



**Last Update: September 2020**

## **NEMBA CHAPTER HANDBOOK**

This handbook describes NEMBA's programs and policies and is intended to provide local chapters and volunteers with information, to help them become more effectively involved with the organization. This information should help chapter personnel become effective local mountain bike advocates in various areas of expertise, and to point them to the appropriate person when they have questions.

New chapters are assigned a contact person or "liaison" to help them through the initial learning curve about advocacy and to help the chapter become an effective partner in the regional organization. Liaisons are experienced NEMBA members, and new chapters are urged to make use of them. After receiving approval by NEMBA's Board of Directors, and the opening of a local bank account, a new chapter is allocated \$200 of general start up funds. Additional funds are rebated to the chapter on a quarterly basis based on membership revenues.

### **I. OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

The New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting sustainable trail access for mountain bicyclists, and to maintaining the trails on which we ride. NEMBA is committed to educating mountain bicyclists to ride sensitively and responsibly in order to protect the natural environment and the experience of other trail users. NEMBA supports the conservation of open spaces.

NEMBA sponsors trail maintenance and promotes the stewardship of public lands. NEMBA utilizes a number of programs, including educational booths, bike ambassadors where needed, and recreational rides, to educate mountain bicyclists on how to be responsible and environmentally sensitive trail users. NEMBA acts as a liaison between bicyclists, government agencies and land managers in order to help protect and conserve existing trail systems and to create new ones.

### **II. NEMBA PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES**

NEMBA Website -- [www.nemba.org](http://www.nemba.org)

NEMBA's website is the source of the organization's activities, programs, events and publications. It also features chapter webpages with links to a chapter's own homepage or Facebook page. Check the listings for your chapter to make sure that the information is current.

#### **NEMBA Trail Maintenance**

NEMBA performs many types of trail maintenance, from trail construction to bridge building to trail rehabilitation. Some maintenance events are part of formal "series," sponsored by bicycle companies. Trail care events are managed by trained volunteers called "trail crew leaders". Other maintenance events may be operated on more of an ad hoc basis. In all cases, permission from the land manager is required.

For a trail Care event to be an official NEMBA activity, it must be sanctioned by the appropriate local chapter and a notice of it must be forwarded to the regional NEMBA office. NEMBA provides insurance for all chapter



activities, but regional NEMBA needs to know what is going on ahead of time. NEMBA lists all trail maintenance events on the [NEMBA Events page](#). They are also sent out in the weekly NEMBA Events email.

### **NEMBA's Bike Ambassador Programs**

NEMBA MTB Ambassadors assist trail users, they give direction to those who may be lost. Assist with minor first aid or bike repairs and do simple trail fixes. They do not enforce rules though they may report problems to the managing authorities. Ambassador programs are usually started at the request of land managers but may also be started by chapters who feel there is a need for one.

Chapters wishing to start one in their area are encouraged to contact regional NEMBA. Most patrols result from requests from land managers or agencies.

### **NEMBA Trail Grants**

NEMBA's annual Land Access Raffle funds a grant program designed to make moneys available for a wide variety of trail projects. All NEMBA chapters and other 501 (c) 3 organizations may apply for grants of between \$100 and \$500 to accomplish projects, which benefit New England trails. These grants may be used for anything from buying tools, building boardwalks, repairing trails, land protection or for programs that educate and benefit trail users.

Trail Grant applications are submitted to the NEMBA Grants Committee and should include a description of the project, how the project shall be carried out, a detailed budget and a letter of permission from the land manager to undertake the project. There are two rounds of grants every year, one in March and one in August. Details of the application process are on the [NEMBA website](#).

Here's a list of recent funded [NEMBA Trail Grants](#).

### **NEMBA Signature Trail Grants**

NEMBA's Signature Trail Grant program provides more significant funding (\$5,000 - \$10,000) for exceptional trail projects spearheaded and executed by a NEMBA Chapter and are limited to the creation of new trails and trail systems. For an example of a past grant application see <https://www.nemba.org/leadership-resources>.

Contact [office@nemba.org](mailto:office@nemba.org) for more details.

Signature Trail Grants are for NEMBA chapters only. The program's goal is to "get more trails on the ground". Every year chapters will be sent details of the application process in the late fall.

### **Funded NEMBA Signature Trail Grants**



## **NEMBA Special Events**

NEMBA holds special events such as the Kona Bicycles MTB Adventure Series, EFTA/NEMBA Fun Rides Trail Schools and Skills Clinics. In addition, there are a number of other annual events. These events are both fun and important in developing greater membership participation and providing enjoyable activities for our members. Chapters wishing to schedule a Special Event should contact the NEMBA office in order to secure special insurance coverage.

## **NEMBA Ride Series**

NEMBA offers hundreds of member-led rides throughout New England. They form an informal series catering to the desires of their leaders and participant riders. They promote responsible riding and introduce riders to areas that they may be unfamiliar with.

The best way to build chapter membership is to have an ongoing ride series. Official NEMBA rides may be listed on our website. NEMBA rides are open to all mountain bikers: members and prospective members. Chapters offering rides should ensure that new riders are welcomed and that rides for all levels of riders are strongly encouraged (i.e., you want new riders to come back - beginner rides are important, rides for slower riders are as important as rides for faster more advanced riders).

To list your chapter's rides on [NEMBA Ride Page](#), or get more information on how to organize NEMBA rides, contact [office@nemba.org](mailto:office@nemba.org). Rides are also sent out weekly to NEMBA members subscribed to the NEMBA Events email list.

## **III. NEMBA EMAIL LISTS**

The NEMBA regional BOD conducts some of its daily business and discusses many issues related to mountain bike advocacy via email on [NEMBA\\_BOD@nemba.org](mailto:NEMBA_BOD@nemba.org). This is very useful for getting advice from other chapters who may have worked through similar issues. Your chapter will have a Primary and an Alternate representative to the Regional BOD, both of whom will be on this email list.

Contact [office@nemba.org](mailto:office@nemba.org) to update access to these email lists.



#### **IV. NEMBA POLICIES**

- 1) Each chapter must remain true to NEMBA's mission statement and abide by [NEMBA's Bylaws](#)
- 2) Each chapter should set up its own board of directors as soon as possible after being approved as a NEMBA chapter by the regional board of directors. This should include a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. Each of the positions should be filled by a separate individual.
- 3) Each chapter must have reference to NEMBA in its name. IE: Cape Cod NEMBA Chapter. In this way the chapter's name recognition is maximized, as it is always associated with the rest of the organization.
- 4) Board of Directors representatives: The chapter needs to have a Primary regional representative who must participate in quarterly meetings. They are responsible for keeping their chapter informed as to what is happening regionally. Each chapter should also have an Alternate representative to the Board who can fill in when the primary voting member is not available. Normally the primary representative is the chapter's president - but that is not a requirement. Currently the NEMBA BOD meets twice a year by conference call and twice in a face-to-face meeting. The face-to-face meetings almost always have rides as part of the program. The NEMBA BOD Primary and Alternate members must be current NEMBA members.
- 5) Chapter Membership: Each member selects their desired chapter during registration. Chapters can solicit memberships by referring riders to the [Join NEMBA](#) page. All membership dues must be processed by regional NEMBA.
- 5) Chapter Membership: Unless otherwise requested by the member, all members are assigned to the chapter based upon their residency, and if there is no local chapter present, members are given an "at large" status. Each chapter may solicit memberships using their local mailing address. However, all membership dues must be processed through the NEMBA office. Contact [office@nemba.org](mailto:office@nemba.org) for more details.
- 6) Chapter Activities: Chapters are urged to develop advocacy-related programs and activities that are in keeping with NEMBA's Mission Statement. However, permission for such activities must be sought from the Regional Board of Directors. Normally, this is just a formality. The rationale behind this policy is twofold: To maintain NEMBA's integrity as an advocacy organization and to keep regional NEMBA informed as to all of its chapter's activities. Regional NEMBA is always available for consultation and guidance in developing programs. This includes writing grant applications.
  - Special activities, such as benefits, festivals or any event to which the public is invited and must pay a fee must have special insurance. Insurance must be applied for through the Regional NEMBA office at least 30 days prior to the event.
  - NEMBA does not put on mountain bike races and we do not have insurance coverage to put on any competitive event. However, NEMBA does help promote mountain bike races as a sponsor. NEMBA also fields a race team, NEMBA Racing, to help educate and do advocacy outreach to the racing community.
  - NEMBA chapters cannot charge a fee or require a donation for any of their events without seeking special event insurance.



7) Chapter Finances: Because NEMBA is a federally tax-exempt 501 (c) 3 organization, it must file an annual tax form based upon the complete financial data of all of its chapters. Thus, it is critical that each chapter keep an accurate record of its financial dealings and make expenditures that are consistent with NEMBA's mission. This is the job of the chapter treasurer. In no manner, may any individual member financially benefit from NEMBA. All chapter assets exist under the corporation of NEMBA Regional and are the property of NEMBA.

- Chapters must submit an annual financial statement to the regional board, or at any time requested by the board. These are compiled by the NEMBA Treasurer and form part of Regional NEMBA's annual Tax Statement.

- For tax reasons all non-membership moneys in excess of \$100 received from local chapters must be first processed through the regional treasurer, and then dispersed to the appropriate chapter treasurer.

- All NEMBA memberships must be received by the regional membership director and processed by the NEMBA treasurer. Membership rebates to chapters will be sent out quarterly after a chapter has set up their own bank account.

- NEMBA chapters receive rebates based upon new memberships and renewals according to the following formula (updated by the BOD on 5/7/2017):

\$35/45 members = \$10

Memberships above \$35

$($$$-15) \cdot 0.6$

Dealers (\$100 min.)

$($$$-50) \cdot 90\% = \text{rebate}$

Dealers receive and distribute SingleTracks

Industry

$($$$-15) \cdot 90\% = \text{rebate}$

8) Insurance Policy: In the event that NEMBA fails to have insurance coverage, all volunteer activities will immediately cease until such coverage is attained. The Executive Director (or President of the NEMBA BOD) will contact chapter presidents in this eventuality. (Voted 07/29/02)



## **V. DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE NEMBA CHAPTER**

### **Leadership**

It's important to develop an effective and active chapter working group that will work in concert to set the tempo of the chapter and share in the work to develop productive and enjoyable chapter activities (trail maintenance, rides, meetings, trips, festivals, etc.).

Each chapter should have the following officers: A president to oversee all the chapter programs and manage the chapter meetings; a vice-president to assist the president and act as president when the later is unavailable; a treasurer to balance the chapter bank account and provide annual financial info to NEMBA's regional treasurer for tax-filing; a secretary to record meeting minutes and other chapter information. Some chapters find it useful to appoint a vice-president for each local riding area. This VP becomes the main contact with that area's land manager. Other chapters have VPs for public relations, membership, rides and trail maintenance.

Each chapter has two representatives to NEMBA's regional Board of Directors, one is a "voting" member and the second is a "non-voting" member who may vote in the absence of the former. This Board is entrusted with guiding and managing the direction of the whole organization. At least one chapter representative should attend each regional board meeting and report back to the local chapter.

### **Monthly Chapter Meetings**

While not a requirement, it is important for each chapter to meet regularly to discuss and organize upcoming events, discuss access issues, and make sure that all chapter programs are running effectively.

Chapters always need "new blood" and more volunteers. We recommend publicizing the monthly meetings to your membership through the appropriate NEMBA email list, website or Facebook page. Even better is to have a set date, time and place for the meetings (e.g., first Monday of every month at 7pm at such-and-such location). Providing enticements to attend the meetings sometimes is appropriate: have a ride before the meeting, offer food/beverage, have a guest speaker, hold a short clinic, screen a mountain bike movie, or even have a raffle. When new people come, make sure that they feel welcome, and that they understand that they are welcome to get involved.

Ask for help from your membership! Learn the art of gentle arm-twisting. Look for the specific strengths of your members and try to channel them into leading a NEMBA ride or activity. Once a volunteer realizes that he/she can accomplish a small task, say leading a ride, it will get them more involved.

### **Membership Development**

Increasing membership is critical. Make sure NEMBA brochures are in bike shops and try to convince local shops to get the word out to their customers about the importance of joining your chapter. If possible, have a shop representative who is responsible for keeping flyers and brochures at their local shop. Word of mouth is the best way to get new members. At every NEMBA ride, an effort should be made to plug joining NEMBA. Have NEMBA membership applications available and be prepared to give a quick "sales pitch" summarizing



the benefits of joining NEMBA. Point them to your website, give them a copy of the magazine or a brochure. The more events that your chapter has, the more members you'll get to join!

### **Working with Land Managers**

Developing a good working relationship with local land managers is critical for preserving mountain bike access. Land managers are frequently overworked and under-budgeted, so they will appreciate volunteerism if it is provided in a way that doesn't increase their workload. We recommend that each land manager have one or two primary NEMBA contacts, who will keep in close touch with park issues, so that communication is consistent. Many NEMBA chapters appoint a specific Vice-President for a specific park. If your park has a "Friends" group, the VP should join. If your land manager suggests a project. Act on it as fast as possible. Doing their project first is the best way to build rapport.

It is important to also work with management agencies and even elected officials on a State level is important too. Statewide managers often promulgate policies that can have a big impact on local initiatives. This can be daunting for individuals. Contact Regional NEMBA for assistance.

Here are some helpful hints about developing a good land manager relationship.

Find the facts: learn as much as you can about the park and the staff (what are their goals, what are the problems, know the rules of your park), and try to learn the political atmosphere that affects the park.

Meet with the land manager: be professional and courteous, find common goals, be a resource and way for the land manager to communicate to the MTB community, follow up with action items, and keep a written record of what was discussed. Develop specific goals and plans for the park: trail maintenance events, patrols, and education.

### **Outreach to other user groups**

Try to develop a positive relationship with other trail users (hikers, equestrians, dog walkers, ATV users). Make them realize that we are pro-trail and pro-environment, and that we want to make the trails a better place for everyone. Shared-use trails are almost always preferable. Though motorized users may need to be segregated from others, it is NEMBA's goal to have all 'muscle powered' trail activity treated equally. Always try to understand the needs, motivations and point of view of other trail users.



## **VI. PUTTING ON EVENTS**

Try not to go it alone! Rally volunteers to help put on chapter events and learn how to delegate responsibility. Events are fun and important for chapters, but they also are a lot of work, so make sure that the chapter is fully behind each event and helps out.

### **Fun Rides Guidance**

- First: Organize volunteers who are willing to help
- MTB Adventure Series - chose a local charity that will benefit from your event. The park or land trust where the event is happening is often the best beneficiary. Check with Regional NEMBA for possible conflicts with other nearby events that might conflict with yours and to get insurance.
- Chose a date and a map out a route
- Get permission from the land manager for your date and route. You may need to get an official permit from a higher agency some time ahead of the event date.
- Do Public Relations using SingleTracks Magazine, websites, email lists, Facebook Etc... Get advance listings in local newspapers and invite them to cover the event. Drop flyers in local Bike Shops and outdoor stores.
- Buy or get food and drinks donated to sell or give away during the event.
- Collect Raffle prizes from local bike shops, restaurants, or anywhere else you can think of.
- In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a port-a-john to be delivered to your event.
- Arrow the Route – Don't wait till the last minute, the time in advance will depend on the area you use and the length and complication of your route(s) You will have to check the route the night before or the morning of the event because arrows often disappear.
- Day of the Event
- Set up a registration table. This is to sign people up for the ride, but it is also a great time to talk about NEMBA and to get people to join. Some chapters will waive the registration fee if someone signs up that day.
- It is helpful to have a poster board promoting your chapter - You can include pictures of other events (trail maintenance, weekly rides) and encourage them to attend the next one.
- If you have mtb ambassadors have them frequent the main loop or man a water station. In any case it's a good idea to have frontrunners checking the arrows before the course opens.



- If you ask you may be able to get a bike shop to donate some time to set up a repair area and have a mechanic on hand.
- Take lots of pictures and send a few to your local paper with a write up about the event. Who knows they may print it.
- Assign someone to sweep the course after the event. That way you'll know that everyone is safely out of the woods.
- Take down the arrows - most areas want them down within a week, but the sooner they are gone the less likely another user group will complain about them. (Note: a team of sweep riders after the event can pull the arrows and have a fun time doing it.)
- Be sure to thank your volunteers and the land manager for allowing the event to take place.

### **Weekly Ride**

- Find someone who is willing to host a ride. It doesn't have to be a weekly ride - if they can only do it once a month that's fine.
- Let them decide what type of ride (beginner, advanced), a location, and a time.
- If needed, get permission from the land manager.
- Many chapters have more than one weekly ride.
- Do PR for the ride(s): SingleTracks, Facebook, fliers in bike shops and the weekly NEMBA Events email blast.
- The ride may not attract a lot of people at first but hopefully word of mouth will increase the number of participants,
- Introduce riders to NEMBA - use brochures or referrals to the NEMBA web site.
- If possible, take pictures and get rider feedback.
- A monthly beginner ride has been shown to be one of the best ways to build chapter membership.

### **Trail Care Events**

- Organize volunteers who are willing to help plan the project
- Choose a date and a project. Oftentimes you will initiate a project based on your observations of the needs in a particular area. Land managers may have 'hot button' issues that they'd like addressed.



- Get permission from the land manager for the date and project - you may need to get the official permit closer to the event date. Invite them to attend your workday.
- Contact Regional NEMBA to list and promote the event. Regional NEMBA also provides insurance for all NEMBA Trail Care events.
- Find a way to fund the project if needed - grants are available for many projects but they often require planning ahead
- Do PR - it is often helpful to arrange to meet in a parking lot at a certain time.
- Make use of SingleTracks Magazine, Facebook, fliers in bike shops and the NEMBA Events email blast.
- If appropriate, invite youth groups. Boy & Girl Scouts, school groups or students looking for public service credits.
- Many chapters partner with REI, EMS or local advocacy groups.
- You won't know how many volunteers you have until the day of the event, so you need to plan ahead and plan for various size groups. With some projects you can do some of the work ahead of time (i.e. prefabricating a bridge).
- Day of the Event
- Make sure you have a first aid kit, plenty of water, bug spray, a camera and some food. Providing coffee and snacks is a great introduction on cold mornings.
- Have multiple projects planned in case you get more volunteers than expected.
- Be sure to have enough tools for everyone. No one likes to stand around waiting to use a hammer, rake, shovel, clipper or whatever. Encourage people to bring their own tools and gloves if your chapter doesn't have enough
- Meet your volunteers.
- Orientation - make introductions, remind people to sign up (get an email address or a phone number)
- Welcome all participants. Make them feel appreciated.
- Discuss the day's format, goals and if you're splitting up into groups, do it now.
- Start off with a safety talk. Demonstrate the proper way to carry and use tools.
- Encourage people to bring water or snacks as needed.
- Keep the day fun. Provide rewards (food, swag, a ride). Some chapters send out for lunch, Pizza, etc.



- It is not necessary to have all day events. Most chapters have half day events followed by lunch and a ride. That way volunteers don't burn out and can enjoy the second half of the day with their families or on a ride.
- Educate people as you work - explain why you are doing things and give people a chance to try new things.
- Take lots of pictures
- Keep good records about hours, what worked and what didn't. Reports and photos will help in planning the next event and can be used for documentation when preparing for grant applications.
- After the event be sure to thank your volunteers and the land manager for allowing the workday to take place.

### Skills Clinics

- Find someone who has a skill in the area you want to hold the clinic.
- Skills clinics can be for all levels of riders. They can cover the basics of cross country riding, technical riding, racing or whatever you like.
- Arrange a date and time and if necessary get permission from land managers.
- Do PR: SingleTracks, Email lists, fliers in bike shops, newspapers, Facebook and the weekly NEMBA Events email blast. Skills clinics do not require additional insurance unless there is a fee.
- Hold your clinic - take lots of pictures and get feedback from the participants about what worked and what didn't and use this information in planning future clinics.
- Keep it fun. Don't try to teach too much too fast. Successful Skills Clinics always have 'repeat customers'.
- Bike maintenance clinics are popular and can be run in concert with local bike shops.