

Mountain bikers create Seattle skills park

Recreational surveys have shown that fewer people are spending time in the outdoors. Reasons for the decline range from lack of time to the increased cost to travel.

So, what do you do? In the case of the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance in Seattle, the answer is simple: Bring the “mountain” to the people. While thousands of vehicles rumble overhead on Interstate 5, cyclists hone their talents below at the I-5 Colonnade, the first-ever urban mountain bike skills park. The park is located on Lakeview Boulevard. One can access the venue from I-5 North by taking Exit 168A. Before the park became a reality in 2005, the area was better known for undesirable activities. The number of riders frequenting the park has made it cleaner and safer.


Club members donated about 9,500 hours to complete Phase 1 with substantial hours volunteered for Phase 2. The second phase includes more advanced trails and technical challenges like “jumps, berms, wall rides, progressive drops, rock chutes, skinnies, pump track and a trials area.”

It is obvious that the mountain bike skills park solves two problems. It reduces urban blight and provides nearby terrain for outdoor enthusiasts. But, how did one see an asset amidst syringes and trash? The idea for the park came from Simon Lawton, who owns Fluidride



A number of outdoor projects never come to fruition because of that age-old nemesis – liability concerns. But liability issues can be dealt with. First, get legal counsel. Second, do some research and follow prudent practices already in place. In the case of a mountain bike park, guidelines have been developed by the International Mountain Biking Association (www.imba.com).

To further ward off the fear (not necessarily reality) of lawsuits, provide plenty of signage, explaining safety. Personal injury lawyers note that if an organization has taken “reasonable precautions”



based on “educated decisions”, the liability issues are minimized.

Since the I-5 Colonnade project was launched, others have followed, including Highbridge Park in New York City. *Mountain Bike Action* magazine reported in its April 2008 edition that until May 2007, “it was illegal to ride a bicycle off road in any New York City park.” Since then, however, mountain bikers have been able to navigate rock drops, dirt jumps, a pump track and several miles of singletrack trails. Gone are the more than 50,000 tons of trash that had been dumped in the 118-acre area in the past decade.