



Outdoors NSW & ACT

Recreational Trail & Adventure Riding in NSW

Trail Bike Sub-Committee Outdoors NSW & ACT





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Planning by the NSW Government and numerous land managers to provide opportunities for safe and legal, non-competitive trail bike riding in NSW has largely been ad-hoc and limited.

There are few places in NSW where community members can legally ride a trail bike 'off-road'. A minefield of legislation applies to trail bike riding and law enforcement is divided between State and Local governments. Our objective is to lobby the NSW Government and its agencies to develop, adopt and implement a NSW Recreational Trail and Adventure Bike Strategy that:

- Acknowledges trail and adventure bike riding as a legitimate and healthy recreational activity
- Enables participant access to suitable and sufficient riding areas, and where possible legitimises single-track riding
- Addresses the legitimate concerns of the variety of stakeholders, especially land managers

Population growth and robust motorcycle sales have seen the demand for suitable trail bike riding areas increase. Compound this with diminishing riding areas, especially in the ever-expanding Sydney region, and the rising level of usage of available areas is to their detriment.

Because of limited planning for the provision of safe and legal trail and adventure bike riding opportunities, government bodies and developers face difficulties allocating space for the activity in the local environment to ensure minimal disturbance.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) currently supports recreational pursuits as one of its key functions. NPWS is not however generally supportive of motorised recreational use of National Parks. Their key objective is the conservation of the State's biodiversity and cultural heritage, and these are often seen as mutually exclusive.

Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) has an extensive network of publicly accessible forest roads, allied with a number of visitor facilities including picnic areas. FCNSW's primary remit is forest management to enable sustainable timber harvesting.

Other land managers appear unable to actively support recreational pursuits, let alone motorised ones, due to the objectives and functions under their own legislation and regulation.

Riders span all age groups and although trail bike riding is largely seen as a male activity, many females also participate. Based on the number of bikes sold, NSW has approximately 75,000 active trail bike riders along with many more adventure bike riders. Clearly, trail and adventure bike riding is a popular activity undertaken by significant numbers of people across all age groups and demographics.

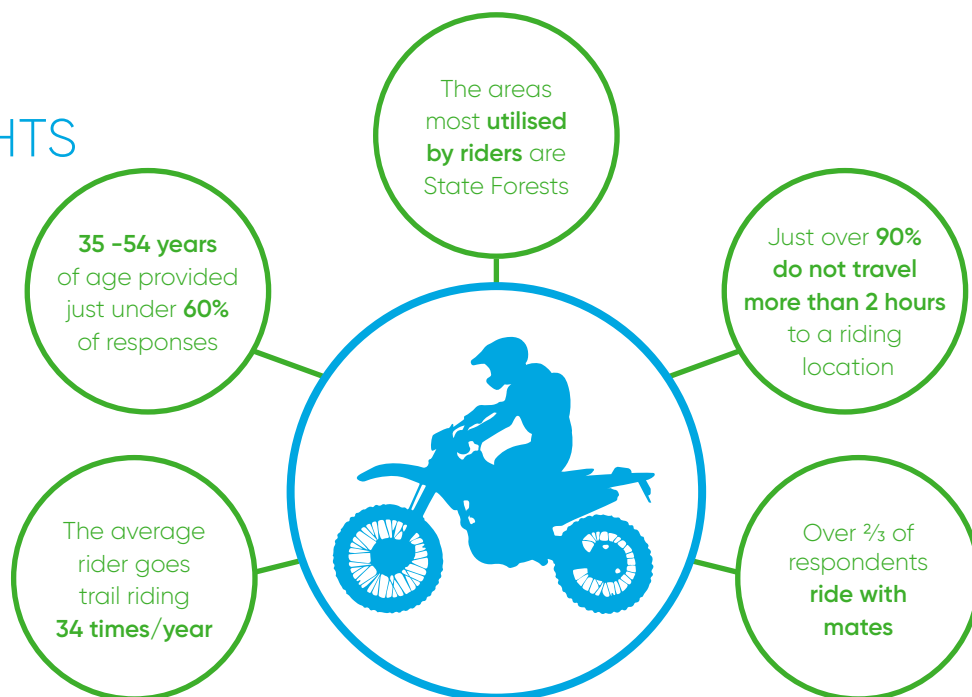
In September 2020 a survey of trail bike riders was undertaken by the Motorcycle Council of NSW (MCC). This White Paper is one outcome of that survey with the MCC and ONSWACT now working together towards the development and adoption of a NSW Recreational Trail and Adventure Bike Strategy. Our success hinges on the recognition of trail and adventure bike riding as legitimate and sustainable recreational activities, and for participants to enjoy trail and adventure riding well into the future.

Trail and adventure bike riding is a legitimate sporting activity that entails strenuous physical and mental exercise. If not well managed however, it raises legitimate concerns for numerous stakeholders including landholders, land managers, State government agencies, local councils and the riders themselves. Noise, dust, safety, environmental impacts and finding safe and legal places to ride are among the challenges faced by riders, land managers and regulators.

The development and implementation of a comprehensive NSW Recreational Trail and Adventure Bike Strategy will benefit the NSW community and its stakeholders by delivering the vision that trail and adventure bike riding is acknowledged and supported by government, land managers and the general community as a legal, legitimate, healthy, sustainable and active recreational activity.

In developing a NSW Recreational Trail and Adventure Bike Strategy, this White Paper aims to inform readers on key elements. This document is to be accompanied with the Discussion Paper on the same topic for full understanding.

INSIGHTS



WHAT IS RECREATIONAL TRAIL & ADVENTURE RIDING?

Trail and adventure bike riders are looking for a bush experience that can challenge them physically and mentally.

MOTORCYCLE COMPETITION

Trail and adventure bike riding is not a competitive sport.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL BENEFITS OF SPORT

Trail-riding provides physical and mental health benefits to its participants, thereby reducing societal health costs.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholder engagement is fundamental for acknowledging trail and adventure bike riding as legitimately healthy, recreational pursuits that benefit society in numerous ways.

TYPES OF BIKES

"Dirt bikes" is a broad descriptor of bikes more suited to unsealed surfaces than road bikes, often otherwise known as off-road bikes, or trail bikes.

ELECTRIFICATION

Trail and adventure bike electrification will gain momentum in the future with electric trail bikes, like other electric vehicles, likely to receive more market acceptance through improved battery technology.

WHERE PEOPLE RIDE

There is currently only one public location in NSW where junior, unlicensed riders can obtain a permit to ride.

Locations for trail bike riding are becoming harder to access.

ORGANISED EVENTS

Notwithstanding the availability of occasional organised events, most trail and adventure bike riders ride casually and socially on an ad hoc basis.

DIRECT COMMUNITY ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Trail and adventure bike riders deliver direct economic benefits to communities adjacent to riding areas.

GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Motorised recreation in the bush, including trail bike riding, can be managed in an environmentally sustainable way.

Management and emergency response benefits when trails are open and functional.

An opportunity exists to formerly investigate the environmental impacts of trail bike riding

ILLEGAL TRAILS

Illegal trail creation and use is a major concern for land managers and enforcement agencies.

EROSION	<p>Erosion is a key environmental concern that can be managed sustainably with suitable controls.</p>
SINGLE TRACK	<p>Single track riding is a core component of trail riding for a majority of trail riders.</p> <p>For the most part, single track riding is currently illegal on public lands in NSW.</p> <p>Single track riding can be, and usually is, environmentally sustainable</p> <p>Single track occupies a very small area within a much larger area.</p> <p>Riding single track on trail bikes is subjectively safer than riding bicycles.</p> <p>A simple mechanism must be established to enable legal and readily -available single track riding opportunities for trail riders on NSW public lands.</p>
NOISE	<p>Noise impacts and mitigation must be included in any environmental assessment undertaken.</p>
LOSS OF RIDING AREA	<p>Urban expansion has decreased the size and increased the use of available trail bike riding areas within a reasonable travel distance for many riders.</p>
CONFLICT WITH OTHER OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES WALKERS, CYCLISTS, 4WDS, HORSE RIDERS ETC.	<p>Conflict with other user groups can be addressed by education and engagement, alongside the creation of additional, dedicated recreational areas for various user groups.</p>
UNLOADING AREAS	<p>The creation of dedicated trail bike unloading sites distanced from residential areas can assist with alleviating concerns regarding traffic and noise.</p>
TRESPASS ON PRIVATE AND PUBLIC LANDS	<p>Improved signage, accurate maps and education can reduce trespass.</p>
TRAIL RIDER SAFETY	<p>Trail rider safety risks are reduced when riding in groups, implementing one way travel on trails and tracks, using PPE and effectively communicating with emergency services.</p>
UNDERAGE, UNLICENSED AND UNREGISTERED RIDING	<p>The development of dedicated off-road riding areas, along with additional recreational vehicle areas such as Stockton Beach, can reduce the incidence of illegal unregistered, underage and unlicensed riding.</p>
ADOPTING A TRAIL RIDING CODE OF CONDUCT	<p>Adoption of a trail rider code of conduct by riders can assist with the communication and management of a variety of concerns including legality, safety and the environment.</p>
FACILITATING THE CREATION OF DEDICATED DIRT BIKE RIDING AREAS	<p>The lessons learned by the MTB community in successfully delivering MTB riding areas should be leveraged by the motorcycling community in developing the NSW Recreational Trail and Adventure Bike Strategy.</p> <p>Provision of trail bike riding areas can be facilitated by clearly defining the necessary processes for access and use.</p>
PROMOTING EXISTING OPPORTUNITIES	<p>Marketing existing opportunities could reduce the incidence of illegal trail use and simultaneously increase the economic benefits derived by regional communities.</p>
RECREATIONAL REGISTRATION	<p>Developing and implementing a recreational vehicle registration scheme for trail bikes can be done through leverage of existing schemes.</p> <p>A recreational registration scheme would increase compliance and reduce the risks imposed by unregistered vehicles.</p>
IDENTIFYING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	<p>The development of a NSW Trail and Adventure Bike Strategy is dependent upon funding. Stakeholders and philanthropists could contribute to a well-defined project plan.</p>

THE VALUE OF RECREATIONAL TRAIL BIKE RIDING IN NSW & ACT

DIRECT COMMUNITY ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Trail riding provides many direct and indirect socioeconomic benefits. Owning and operating a motorcycle requires expenditure on the initial purchase and ongoing operating costs:

- Bike
- Parts and accessories
- Servicing
- Petrol and consumables
- Other transport: car, ute, trailer

Numerous towns have formally identified the economic benefits derived from trail and adventure bike riding. Dungog Shire Council in the Hunter has explicitly identified trail and adventure riders, or road and off-road motorcyclists, as making a positive contribution to the town's economy in their [Dungog Shire Visitor Strategy & Destination Management Plan 2021-2026](#) page 6.

There is clearly an opportunity to investigate any other Council Destination Management Plans (DMP) that identify and include the economic benefits of visiting trail and adventure bike riders to their communities.

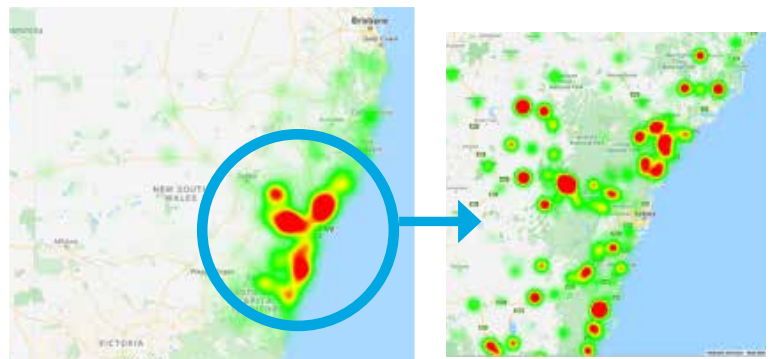
A survey to obtain economic data to help quantify the tourism and community contribution generated in NSW by trail and adventure bike riders has been jointly initiated by ONSWACT Trail and the Adventure Bike Riders Subcommittee covering:

- Food and drinks
- Accommodation
- Entertainment
- Fuel

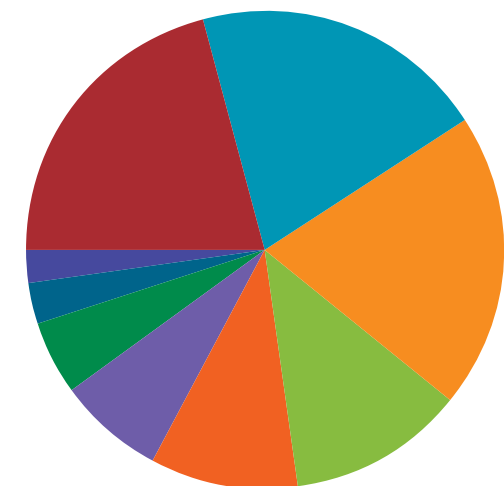
One person spends an average of \$524 per trail bike trip and the average group (consisting of 6 people) spends \$3,144 per trip in the region of travel. Across one year, an average group injects \$49,518 into the local economy in the region they visit.

To extrapolate this further, there are 75,000 trail bike riders in NSW which equates to a \$618,975,000 injection into local economies throughout NSW and the ACT from trail bike riding.

The most popular trail bike riding areas can be seen in the image below:



Where is money spent on a trail bike trip.



- Fuel | 21%
- Beverages | 20%
- Food | 20%
- Accommodation | 12%
- Camping Fees | 10%
- Camping Equipment / Items | 7%
- Other Retail | 5%
- Souvenirs | 3%
- Other | 2%

WHAT DO WE NEED FOR RECREATIONAL TRAIL BIKE RIDING?



1.



Trail and Adventure Bike riding to be recognised as a legitimate activity that provides community, social and economic benefit.

2.



Work with stakeholders, including government and private land managers/owners and user groups to deliver a Strategic Plan for Trail and Adventure Bike Riding that enables single track access for trail bikes

3.



Investigate a potential Recreation Registration that provides funding to grow opportunities for the sector and enables better compliance with legal requirements by the trail bike communities.

4.



Establish a rider Code of Conduct that helps to dis-encourage disruptive behaviour that works in opposition to the goals of the Strategic Plan.

Outdoors NSW & ACT is the peak body for all outdoor recreation, education, and adventure tourism activities within NSW and ACT. Established in 1984, the legal entity known as Outdoors Recreational Industry Council of NSW Incorporated, trading as Outdoors NSW & ACT. Subcommittees can be formed to conduct business that meet the objectives of the organisation. The Trail Bike Committee was established on 18 August 2020 at the Outdoors NSW & ACT Annual General Meeting.

Members are;

Martin Burney	Chairman of Outdoors NSW & ACT
Lori Modde	CEO of Outdoors NSW & ACT
Colin Robinson	The Office of Sport NSW
Steve Donkers	Representative from the Motorcycle Council of NSW Trail Bike Sub-Committee
Brian Wood	Representative from the Motorcycle Council of NSW Trail Bike Sub-Committee
Rhys Griffiths	Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries
Michael Hill	Forestry Corp NSW

This document is intended to highlight the challenges of the activity in NSW and inform stakeholders to create opportunities for collaborative discussion on favourable outcomes.

The intended audiences are policymakers, landowners and managers, stakeholders in the industry, and participants in the activity.



Outdoor Recreation Industry Council of NSW Inc

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