations
 - Information on responsible riding practices and legal requirements
 - Information on where to ride, with a map of suggested riding routes.
- **Keeping the noise down.** Noise emission testing of trail bikes in the bush will be undertaken to provide advice to riders about compliance with noise emission standards.
- **Increased forest patrols.** Unlicensed riders and those with unregistered bikes can expect to be prosecuted.

What's in it for rural residents?

Rural residents adjoining public land are frequently disturbed by excessive trail bike noise. This initiative will provide:

- **Improved noise protection for residents by:**
 - Providing trail bike unloading areas further away from residents
 - Advisory "Low Rev" zones close to residential areas
 - Establishment of voluntary buffer zones in close proximity to residential areas
 - Improved noise emission advice and testing in the bush will lead to a reduction in the number of excessively noisy bikes
- **Improved information and education** of trail bike riders and other forest users concerning the need to be considerate of those that live nearby.

What's in it for other forest users?

State forests are enjoyed and valued by people camping, picnicking, walking, fishing, horse riding, mountain biking, and observing plants and wildlife. The benefits for these users will include:

- **Reduced noise** due to improved understanding of noise compliance requirements

- **Improved information** for trail bike riders concerning the need for them to be considerate of other forest users
- **Rehabilitation** of environmentally degraded areas and closure of illegal tracks
- **Improved safety** as a result of compliance operations targeting unlicensed riders and unregistered bikes.

What's in it for the environment?

- Degraded areas will be rehabilitated
- Wildlife disturbance will be reduced
- Soil erosion and stream sedimentation will be reduced

Further investigations

More research will be undertaken with the aim of better understanding the extent of and reasons for under-age, unlicensed and unregistered riding.

A final note

Trail bike riding is an enjoyable pastime for many. The challenge is to work together to ensure that trail bike riders, other recreationalists and rural residents all get a fair deal, and that future generations can continue to enjoy the bush. If you are interested in having input into this project, please email roger.pitt@dse.vic.gov.au to register your interest or call:

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For more information

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is responsible for managing Victoria's State Forests. For further information contact DSE's Customer Service Centre on 136 186 or visit DSE's website at <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/trailbike>

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