

Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area

Mountain Bike Trail Development Timeline

1995 - Gary Sjoquist, founder of the Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists (MORC), attends a public hearing in Crosby about the new Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area (CCSRA). At the meeting, Sjoquist meets local cyclist Dan Cruzer. Working with the MN DNR's Grant Scholen, Sjoquist and Cruzer help draft a master plan for the CCSRA that includes a mountain bike trail.

1997 – MN DNR hosts “On Common Ground,” a DNR trails conference. At a mountain biking presentation, Sjoquist (who is now a MN State Representative for IMBA), talks about the potential for Cuyuna to become a destination for mountain bikers, much like Moab, UT or Chequamegon in WI.

2002 – Sjoquist helps secure a Bikes Belong grant for \$10,000 to help build the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail. Sjoquist would help secure a second Bikes Belong grant for the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail in 2009.

2002 – MORC member Tim Wegner approaches MN DNR's Director of State Parks Courtland Nelson about the lack of purpose-built mountain bike trails in Minnesota State Parks. Nelson suggests there is a great potential for a mountain bike trail network at CCSRA.

2005 – IMBA's Jenn Dice suggests to Tim Wegner that MN 8th District Congressman Jim Oberstar might be able to help with funding. Wegner drafts a request for a federal transportation grant which he and Sjoquist present to Oberstar in Washington, DC. When President Bush signs the 2005 federal transportation bill in July, \$750,000 is earmarked for the CCSRA to be administered through MN Department of Transportation to the MN DNR.

2007 – IMBA's Executive Director Mike Van Able travels to Cuyuna to attend a DNR meeting on Cuyuna with Sjoquist, Wegner, and Ric Ahearn of the Parks and Trails Council of MN. Later the same day, at a Chamber of Commerce presentation, the economic impact of the new mountain bike trail network is discussed. Later in the Summer, IMBA's Trail Care Crew visits Cuyuna and with the help of local MORC members, build a half-mile demonstration mountain bike trail in the CCSRA.

2008 – Hansi Johnson, newly appointed IMBA Regional Director, becomes the IMBA liaison between MORC and the MN DNR for the mountain bike trail network at the CCSRA.

Spring, 2009 – Courtland Nelson, Director of State Parks for the DNR, states in a Brainerd presentation that the Cuyuna project needs to show results soon. Sjoquist and Tim Wegner begin working with Hansi Johnson to help expedite the Cuyuna project by working with the DNR's Larry Peterson. Thanks to economic impact data provided by IMBA, and some heavy lifting by local legislators Rep. John Ward and Senator Paul Koering, Cuyuna is awarded state funding thanks largely to the lobbying work of local business people in the Crosby Ironton area.

Summer, 2009 – work on Cuyuna is nearly derailed because federal funds can't be used for the process to hire contractors. IMBA Executive Director Mike van Abel, working with the Parks and Trails Council of MN, secures funding to keep the project going. Quality Bicycle Product's owner Steve Flag, at the

request of QBP employee (and MORC president at the time) Scott Thayer, also provides funding. Locally, the Hallet Foundation also provides a significant grant for the project.

Summer, 2009 – because the CCSRA mountain bike trail is federally funded, and even though the CCSRA is an abandoned mine site, the project requires an environmental assessment be completed. Local mountain biker Jeff Zipfell completes the assessment pro-bono, saving the project a significant expense.

Spring, 2010 – thanks to economic impact data provided by IMBA, and thanks again to the persistent work of Rep. Ward, Senator Koering, and the Parks and Trails Council of MN, Cuyuna is again awarded funding from the state legislature thanks in large part to a Bonding Bill tour of the area arranged by local business folks. Gov. Pawlenty veto's funding for virtually all trail projects statewide, all but Cuyuna which once again receives funding.

May, 2010 - Jeff and Kathy Schoenbauer, trail architects and mountain bikers, are retained for design and construction oversight of the project. The winning construction bid is awarded to a contractor (G&L Excavating), who understands mountain biking trail design thanks to the owner's mountain biking sons Doug and Dan Swanson. Construction of the mountain bike trail network at the CCSRA begins with Dino Cantos, a highly regarded mountain bike trail builder from GA and his crew, supplemented by trail work from Tim Wegner and local MORC volunteers. IMBA brings Dan Hudson of Trail Solutions to consult with the construction crews on technical trail sections.

Summer, 2010 - IMBA's Hansi Johnson fundraises with MORC and Trek to secure additional funds to bring in gravity specific trail builder to the Yawkey section. IMBA Trail Solutions sends Shane Wilson from Hood River Oregon to work on the flow trail in the Yawkey area called the Bob Sled run.

September, 2010 - Sjoquist works with MORC, Hansi Johnson, and MN DNR to host the Cuyuna Fall Preview, a celebration/assessment of the new mountain bike trail network at Cuyuna. Trailblazer Bikes donates a trailer to hold trail maintenance tools given to the local MORC riders by the MN DNR. An MOU regarding trail maintenance is signed by MORC and the MN DNR. After the ceremony, invited guests ride the mountain bike trail network for the first time. The verdict; Cuyuna is astonishingly good.

Spring, 2011 - IMBA designates Cuyuna a Bronze level Ride Center. This is the first designation for a Ride Center in the Midwest, and one of only a few in the country.

June, 2011 – MN DNR hosts the CCSRA Grand Opening of the mountain bike trail network. The inaugural Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Festival is scheduled to take place June 11 and 12.