

Frequently Asked Questions Mountain Biking in Wingecarribee Shire



Q: Does the Council support mountain biking and other recreational activities?

A: Council recognises the popularity of mountain biking and is committed to providing opportunities for riders. Council needs to balance this activity with other passive recreational activities within bushland reserves and nature conservation.

Q: Why did Wingecarribee Shire Council close the unauthorized mountain bike track at Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve?

A: Council resolved to close and decommission the mountain bike track due to concerns about environmental and cultural heritage impacts as well as safety issues.

Q. What is the purpose of bushland reserves?

A. Wingecarribee has a very large area and number of parks and sportsgrounds per capita across the shire for more intensive sport and recreation activities. We are also incredibly fortunate to have over 30 bushland reserves that are either owned or managed by Council and their primary purpose is to protect and conserve nature. Biodiversity and Aboriginal and European cultural heritage conservation are the focus priorities for bushland reserves. These reserves are community land that has either been donated, obtained, or purchased by Council over many years for conservation and recreation purposes.

Passive recreation within bushland reserves is encouraged. Nature conservation is a top priority in our community and is a major reason why people want to live here. Council has an obligation to protect biodiversity in these reserves to ensure wildlife is protected into the future, while ensuring future generations can enjoy these areas for hiking, nature immersion, photography, bird watching, cultural heritage and bushcare in addition to sites where more active recreation is permitted, such as mountain bike riding.

Q: Will there be any alternative mountain bike facilities in the future?

A: Yes, the Council will be developing a *Recreation Activities in Natural Areas Strategy* to explore options for future mountain bike facilities.

Q: What specific environmental damage did the unauthorised gravity mountain bike track cause?

A: The independent Review of Environmental Factors (REF) of the existing unauthorised track highlighted several issues including:

- **Disrupting critical habitats:** The track encroached on tree protection zones, vital for safeguarding native trees and the wildlife they depend on.
- **Soil erosion and instability:** Cutting and filling sections, particularly near steep slopes and creek crossings, heightened the risk of soil erosion and landslides, impacting water quality and ecosystem function.
- **Clearing of fragile riparian vegetation and impacts on water quality:** The side tracks crossing the stream resulted in the removal of the stabilising streambank vegetation. Impaired natural flows and movement of aquatic organisms and erosion can result from obstructions such as unauthorised creek crossings.

Therefore, the Council's decision to close and remediate the track, particularly the creek crossing section, was essential to prevent further environmental damage and protect the sensitive ecosystem of Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve.

Q: When did the Council decide to close the track?

A: The Council made the decision at the Ordinary Meeting of Council 20 September 2023 after considering the findings of the REF and receiving community feedback.

Q: Who carried out the deconstruction and restoration work on Mt Gibraltar Heritage Reserve?

A: Wingecarribee Shire Council contracted the **Soil Conservation Service** to carry out the specialized work. This experienced team implemented a multifaceted approach:

- **Removal of obstacles:** Jumps and other track features were carefully dismantled and removed.
- **Landform restoration:** The disturbed and compacted soil was roughened and reshaped, to improve water retention and seedling propagation. Holes were filled in and the area was recontoured to ensure appropriate drainage.
- **Soil stabilization through brush matting:** To encourage natural regrowth, the loosened soil was covered with branches and sticks, aiding in moisture retention and seed dispersal from nearby vegetation.
- **Creek bank protection:** The creek environment received special attention. Re-shaping of the banks and further brush matting using natural fallen timber and vegetation will prevent further erosion and protect the waterway.

Q: Is there a specific location in mind for a new mountain bike facility?

A: Other potential mountain biking sites may be considered following the completion of the *Recreation Activities in Natural Areas Strategy*. Decisions will depend on a range of factors in addition to community feedback.

Q: What can mountain bike riders do to be involved in the decision-making process?

A: Riders can participate in community consultations regarding the *Recreation Activities in Natural Areas Strategy* when it commences. Riders can also volunteer for track creation and maintenance projects through an existing group such as Highlands Trails.

Q: Is there a Mountain Bike Club in the Southern Highlands?

The main cycling club in the Southern Highlands is the Southern Highlands Cycling Club (SHCC). They cater to various disciplines, including mountain biking, road cycling, track cycling, and cyclocross. You can find more information about them on their website: <https://www.southernhighlandsccl.com.au/>

Highlands Trails maintain and manage the Welby Mountain Bike Track within the Greater Mount Alexandra Reserve (with support from Council).

Q: Where are the Authorized Trails for Mountain Bikers in and around Wingecarribee Shire?

Several authorized trails exist in the Southern Highlands, including:

- **Welby Mountain Bike Track:** Located in Mittagong, this park offers a range of trails for beginner, intermediate, and advanced riders. A new gravity track section is currently being built, following a REF and authorisation by Council.
- **Wingello State Forest:** Wingello. This site was severely impacted by the Black Summer Bushfire 2019 - 2020 and the maze of single tracks for mountain biking were



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damaged. Council financially supported Highlands Trails who have done an incredible job of rehabilitating part of the track with 6km of completed winding single track to hit up.

- **Fitzroy Falls to Kangaroo Valley cycling route**, Combining scenic riding with some steep downhill runs, adventurous mountain bikers can get their heart pumping through Fitzroy Falls to Kangaroo Valley through the Morton National Park.
- **Tahmoor Pump Park**, The Tahmoor DNA Dirt Jump Park is a freestyle BMX/Hardtail progression park with four different jump lines and Pump track designed to suit a beginner all the way through to a professional shredder.
- **Fire Trails:** Most fire trails in the Southern Highlands are open to mountain biking. However, it's essential to check with the relevant authorities for regulations and closures.

Q: Is there a Code of Conduct for Mountain Bike Riders?

The Australian MTB Alliance (AMTBA) outlines a national code of conduct for mountain bike riders. This code emphasizes responsible riding practices including wearing appropriate safety gear and helmet.

Obey all signs

- Ride only on formed trails and do not take shortcuts.
- Stay off closed trails.
- Control your bike – ride within your abilities.
- Plan your ride and avoid riding alone.
- Carry a first aid kit and know how to use it.
- Avoid riding in wet or muddy conditions.
- Share the trail and respect the rights of others.
- Take your rubbish with you.
- Do not disturb plants and animals

More information - [AMTBA code of conduct](#)

Q: How can riders learn more about bush care and protecting local sites?

A: There are several ways riders can get involved in learning about bush care and protecting local sites in the Southern Highlands:

a) Wingecaribee Shire Council:

- **Bushcare and Rivercare:** Council actively maintains these programs, offering volunteering opportunities and educational workshops on various topics, including native plant identification, weed control, habitat restoration, and sustainable land management. You can find more information and register for events at [Get Involved](#).
- **Citizen Science Initiatives:** Participate in ongoing projects such as bird surveys (bird count), Frog ID, and annual bioblitzes using tools such as iNaturalist to gather valuable data and contribute to conservation efforts.

b) Southern Highlands Landcare Network:

- Connect with your local Landcare group to learn about their specific initiatives and volunteer opportunities in your area. [The Southern Highlands Landcare Network](#) provides a directory of local groups.

Additional Resources:

- NSW Dept of Environment and Heritage: [Environmental impact of mountain biking](#) - Trail managers can either avoid or minimize impacts to vegetation through careful trail design, construction, maintenance, and management of visitor use.
- [National Parks and Wildlife Service](#): Learn about threatened species and protected areas in the Southern Highlands:



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