



The Place To Be

Media release

From the Department of Sustainability and Environment

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TRAIL BIKE PROJECT ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Trail Bike riders, community representatives, and Department of Sustainability and Environment staff met at Powelltown on Sunday to review design plans for Trail Bike Visitor Areas in the Powelltown – Noojee area.

DSE Trail Bike Project Manager Roger Pitt said these Trail Bike Visitor Areas are a pilot project which, if successful, will lead to creation of similar facilities in other locations around the State.

The planned Visitor Areas will provide parking, unloading, toilet and picnic facilities for trail bike riders in locations where there is a network of forest tracks suitable for trail riding – without coming too close to local residents.

“Trail bike riding is a popular recreation in State forests, but noise from trail bikes is a common concern for people who live near popular riding areas, and for other forest users who come to the bush expecting some peace and quiet,” Mr Pitt said.

“Trail bike riders are increasingly aware of this issue, so providing well located Trail Bike Visitor Areas away from houses will encourage riders to park and ride in the most suitable locations.”

Construction of Trail Bike Visitor Areas will be funded by the Trail Bike Project under the State government’s Environmental Sustainability Action Statement.

DSE Statewide Recreation and Tourism Co-ordinator Richard Wadsworth was pleased to hear endorsement of the planned facilities by a number of community representatives outside of the trail bike riding fraternity.

“In the future, we expect to provide Trail Bike Visitor Areas in a number of different locations across regional Victoria,” Mr Wadsworth said.

“Riders will find track information, trail riding guidelines, and maps of several recommended routes developed by local trail riders in conjunction with DSE forest management staff.

“These two areas are pilot projects, so it’s crucial to get everything right in the design and construction.”

Two locations adjacent to the Yarra Junction – Noojee Road have been surveyed, and concept plans have been prepared for each.

Landscape architect Glenn Berrill has prepared designs which protect the existing mature trees while providing easy parking for vehicles towing trailers. To improve safety, one-way traffic circulation will be employed in the parking areas.

Trail bike riders at the Powelltown meeting were impressed with the designs, and said they felt the Trail Bike Visitor Areas would prove to be a valuable asset.

Australian Motorcycle Trail Riders Association Vice President Peter Ellard welcomed the planned facilities.

“They represent the start of the way forward for responsible trail bike riding in Victoria’s State forests,” Mr Ellard said. “The Trail Bike Visitor Areas will be important in addressing some of the community issues that can arise from trail bike riding.”

Warragul Motorcycle Club president Ian Frost said the Trail Bike Visitor Area design meeting showed a lot of goodwill and co-operation between trail bike riders, other forest users and DSE.

“Bike riders will gain benefits from this initiative, as well as a better understanding of the responsibilities riders have towards the environment and other user groups,” Mr Frost said.

Other riders agreed with trail bike rider Rick Los when he said that, “The plan has been very well thought out and we just can’t wait to see the first one constructed so we can put it to good use”.

Further design development and consultation will take place prior to a decision on the final construction design, with construction expected to take place in the spring.

Joy Harte, Trail Bike Project Officer for Gippsland, is working on the development of similar facilities in other parts of Gippsland.

“We expect that the Trail Bike Visitor Areas will prove popular with riders, and be welcomed by local residents due to the reduction in noise close to their houses,” Ms Harte said.

“At present, riders park their cars and trailers all over the place, wherever they can find some space, but that’s often very close to people’s homes.

“The noise of a group of riders starting up their bikes outside your house early in the morning is not a good way to start the day, so these new facilities will reduce that conflict.”

BACKGROUND:

The State government has provided Trail Bike Project funding of \$5 million over four years through to 2010 under the *Our Environment, Our Future Sustainability Action Statement 2006*.

The objective is to put trail bike riding on an environmentally sustainable footing. Licensed riders on registered motorcycles are welcome to use the network of forest roads and tracks open to the public.

Major issues to be addressed include excessive noise, environmental damage caused by off-track riding, safety of riders and other forest users, and compliance with legislation regarding registration and licensing.

Trail bike sales have been increasing by an average of 10% per annum for a number of years.

At the same time, more people are choosing to live close to State forest, more people are heading to the bush for their recreation and leisure pursuits, and the community has higher expectations regarding environmental standards.

The result has been increasing recreational conflict in some heavily used areas, together with noise problems for residents.

The Trail Bike Project will focus on providing improved information to riders on where to ride and their environmental responsibilities.

Trail Bike Visitor Areas will be established in heavily-used riding areas to reduce recreational conflict with other users and residents.

Areas that have been environmentally degraded by off-track riding will be rehabilitated and unofficial tracks closed, and additional compliance operations will be mounted to deal with unlicensed and unregistered riding.

More information on Trail Bike Initiatives is available on the Department of Sustainability and Environment website: www.dse.vic.gov.au or from DSE's Customer Service Centre, tel: 136 186