

The Merrimack Valley Trail Riders in Cooperation with The United States Army Corps of Engineers / NH Bureau of Trails Proudly Presents:

The 2021 Hopkinton Everett Riding Area's Fall Trail Maintenance Series

History

HOPKINTON-EVERETT RIDING AREA aka "Clough" or "Hop-Ev"

Located in the towns of Dunbarton and Weare, the area is one of the oldest of the State's public riding areas and one of the few in southern New Hampshire. A Federal flood control zone owned and managed by the Army Corp of Engineers, the NH Bureau of Trails leases the property on an annual basis. All of the trails and infrastructure were developed with volunteer labor from the Merrimack Trail Riders (MVTR) beginning in the early 1980s. Since that time, MVTR and the State's Bureau of Trails have partnered to maintain the OHRV trails within the riding area. MVTR utilizes self-generated funds and monies from the State's Grant-in-Aid Program (GIA) to cover the cost of maintenance. The GIA monies are derived primarily from OHRV registrations.

The New Hampshire Bureau of Trails has authorized the Merrimack Valley Trail Riders as stewards of the Hopkinton Everett Riding area. Along with the responsibility of maintaining the trail system, MVTR has a responsibility to the Army Corp. of Engineers, to the State as the lessee that the property be respected; In order to protect the privilege of riding the Hopkinton Everett Riding Area, MVTR must be vigilant in assuring OHRV users respect State OHRV Rules and Laws. MVTR and OHRV riders are encouraged to make verbal contact with an offender, or should the action continue or be deemed excessive, contact law enforcement.

Fall Trail Maintenance Series Details:

We will be working on the River Loop Trail. MVTR has a number of shovels, but feel free to bring your own for your personal use. We also recommend work gloves, good walking/hiking shoes, water, and bug spray. Locations are roadside accessible. Bikes are allowed, but will not be necessary for the trail work portion. Feel free to gather with some others for a ride afterwards.

Please rsvp to one of the channels below. Coffee and snacks will be provided in the morning, and lunch will be provided in the afternoon.

Dates:

SEPTEMBER 18, 2021

SEPTEMBER 25, 2021

OCTOBER 2, 2021

KEY TIMES: 08:30 Bench Racing, 09:00 Trail Work Begins

Please RSVP to:

Email: WELOVEHOPEV@gmail.com

Bruce Starer 603-991-9250

Sarah Starer 603-728-7187

MEET AT THE RAY ROAD PARKING LOT

DIRECTIONS: The main parking area is at the junction of Ray, Winslow, and Old East Weare Roads in Dunbarton. From Rte 93 take 89 N to exit 2 / Rte 13 – Clinton St. Go South on Rte 13 to flashing light at intersection with Rte 77. Stay straight at flashing light onto Rte 77 and watch for Ray Road on the left across from the Transfer Station. Follow Ray Road through gate to the end and turn right into the parking lot.

[More Hop-Ev History:](#)

Hopkinton-Everett Reservoir

Case Study: Hopkinton-Everett Reservoir (Hop-Ev)

(As presented by Chris Camache, NH Bureau of Trails)

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Hopkinton-Everett Reservoir (Hop-Ev) serves as a 'dry' flood control reservoir for the Merrimack River (NH). Prior to 1987, Hop-Ev land had been abused by 4X4 users, who destroyed vegetation and created significant erosion issues. There was even a small crane on site to pull out trucks that had become mired in the mud. Trash dumping and drinking parties were also issues. Local law enforcement in this rural community would not answer calls to the area without backup.

During the early to mid-80s, the Merrimack Valley Trail Riders (MVTR) sought and received permission from the landowner (Army Corps of Engineers) to run dirt bike events on the property. Today's multi-use trail network grew from existing dirt roads and the new trails cut for these events.

A meeting of mutual needs drove the designation of the Hop-Ev Reservoir multi-use trail system. The State and users desired official trails open on a daily basis and the Corps needed greater control over the area. The first proposal was developed in 1987. Soon after, NH stepped in as the land manager and set out to:

- Stabilize and recover damaged areas
- Establish and mark a legal trail network for ATVs and dirt bikes
- Maintain and enforce the network and the ban on 4X4s

PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS AND ROLES

The US Army Corps of Engineers and the State of New Hampshire New Hampshire, Department of Resources and Economic Development, Bureau of Trails (NH-BT) are the primary stakeholders. The Army Corps offers its land for the State-run trail network. Army Corps stays distanced from day-to-day administration, which is the responsibility of NH-BT. Army Corps does act in a law enforcement capacity, as do local police and NH Fish and Game officers.

Issues are resolved in a cooperative fashion between the Army Corps and NH-BT. This does not change the understanding that Army Corps is the final authority on the use of its land. Title 36 and the flood control mission of the reservoir property and staff take precedence over any recreational demand on resources.

A critical partner of NH-BT is the user group, the Merrimack Valley Trail Riders (MVTR). MVTR has little or no contact with the Army Corps, instead working through NH-BT for permission to initiate significant changes to the trail network. MVTR also receives grant funding from NH-BT for specific trail maintenance or improvement projects. NH-BT and MVTR perform the majority of work on the trails.

PRINCIPLE OBJECTIVES

The initial objectives were clear: bring the area from unmanaged use to managed recreation and expand the designated, legal place to ride in the State. These met landowner, land manager, and user needs.

The trail system contributed to the Army Corps regaining control of the land from its reputation of the 1980s and the NH-BT/MVTR partnership is providing users with legal trails offering diverse levels of challenge. While these initial objectives brought the parties together and were apparently met, the landowner doesn't feel their solution today to control lawlessness on an undeveloped property would be to bring in a trail network. It worked at that point in time with the existing leadership and social climate, but would not necessarily be repeated today on this property if starting from scratch.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

The trail system and management of it have matured to a steady state, with roles and expectations among the 3 primary parties understood and fulfilled. User opinion of the network and satisfaction with their riding experience is high. Use of the trail network is significant, with 100+ trucks/trailers in the lot on a busy Saturday or Sunday, equating to 150+ riders in the woods.

FOSTERING PROGRESS

Leadership support at the inception of the project drove its accomplishment. All involved wanted to make it happen. The NH-BT Chief wrote the initial proposal, with support from local legislators and NH Fish and Game (law enforcement interest). NH-BT prioritized funding to move the project forward, both in operation funds and grant monies for user clubs.

Initial support or opposition from local communities and local law enforcement cannot be quantified, other than to say they weren't necessarily involved, but not opposed either.

KEY CHALLENGES

Off-trail riding is the primary challenge. This appears to be a case of "1% of users wrecking things for the 99% doing things right." Regardless, off-trail use is the single most significant area of concern for all parties, particularly the Army Corps. Off-trail use that causes environmental damage or impacts the integrity of flood control structures (earthen dams, etc) would force them to close access to the land.

A number of tools are used to control off-trail use and foster responsible riding.

- Education is a component and NH-BT worked with the NH legislature to bring about laws requiring rider responsibility literature to be issued to all purchasers of new ATVs.
- Law enforcement from the Army Corps, NH Fish and Game, and local police is a tool to managing proper use. Resources for law enforcement are limited however, and law enforcement is not a stakeholder in management of the trail system. The level of authority among law enforcement parties also differs.
- MVTR runs a trail patrol force whose mission is to assist riders in need. They are there to help and educate, not enforce, however they are distinguishable by the vests they wear. Their visibility in and of itself tends to make others behave by the rules.

Off-property use can also be a problem, as local riders use abandoned roads, snowmobile trails, etc. to reach Hop-Ev or transit through Hop-Ev from point to point. It's unclear whether this is a result of the draw to the legal trail network or simply a fact of life in rural areas where private land ownership dominates.

User conflict is not a significant issue at Hop-Ev. It is an established area for motorized recreation, so others have 'ceded' its use in the evaluation of one interviewee. Among the motorized community, ATVs and dirt bike users tend to seek different experiences from the trails and their machines offer different capabilities. The design of the trails and MVTR's approach seeks to accommodate this, with

tight singletrack trails for the dirt bikes, and wider paths for the ATVs. These users are intentionally directed away from one another by physical design.

It is critical to note that Hop-Ev is a loop, day-use network with no point-to-point trails. The area is well signed and narrow routes are one-way. MVTR points to signage and the one-way designation as the single most significant factor in creating a safe network that balances the experiences sought by ATV and dirt bike users. The opportunity for head-on collisions and surprises must be kept to an absolute minimum.

Illegal trash dumping remains a perpetual problem to the property, though to a lesser extent than in the 1980s and unrelated to the trail network and its legitimate users.

On a broader level, interviewees expressed opinions that ATV and dirt bike industry/manufacturers are not doing enough to advocate for responsible riding. Users feel that the American Motorcyclist Association limits its causes to street bikes, while others are concerned by the images of reckless, environmentally damaging riding depicted in many magazines and advertising.

COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

As mentioned, the parties were united by issues they could help each other solve. They had a mutual need to cooperate and this grew to the relationship in its steady state today.

LESSONS LEARNED

If you build it, they will come. Use has skyrocketed in this area because the trails are excellent and within 1 hour of NH's population center and the Massachusetts border.

Growth predictions must drive the initial design, because it is much harder to establish new trails once a network is in place. Where the initial network grew from existing dirt roads and trails cut for dirt bike events, the opportunity to plan routes with a broader picture in mind never presented itself. The design of the network might be much different if the parties began with a 'blank sheet of paper.'

STILL TO ACCOMPLISH

The draft revision to the Hop-Ev multi-use trail network strategic plan is under review. While the state and user groups would like more miles of trail, they are constrained by the boundaries of the Army Corps land and Army Corp's responsibility to meet Federal environmental and land management law.

Stronger user education and better support from manufacturers and the industry remain a broader need.