



The Trail Mail



Friends Of East Gippsland Rail Trail

Annual General Meeting

5 June 2005 Mingling Waters at Nowa Nowa

BYO Bar-B-Q lunch starting at 12 noon

AGM starting at 1 pm

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Late News

May 1 Working Bee

Meet at 10 am Corner Sarsfield Rd and Rail Trail Nicholson

Bring your lunch . BBQ facilities available.



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Feedback from trail users.

Our web site Comment facility - a form which can be filled out 'on screen' and automatically sent as an email to both Keith and Michael - is getting more use and the information coming back is providing valuable insight into what visitors experience when using the trail and their suggestions for improvements etc.

A recent response included the following: "*Visited Bairnsdale recently, and was interested in the East Gippsland rail trail. I have the pamphlet and have checked the web site, but would like more information on actually cycling/walking the trail. eg approximate times to complete (at an average pace) so that places to stop (maybe overnight) could be investigated further, recommended list of things to take, etc. I am sure there are lots of people out there with hints and experience.*"

So here is a challenge for some Friends! Are there two or three members who could get some details down on paper for 'average' travel times between the major points along the trail e.g. Bairnsdale to Nicholson; Bumberrah to Bruthen, etc? This information could then be added to the web site Resources section.

We will also be adding information markers and seats at significant points along the trail e.g. Harmons Road with the view of the Lakes. Suggestions for other places will help the RT Committee in making decisions about future additions.

In the meantime we are adding information to the web site about accommodation options. Other web site addresses have been added e.g. for Twin Rivers BTA, as a way of assisting potential visitors. The updated brochure will offer local businesses a chance to have include an advertisement and also be listed on our web site.....

Can you assist?

We have two opportunities for assistance with projects.

Photographer: to capture some of the highlights of the rail trail and especially of people using it. We need a portfolio of photos which can be used for promotion and publicity purposes. Either digital or film (color). Film can be provided. Timing of when photos could be taken would depend of course on weather and other conditions and as opportunity occurs. 'People' photos are more difficult and to get material for promotional purposes usually need to be set up, rather than a lucky passing situation.

Coordinator for working bees: preferably covering the Bairnsdale/Nicholson end, the Bruthen area, and Nowa Nowa (rather than expecting one person to try and cover the lot). These activities don't need to be mega operations. In fact even just a few willing helpers tackling a specific area e.g. a clean up and grass cutting at the entrance in Bairnsdale, trimming overhanging branches east of the Nicholson bridge, etc.

If you can assist please contact Sue Peirce 5156 8228.

Rail trail visitors boost local trade.

Cycling visitors using the rail trail between Bairnsdale and Nowa Nowa on the long weekend brought additional trade to local businesses providing accommodation and meals. On Sunday (March 13) an estimated 160 bicycle riders traveled on different sections of the rail trail and the Lakes Discovery Trail, including a visit to Forestech and a guided tour of their facilities.

Publicity for a 'Visit a rail trail' program for the long weekend by Bicycle Victoria and through East Gippsland News helped attract many visitors from Melbourne and across Victoria. Many local folk also took the chance to find out more about the rail trail and experience relaxed riding through East Gippsland countryside on easy grades away from road traffic.

"The rail trail is proving popular with family groups visiting with children, who travel in a carrier seat, tag along on a 'third wheel' or under their own pedal power' reported rail trail committee secretary Michael Oxer. "Many visitors from Melbourne stayed for the weekend, boosting demand for local accommodation and other services. We also expect that Bruthen and Nowa Nowa will become increasingly important stopping places for trail visitors and Orbost will be included once the rail trail extension is completed next year." he added.



Replacement direction sign for Bairnsdale entry point.

Beside the path which is now on part of the old line where it came off the Mitchell River rail bridge (now partly demolished) and beside Howitt Park, stands a battered looking sign which reads 'East Gippsland Rail Trail'. Or it did before a new sign was fixed on top of the old one. That sign was used as part of the official Opening event for the rail trail in 1998. It was later moved to its present position closer to where visitors would be seeking direction to the actual trail entrance across McEacharn street. Visitors have also suggested the need to a direction sign on the Mitchell River Walk path. The new sign gives a clear direction and distance to the trail entry point (285 m).

Bollards to protect the Nicholson Bridge.

Two steel bollards have been made by Alan Jones as the first of several for use at critical spots on the rail trail. Alan has done a professional job of cutting and welding heavy section square steel tubes into two piece bollards, the top section of which can be unlocked and removed to allow authorised vehicle access (although vehicles are not permitted to use the Nicholson Bridge).

The first two off the production line will be installed near the ends of this bridge. Other bollards will be installed at other carefully selected locations to reduce illegal vehicle use of the rail trail. With increasing visitor use it is incompatible to have unauthorised motor vehicles on the trail. Any such incidents can be reported either via the Comments service on our web site or to 5156 8228.



Fire management planning meeting for April.

Following the very encouraging assistance already provided by representatives of the several CFAs along the rail trail, a further meeting will be held at the (new) DSE office in Bairnsdale to map out a three year plan. Meanwhile, as the weather permits, fuel reduction burns will be done between Bairnsdale and Bruthen, with particular attention to the section between Nicholson and Wiseleigh. There are heaps of toppings, left over old sleepers etc which need to be cleared. Short delays can be expected when fire reduction burns are in progress.

Trail side slashing has improved visitor amenity.

Recent slashing to reduce long grass close to the trail has improved trail safety by reducing fire risk and allowing users a better view of the edges as a precaution against unexpectedly coming across a local reptile. The chances of that happening are usually rather slim. There is more chance of a surprise 'agonistic' assault from the skies per a diving Magpie, when we get into their breeding season. The fantastic Summer/Autumn break we have had this year seems to have been good for maggies, and you can see a log of families along the trail, especially in the later afternoon. Calling Magpies 'aggressive' is incorrect. Territory defending actions are 'agonistic' behaviour, evolved and adapted for survival. It's a case of a Magpie doing what it has to do to protect its group against threat. Bike riders especially can get a scary reception, usually from the rear, if a bird reacts as if under attack or threat to its territory. A recent paperback titled 'Australian Magpie: Biology and behaviour of an unusual songbird', by Gisela Kaplan (2004. Australian Natural History Series. CSIRO Publishing www.publish.csiro.au) is a fine source of information about Magpies.

Web Site Statistics

Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits
Jan 2005	157	207
Feb 2005	214	242
Mar 2005	188	231

Usage of the website continues to grow. Many visitors are coming through Bicycle Victoria or Rail Trails Australia websites. Many others reach the site through search engines

www.eastgippslandrailtrail.com

East Gippsland Rail Trail extension mapping team.

Recently we have been carrying out a digital mapping survey of the Nowa Nowa to Orbost section as a preliminary to preparing specifications for the construction works required to get the trail in place. It has been a very interesting process and revealed more positives than negatives, despite several major bridge access issues, as we develop a program to handle the project.

In preparation for construction of the last 38 Kms of this rail trail a two day mapping survey using GPS and digital mapping technology was recently completed. Relevant geological, hydrological and existing infrastructure details were recorded the survey revealed extensive information about the condition of the former railway easement, which will be used to prepare construction specifications. This photo is in the last cutting before the trail ends at Burns Road on the edge of the Snowy River valley.

The survey team comprised (from left): Andrew Sharpe, Rail Trail Committee President, Eric Sjerp, Principal, Ethos Natural Resource Management Consultants P/L, and Michael Oxer, Committee Secretary. Photo: Michael Oxer



Project Management for Nowa Nowa to Orbost Extension

The Rail Trail management committee has engaged the services of DSE to provide project management for the construction phase of the Nowa Nowa to Orbost extension, after detailed analysis and discussion. The committee has also set up a Project Reference Group (PRG) which comprises Andrew Sharpe, John Nelson, Brian Gustus and Michael Oxer. The PRG will review the draft construction costings details, provide liaison with DSE during the tender evaluation process and then be the ongoing contact during construction.

DSE has proposed a timetable with the following key dates:

- **construction costing review by end of April**
- **letting of contracts by end of June**
- **trail construction to be completed by December 2005.**

This project is supported by funding from the Australian Government under its Regional Partnership Program.



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Activities Calendar 2005

April 24 Orbost	Meet at Forest Park Orbost at 11am. The ride will be around Bete Bolong beside the Snowy River. Approx 35 Km. Bring your own lunch and water.	Vicki 5154 2175
May 22 Bairnsdale	Bairnsdale to Paynesville and ferry to Raymond Island . About 16 km each way to Paynesville plus Raymond Island exploration. Meet 10 am Howitt Park Bairnsdale	Alan Jones
Jun 5 Bruthen	AGM at Nowa Nowa Ride from Bruthen leaving 10 am approx 27 km each way	
July 31 Orbost	Orbost – Simpsons Creek return by rail trail where access allows. Meet Forest Park Orbost 10 am	Marlene and Keith 5154 1232
Aug 28 Start from Nowa Nowa and Bairnsdale	Ride from N-N or Bairnsdale and meet in Bruthen main street for lunch at 12.30 Start Bairnsdale at 10 am Nicholson 11.am Nowa Nowa 10am	Sue/Michael 5156 8228
Sept 25 Bairnsdale	Lindenow to Middle Weir Meet 10 am Lindenow	Alan Jones 5153 1454
Oct 23 Orbost	Route to be determined	Eddie
Nov 20 Bairnsdale	Bullumwaal Rd	Alan Jones
Dec 4 Orbost	Route to be determined Lake Tyers House	