

Publicizing NEMBA Events by Tom Grimble, NEMBA President (9/3/04)

One of Philip's favorite mixed metaphors goes something like "If mountain bikers do trail maintenance in the woods and nobody hears about it, does it matter?" One thing we could improve is how we promote ourselves and our work. I know I am guilty of it also. You work hard to get a maintenance day or event planned and once it is over we all tend to move on to the next event. But, getting the word out is very simple and it just makes sense. As well as being a recruiting tool, it is also an advocacy tool. People who are not familiar with our sport or our organization may become acquainted with us first by reading about the good work we do in our local parks.

Here is a simple explanation of what you will need to publicize your event.

1. The first thing you will need is a press release. DON'T PANIC! A press release is not very hard to create and to make it even simpler, I am copying the text of a recent release that I did at the bottom of this note. I would be happy to send the actual word document complete with letterhead to anybody who wants a copy. (This list does not accept attachments☺) You will notice that I placed several quotes in the press release. These are helpful to the reporters or editors and if you want to use myself or Philip as a source for quotes let us know. We are full of...um...let's just say we are vocal. Please do not put words in our mouths though, run things by us first.

2. You need to know where to send your press release. Local newspapers are excellent contacts. They will often run a timely story. Be prepared to give your story a local angle for smaller town papers such as a photo of someone from that town working at the trail day. The following web site can be used to research what news outlets might be appropriate for your event. Don't be afraid to call the paper and ask who you should send the press release to. This additional point of contact is often helpful in getting placement. (Note, Common Cause lists many local and national media contacts, as well as political contacts: <http://causenet.commoncause.org/afr/home/>)

3. Have a photo ready. Digital photos of high resolution are preferred. Group shots are often not too exciting. Everybody likes smiling people with dirty hands. Children are always a crowd pleaser although, children with dirty hands just look messy but that is my personal opinion.

4. Be prepared to follow up. The press release often does not give the reporter or editor enough information to complete the article. They will often fire a couple of questions at you. Always give them straight clear responses and keep your message positive. I find it helpful to assume that the press is always going to be hostile to our cause so I proof read my correspondence twice before sending it to make sure I am not going to be misunderstood or quoted out of context.

5. When you see your own face smiling back up at you from the front page, make sure you buy and extra copy for you mom and let the rest of us know about your success too.

Another thing to consider is sending out press releases to news, radio or even TV outlets before an event to promote it. If it is a big event and has an interesting angle, you might get a reporter and photographer to show up and cover the story. With our fall workdays just around the corner, I think it would be good for each chapter to pick at least one event to promote. Once you see how easy it really is, I am willing to bet you will make it part of your normal routine.

-Tom Grimble

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 30, 2004

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Mountain Bikers Spruce Up Local Park

Medford MA - On Saturday, August 28th, 30 volunteers from the New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) worked to improve the trails at the Middlesex Fells Reservation. This event was part of a series of six trail maintenance days that the New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) has planned for the Middlesex Fells in 2004 in conjunction with the staff of the Department of Conservation and Recreations (DCR), the state agency responsible for the stewardship of the Middlesex Fells.

"This maintenance day focused on repairing damage to a portion of the orange hiking trail and mountain bike loop," says NEMBA President Tom Grimble. "Many of the trails in the Fells were not designed to carry the volume of trail users we see today. NEMBA uses modern trail building techniques to make sustainable shared-use trails that can handle the higher volumes of trail users." NEMBA is a significant contributor of volunteer labor to the DCR and is recognized throughout New England as experts in trail design, construction and maintenance. "The work done this past weekend retired a section of trail that was too close to a stream", continues Grimble. "Silt was being deposited into the stream because the old trail was too steep and too close to the water. The new section of trail improves this situation because it is less steep and further away from the stream."

The first three trail maintenance days focused on repairing existing hiking and biking trails including narrowing of trails, planting trees and providing proper drainage. NEMBA maintains a core group of volunteers who are trained in the science of trail design and the techniques of trail maintenance. These volunteers have been trained by NEMBA, the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) and the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC). According to Grimble, "Many mountain bikers feel strongly about giving back to the environment. We are proud to team with the DCR to provide this service to the community."

The New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) has 17 chapters and over 6500 supporters throughout New England. Its mission is to promote responsible mountain biking and to protect and preserve New England trails and open spaces. The group also leads about 1000 recreational rides, holds mountain bike festivals, camping trips and has bicycle patrols in many parks. Contact NEMBA at www.nemba.org. or 800-57-NEMBA.

(Digital photo's available upon request)

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