



Valley Mountain Bikers' Feedback to the Lehigh Mountain Park Master Plan

August 2, 2010

To: Cynthia Sopka, Director of Planning and Zoning for Salisbury Township
Thomas Gettings, Director of Special Projects for Wildlands Conservancy
Scott Cope, Chief Program Officer for Wildlands Conservancy
Greg Weitzel, Director of Parks and Recreation for City of Allentown
Bob Stiffler, Director of Parks and Recreation for Lehigh County
Jan Creedon, Director of General Services for Lehigh County
Don Cunningham, County Executive for Lehigh County
Alex McDonald, Pennsylvania DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation

CC: Dean Browning, Chairman for County of Lehigh Commissioners
Mike D'Amore, President for City of Allentown Council
James Brown, President for Salisbury Township Board of Commissioners

Valley Mountain Bikers (VMB) would like to thank Lehigh Mountain Park land and management officials for the opportunity to review and comment on the Lehigh Mountain Park Master Plan (revised June 2010). We hope our comments are taken into consideration for the ongoing development of Lehigh Mountain Park, and appreciate you taking time to review them.

We would like to preface our comments on the Master Plan with a brief description of our club and a statement on our history at Lehigh Mountain Park.

Valley Mountain Bikers is a Lehigh Valley based organization with approximately 150 members. Our Club's Purpose Statement: "VMB is an educational and charitable organization devoted to preserving and promoting the sport of mountain bicycling. Our Club is dedicated to encouraging and organizing volunteerism, and views the sport as a vehicle to promote healthy outdoor recreation, conservation, and trail use opportunities that are environmentally sustainable and socially responsible."

Valley Mountain Bikers history at Lehigh Mountain Park:

VMB was given permission from Salisbury Township in 2004 to design, build, and maintain multi-use trails at Lehigh Mountain Park. Six years and several thousand volunteer hours later, a 10-mile multi-use trail system has been built and maintained by VMB. We are proud that our volunteer efforts have resulted in "Proven successful trails include features that provide a memorable experience and different challenges, and are well maintained."¹ These successful trails have created a consistent presence of mountain bikers, runners, and hikers in the park; which has practically eliminated illegal ATV use in the Uplands area, and has helped to lessen illegal dumping. Additionally, VMB has purchased and installed kiosks and trail markers in the park, and has organized trash clean-up days. Please refer to attached document Walking Purchase Park: A Valley Mountain Bikers Success Story for a more detailed description of our past and ongoing efforts in Lehigh Mountain Park.

¹ "Lehigh Mountain Park Master Plan", page 25.

Comments on Lehigh Mountain Park Master Plan

(Master Plan text shown in regular text, *VMB comments shown in italicized text*)

III. Natural Resources

B. Natural Resource Protection

1. Recommendations for the Uplands

- There are several places where bike trails cross over the numerous seeps. Placing large rocks or small boardwalks at these areas will reduce erosion and disturbance in these areas.

VMB would like to work with park officials to identify where existing trails and seeps come in close proximity, and to then develop proposals to address any identified issues.

IV. Recreational Resources

D. Overview of Recreation and Infrastructure Recommendations

1. Uplands Recommendations

Manage the Upland Trail System

- No new trails should be constructed without approval of land owner/manager *and* a site visit with a qualified ecologist and a trail builder.

Valley Mountain Bikers has interest in adding trails to the western portion of the park where no trails currently exist. We feel additional trails in this area would help to lessen the ongoing illegal dumping and trespassing in that region of the park. Additionally, a few more miles of trail would create enough total mileage to make Lehigh Mountain Park a true destination trail system and attract mountain bikers from outside our immediate area, raising tourism and tourism income. We look forward to an opportunity to review our preliminary proposal to add trails in the park's western portion with an ecologist and the park managers.

- The trails should be regularly monitored to make sure they are not widened over time, are not causing any erosion issues, and are not becoming lined with invasive/exotic plants.

VMB members have attended detailed training sessions to learn IMBA's (International Mountain Biking Association) trail design and construction guidelines for "... sustainable trailbuilding techniques that produce paths that withstand erosion, provide designated users with their desired experiences, and minimize user conflict."² Valley Mountain Bikers designed, built, and maintains the multi-use trails at Lehigh Mountain Park to minimize widening and erosion – it is fundamental to all trail work we do. VMB continually monitors the Uplands trails for any trail widening or erosion issues. If any do arise, we work to address the issue appropriately. VMB has also drafted and adhered

² "Trail Solutions: IMBA's Guide to Building Sweet Singletrack" 2004, page 13.

to additional guidelines for the multi-use trail construction and maintenance at Lehigh Mountain Park – see attached document Trail Building Guidelines for Salisbury Walking Purchase Park.

- Trails extending onto neighboring private properties need to be closed and/or rerouted to remain on public park land (Map 12).

Valley Mountain Bikers worked carefully to prevent the trails we designed and constructed from encroaching onto private property. We located and referenced property line pins and reviewed the proposed trail locations with each of the property owners prior to any trails being built. VMB would like to work with park and land management officials to ensure the trail locations and property lines referred to on Map 11/12 are accurate, at which point VMB can propose any changes necessary to ensure all trails are fully contained on public park land.

- Official trail maps should be developed and the map located at the Cardinal Drive parking lot should be updated.

Valley Mountain Bikers has developed a trail map for the entire Uplands multi-use trail system – see attached document Walking Purchase Park Multi-Use Trail System. VMB, with the help of local Boy Scouts, have constructed and installed kiosks at three primary trailheads where this map (and other trail related information) is posted. Printed copies of the map are also provided by VMB at these kiosks. We are happy to contribute the map we created toward the development of an official Lehigh Mountain Park trail map.

- Official trails should be clearly blazed and spur trails should be closed.

VMB purchased and installed trail blazes on the entire Uplands multi-use trail system in 2009. The trails are blazed with markers colored according to our trail map. VMB has made efforts to close improper (unsustainable, ATV, and rogue) trails in the past and continually monitors for any new trails of this nature. Any spur trails that may exist are not on our map, and are not marked with blazes.

2. Lowlands Recommendations

Improve Lowlands Trails

Valley Mountain Bikers supports the Master Plan's proposal to add trails in the Lowlands area that are beginner friendly, and we are willing to provide input and advice for these trails. Additionally, VMB has ideas for the construction of trail features to help cyclists transition from the beginner trails of the Lowlands, to the more advanced trails of the Uplands.



In closing, VMB has been the primary steward for Lehigh Mountain Park and its multi-use trails over the past several years. We hope our significant volunteer contribution toward the overall improvement of Lehigh Mountain Park and our community is recognized.

Valley Mountain Bikers looks forward to continuing a positive relationship with Lehigh Mountain Park officials, and to continuing our volunteer efforts at the park. We are very optimistic about the future of Lehigh Mountain Park and hope to be an integral part of Lehigh Mountain Park's ongoing development.

Sincerely,

Doug Pinkerton, President

Scott Stortz, Vice President

Greg Horwath, Treasurer

Eric Rigler, Committee Leader for Lehigh Mountain Park