

West Branch

STATE PARK

Interoffice Memo

Date: April 7, 2010

To: John Hunter, Acting Chief, Division of Parks & Recreation

From: John Wilder, Regional Park Manager, West Branch Region

Subject: Trail Partnership Award Nomination

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I would like to nominate the Cleveland Area Mountain Bike Association (CAMBA) for the trail partnership award.

It has been an absolute pleasure working with this organization. This group of young professionals are well-educated, health conscious and are environmentally concerned. This combination is vital for providing the right mix of knowledge and skills to plan, maintain and build a sustainable mountain bike trail system.

CAMBA has been an adopt-a-trail group since 2001. When they began their work at West Branch they were riding their mountain bikes on wide, double track snowmobile trails. They soon approached me with ideas to build single track trails, designed specifically for mountain biking. The group attended trail building seminars held by the International Mountain Bike Association to learn the best techniques to maintain sustainability. They in turn have worked closely with the West Branch adopt-a-trail Portage Chapter of the Ohio Horseman's Council group to help improve the park's bridle trails.

Over the last eight years the group has built over 7 miles of technical single track trails. They are tireless volunteers and generally do their trail building in the late fall, winter and early spring so they can enjoy the trails during the summer. CAMBA also helps to maintain the five miles of snow mobile/mountain bike trails.

CAMBA built an informational bulletin board at the trailhead and assisted with the gravel parking lot design and the design/placement of a future shelter house.

CAMBA has volunteered the following hours: 2009 = 604 hours, 2008 = 654 hours, 2007 = 389 hours, 2006 = 1172 hours, 2005 = 1100 hours, 2004 = 872 hours, 2003 = 800 hours, and 2002 = 350 hours. To say the least, this group shows dedication to their sport and commitment to partner with Ohio State Parks for the benefit of thousands.

They are constantly evaluating and re-evaluating their trails. If a section of trail is found to be too muddy or does not ride well, they will return that section back to nature and rebuild it by finding a better route. They work closely with me and the staff during this process. Most of the park staff know the CAMBA volunteers because they are always around either working on the trails or riding on them.

The group has developed a mountain bike safety patrol. These patrol riders educate the 'new' riders about staying on the single track to reduce impact, they emphasize safety by reminding all riders about the safety aspects of wearing a helmet and they carry first-aid equipment in case they come upon an injured rider.

As an example of their professionalism and commitment, I have enclosed a proposal for a multi-use trail extension of the mountain bike trails at West Branch State Park. It has been prepared by Jim Olander from CAMBA.

This well-prepared document is requesting approval from the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) to extend the existing mountain bike trails into a new area with the intent to lengthen the trail system as the sport of mountain biking becomes more popular, and provide new access to the beach area that can become a secondary trail head. The proposed trails will be multi-used by hikers, trail runners and fisherman to access the shoreline. This ties in well with our long range plan to build a hiking/backpacking trail around the entire reservoir.

West Branch State Park has the best mountain bike trail system in northeast Ohio, both in length, diversity and terrain. In 2009, staffs from the Cuyahoga Valley National Park and the Geauga County Park System visited West Branch to see in person the quality of the trails and see the sustainable trail building techniques used by CAMBA. As the sport grows, more demand requires more miles of trails. West Branch has the area, geology and geography to support these new trails. CAMBA will organize volunteers to perform the labor and the park will support with some manpower and minimal supplies such as gravel, culverts and treated lumber.

West Branch will host four mountain bike races on these trails in 2010. Races include an Xterra triathlon, a first time adventure race, a first time long distance endurance race sponsored by CAMBA and the annual Crankfest race, assisted by CAMBA. The support from the riders has been overwhelming as was evident in the 2008 Write Right Surveys as West Branch was recognized as having the best rated trails in the Ohio State Park system.

CAMBA's commitment and dedication to West Branch State Park is evident in the quality and sustainability of the trails and the increasing use by riders from all over Ohio and surrounding states. They are well-deserving of this award and exemplify the power of partnerships that can benefit not only the state park but also the thousands of mountain bikers throughout the area.