

DNR to Close Access to Illegal and Unauthorized Mountain Bike Trails in Northeastern Whatcom County

Local News

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OLYMPIA — On Monday, April 2, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will begin closing access to illegal, unauthorized mountain bike trails and structures in the North Fork Nooksack forest block in northeastern Whatcom County. The trails were built without obtaining permission from DNR or county and state permits. Without careful planning and developing, these trails pose a risk to public safety and the environmental health of the area. And without proper engineering design, liability coverage, and maintenance, DNR cannot ensure the public's safety. In addition, the sediment running off the trails can impact water quality. "We recognize that these trails have become popular with mountain bikers—who come from all over western Washington to ride them," said Mark Mauren, DNR's Recreation Program Manager. "We appreciate that the public places a great deal of value on having access to outdoor recreation in this part of the state. But we need to direct people to trails that are safe and sustainable."

Beginning Monday, DNR crews will be removing user-built structures and restoring the areas where the unauthorized trails were built. In addition, DNR law enforcement officers will monitor the area and issue citations to anyone observed trying to build illegal trails or structures or attempting to ride these trails. **Thoughtful planning provides sustainable recreation** DNR is committed to providing recreation opportunities that are compatible with its obligation as steward of nearly 3 million acres of state trust lands. The agency is interested in pursuing safe and sustainable trail-based recreation in the county through a thoughtful planning process that involves input from citizens and recreation user groups. "We welcome the opportunity to partner with the public to get funding and to plan and develop new recreation areas," Mauren said. "Once developed, these areas will also need adequate funding to maintain and provide enforcement protection." In addition, DNR recreation planning relies on the best available science to help determine the most suitable locations for siting trails and facilities. To develop a new recreation site, DNR must also obtain all state and county permits and have adequate resources to maintain trail systems once they are built. For the past five years, DNR has been developing recreation plans on state lands. Designated mountain bike trails are included in each of these landscapes, including Reiter Foothills Forest in eastern Snohomish County; Yacolt Burn State Forest, in southeast Washington; and Ahtanum State Forest west of Yakima. To date, DNR has developed or is in the process of developing recreation plans on 314,000 acres of state forested trust lands. **Other mountain bike options** Nearby mountain biking opportunities on DNR-managed lands include Blanchard Forest, which has some designated mountain biking trails and Walker Valley ORV Trail System, east of Mount Vernon. Many of the ski resorts in the area, such as Stevens Pass and Whistler Mountain, offer summer mountain biking opportunities. Duthie Hill Bike Park near Issaquah provides year-round riding. Recreation on DNR-managed lands

DNR manages 5.6 million acres of state-owned forest, aquatic, agricultural, conservation and urban lands. Most recreation on these lands takes place in the 2.9 million acres of forests that DNR manages as state trust lands. By law, state trust lands are managed to produce income for schools,

universities, prisons, state mental hospitals, community colleges, local services in many counties, and the state's General Fund. State trust lands are also managed to provide fish and wildlife habitat and educational and recreational opportunities. DNR-managed lands provide 1,100 miles of trails, 143 recreation sites, and a variety of landscapes throughout Washington State. Recreational opportunities include hiking, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, camping, motorized vehicle riding, mountain biking, and boating. DNR's main recreation focus is to provide trails, trailhead facilities, and a primitive camping experience in a natural setting.