



## Monday Lick Contemporary Trail System

A group of stakeholders including the US Forest Service, Snowshoe Mountain Resort, Pocahontas Trails, WVU Extension, Pocahontas County CVB, Pocahontas Parks & Recreation, and private businesses have been actively participating in the Snowshoe-Highlands Area Recreation Collaborative in a shared effort to become the first International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) Ride Center in West Virginia. This process has been an important part of our collaborative work to enhance communities through sustainable recreation on public lands and to develop a sustainable economy throughout the Mon Forest Towns Region (Grant, Greenbrier, Nicholas, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Preston, Randolph, Tucker, and Webster Counties).

**The Snowshoe-Highlands Ride Center was designated a bronze level award by the IMBA in 2019 and received a silver-level designation in 2020.** Since that time, the collaborative has begun developing a strategic plan for achieving the gold-level designation by 2025 which is largely dependent on the creation of bike-optimized, multiple-use single track trails which are currently absent on the landscape except for trails located at Snowshoe Mountain Resort. Achieving a gold level designation will have a substantial impact on economic and business development across the region and will lead to long-term increases in tourist activity. These economic effects will reach well beyond the boundaries of the designated Ride Center into surrounding counties – benefitting the entire region.

Tourism is the leading economic driver for Pocahontas County with a \$113,000,000+ impact, one in every four jobs is directly tourism related in the county, and **according to WV Tourism research, Pocahontas County is impacted more by tourism than any other West Virginia county.** The area has worked extremely hard to sustain the economy through covid and tourism has been one of the hardest hit industries. With a strong outdoor recreation product, the area has been able to recover some of the early-pandemic losses and achieving the gold-level designation is an opportunity to fully rebound.

This region has always relied on forests for our livelihoods and the future is no different. **The Monongahela National Forest is the single largest tourism asset in West Virginia** and offers the opportunity to further develop our recreation economy along with forest products. Our long-term goal is to develop a resilient recreation economy that includes a strong mountain bike component that equals the impact from snow sports. This can be accomplished with planning, construction, and marketing and would bring an estimated \$1,000,000 more in hotel motel tax to the economy in April – October. Based on the most recent tourism numbers provided by the state, this would equate to an additional economic impact of about \$45,000,000.

**A critical next step to achieving the gold level designation is building the Monday Lick Contemporary Trail System.** This project would include the construction of 27 miles of single-track, bike optimized trail that would connect directly to downtown Marlinton, located in Pocahontas County, WV. The design for this new trail system includes stacked loops of trail that vary in distance and difficulty. These aspects of trail design are intended to accommodate riders with varying degrees of skill and time to ride. Connecting directly to the Greenbrier River Trail State Park, residents and tourists will have easy access to the Monongahela National Forest's plentiful natural beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities. While optimized for bicycles, these trails will also be enjoyable for hikers, anglers, and wildlife viewers and offer endless business opportunities.

There are multiple examples of how small towns, especially those transitioning from economies dominated by natural resource extraction are leveraging their natural resources for outdoor recreation tourism, and mountain biking specifically. For example:

- Oakridge, Oregon struggled after the closure of a local mill in the 1980s. Since 2004, the town has rebranded itself as a mountain biking destination; riders spend an estimated \$2.4 to \$5 million a year in the local economy<sup>1</sup>.
- The Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests of North Carolina have become important mountain biking destinations; Pisgah is routinely listed as one of the most visited destinations for avid bikers. Mountain biking generates more than \$48 million in regional spending including \$30 million in visitor spending. The sport supports 366 full time jobs and \$9 million in labor income<sup>2</sup>.
- Bentonville, Arkansas resurgence as a mountain bike destination began in early 2000. Trail development has focused on developing opportunities for all skill levels that start and end and weave through the community. Bentonville is now recognized as a cycling mecca, is a silver level IMBA Ride Center with over 100 miles of singletrack trails and 57% of trail users come from outside of NW Arkansas<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.outsideonline.com/2184491/how-mountain-biking-saving-small-town-usa>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.imba.com/sites/default/files/content/resources/2018-06/OA\\_NPNF\\_MtnBikingStudy.pdf](https://www.imba.com/sites/default/files/content/resources/2018-06/OA_NPNF_MtnBikingStudy.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.visitbentonville.com/bike/trail-maps/off-road/>

Monday Lick Trails Project Budget - Marlinton, WV						
Segment	Designed User	Managed Users	Skill Difficulty Level	Length (ft)	Length (mi)	Cost Estimate
100	Mountain bike	Mountain biker, hike	More-difficult	24040.92	4.55	\$269,000
101	Mountain bike	Mountain biker, hike	More-difficult	3884.39	0.74	\$39,000
102	Mountain bike	Mountain biker, hike	More-difficult	14890.26	2.82	\$223,000
103	Mountain bike	Mountain biker, hike	More-difficult	8856.04	1.68	\$89,000
104	Mountain bike	Mountain biker, hike	Most-difficult	27622.67	5.23	\$345,000
106	Mountain bike	Mountain biker, hike	More-difficult	16656.66	3.15	\$250,000
107	Mountain bike	Mountain biker, hike	Easiest	1132.77	0.21	\$11,000
108	Mountain bike	Mountain biker, hike	Most-difficult	16207.75	3.07	\$243,000
109	Mountain bike	Mountain biker, hike	More-difficult	7002.22	1.33	\$70,000
110	Mountain bike	Mountain biker, hike	More-difficult	8001.06	1.52	\$80,000
112	Mountain bike	Mountain biker, hike	Easiest	1593.44	0.30	\$16,000
114	Mountain bike	Mountain biker, hike	More-difficult	10813.36	2.05	\$108,000
117	Mountain bike	Mountain biker, hike	Easiest	1612.11	0.31	\$16,000
<b>Total</b>				<b>142,313.7</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>\$1,759,000</b>



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### **Trail systems status:**

- Snowshoe Mountain has trails designed, funded and planned, not funded;
- Green Bank Observatory rough trails in place, trail improvements and new trails designed; not funded
- Watoga State Park – trails designed, not funded; volunteers building
- Monongahela National Forest future trail development throughout the forest, not funded
  - **Monday Lick Trails which are designed, not funded;**
  - Mower Basin Trail System – 8 miles built, additional trails designed & funded; future stacked trails planned, need designed and need funded;
- Additional state park and forest trail development opportunity and town projects TBD

### **Goal:**

1. **IMBA Gold Level Ride Center by 2025**
2. Foster development of additional WV ride centers within 2 hours of SHRC. There is a lot of trail development around the region so this is very achievable
3. Establish West Virginia as the best east coast mountain biking destination. SHRC is the first ride center and sets the foundation for reaching this goal. This has been the vision for many years.
4. Move Pocahontas County, Randolph county, Nicholas County and Webster County into the transitional ARC designation through recreation development within the next 5-10 years. Currently these counties are distressed or at-risk.

### **Funding Objectives 1-3 years:**

- Implementation of the SHARC strategic Plan
  - Refine and implement through continued collaborations
  - Recreation coordinator and trail maintenance staffing – funding to be determined; initial funds GAOA
- Shovel ready phase – fund the builds for projects designed and ready to be built but need funded:
  - **Monday Lick Trail System \$1.8 Million**
- Design phase for planned trail systems – fund comprehensive designs to complement and augment existing trails and the SHRC. Funding to be determined
- Fund Trail maintenance and trail maintenance planning on existing trails in area and SHRC. Model Plan identified, local trail fund initiated
- Planning of future trail systems connecting communities to trails
- Expand the planning; Regional outreach and coordination with potential ride center destinations ex: Canaan Valley; White Sulphur Springs

### **Outcomes:**

1. Workforce development
2. Business and Economic growth in region and for WV
3. Creating sustainable recreation economy for rural West Virginia, communities and forest heavy destinations

### **World Mountain Bike Events:**

- UCI Mountain Bike World Cup Race July 2022 Snowshoe
- UCI World Mountain bike Marathon 2024 Monongahela National Forest & Snowshoe
- Anticipated 2023 UCI event