

General Manager
Ballina Shire Council
PO Box 450
Ballina NSW 2478

27 July 2012

Attention: Jillian Pratten (Manager, Open Spaces and Reserves)

Dear Jillian,

Thank you for the time that you have spent to assist us with preparation of an application to use Council owned land at Alstonville for mountain biking purposes. Our application report is attached.

You will be pleased to know that we have formed an incorporated, not-for-profit community group called Northern Rivers Dirty Wheels Mountain Bike Club Incorporated. This club has 40 members with new applications still being received. We have also had many expressions of interest from businesses within the shire to provide sponsorship and support. The enthusiasm has been overwhelming.

The club executive and its members are very excited about the prospect of being able to negotiate use of this land for the establishment of the only public single-track mountain biking experience within the shire (and adjoining shires).

I look forward to discussing the proposal further with Council in the future.
Please feel free to contact me if you would like further information or wish to discuss any matters.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Geoff Parry".

Geoff Parry
President
Northern Rivers Dirty Wheels Mountain Bike Club Incorporated

Northern Rivers Dirty Wheels Mountain Bike Club Incorporated | 27 Swift Street, Ballina NSW 2478 | nitriversdirtywheels@gmail.com

**Request for Permission to Use Council Owned Land at Lot 12 D.P. 814359
Bruxner Highway, Alstonville to Establish a Mountain Biking Facility**



July 2012

Northern Rivers Dirty Wheels Mountain Bike Club Inc. | 1



Introduction

Northern Rivers Dirty Wheels Mountain Bike Club (NRDW) is a local NSW incorporated, community based not-for-profit organisation based in Ballina Shire.

This report provides a background to the club and the sport of mountain bicycling, and is a formal request to Ballina Shire Council seeking permission to use the land at Lot 12 D.P. 814359 Bruxner Highway Alstonville (18.53 Ha), for recreational mountain bicycle riding. In exchange for this ongoing permission NRDW is committed to seeking funding to establish basic ancillary facilities and provide voluntary labour to establish and maintain quality sustainable single-track trails generally in accordance with the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) model. This model has been very successful in other locations such as Gap Creek, Daisy Hill, Nerang and Bunyaville in SE Queensland and in many other locations throughout NSW.

We anticipate that should Council be interested in granting such permission then a Memorandum of Understanding may be a suitable agreement format.

Northern Rivers Dirty Wheels Mountain Bike Club (NRDW)

Northern Rivers Dirty Wheels Mountain Bike Club was incorporated on 15 June 2012 with a vision of encouraging the development of all disciplines of mountain biking by:

- advocating for the development of legal facilities for mountain biking in the Northern Rivers area of New South Wales;
- building and maintaining legal facilities for mountain biking in the Northern Rivers area of New South Wales in accordance with current industry standards or guidelines;
- encouraging and organising education with respect to all aspects of mountain biking, and
- conducting racing, training and social riding events.

The club had its inaugural meeting on 17 July 2012 and presently has 40 members from a wide demographic mix. The club is a member of Mountain Biking Australia (MTBA) and is a member of the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA).

The Mountain Bike Riding Experience

The mountain bike experience is growing in popularity and is a recreational activity and competitive sport which can be a sustainable use of vegetated public lands. This concept is reinforced by the recent establishment of a 'Sustainable Mountain Biking Strategy', by OEH which has a vision of achieving "excellence in mountain biking as a normal part of recreation management in NSW national parks and reserves, where high quality mountain biking experiences are provided in an ecologically and socially sustainable manner across the landscape".

The majority of mountain bike riding locally is for recreational purposes as opposed to competitive motivations, although there are many competitive events held annually in the region. The most popular genre of mountain biking is 'cross-country' and 'all-mountain'. The mountain biking experience is sought after for many of the same reasons as hiking: fitness, socialising and being part of a low- noise, low impact and sustainable natural landscape setting. In particular demand locally are single-track facilities which are narrow tracks that traverse a variety of terrain from gentle and



undulating to rough and technically challenging, providing an intense and exhilarating ride. This type of trail is appealing to all age groups and skill levels. Some photographs of typical single-track trails are provided in *Figure 1*.

There are presently no public legal single-track mountain bike facilities within Ballina Shire or the surrounding shires, with the nearest facilities being approximately 1.5 hours drive away.

In May 2012, a restriction on riding the single-track within a local Nature Reserve was enforced by OEH. This venue was ridden by at least 80 local riders on a weekly basis and by many others from outside the region (The trails at this location have been ridden since their establishment in 1995). This means that there is now no other community single-track riding venue within about 1.5 hours drive of Ballina Shire (the next closest being Nerang and Daisy Hill in the north and Grafton in the south).

Figure 1: Typical Single-track Trails and Advisory Signage



Our Vision for the Site

Our vision for the site is to provide a legal riding venue which contains low-key and sustainable single-track mountain bike trails which are managed and maintained in accordance with the IMBA design guidelines. The trails will be available for use by the general public and will provide meaningful mountain biking experiences which advocate positive environmental custodianship.

The facilities will be planned in liaison with an experienced track designer, well managed and well maintained offering opportunities for people of all ages to experience and learn about the natural environment.

Description of the Site

The site is described as Lot 12, D.P. 814359 Bruxner Highway, Alstonville and has an area of 18.53 Hectares. The location of the site is provided in *Figure 2*. It is bound to the south by the Bruxner Highway and to the east by a Council owned quarry. To the west and north are rural residential lands. The site consists of steep undulating topography which falls generally to the north where the boundary abuts Chilcott's Creek. The site land cover consists of grassland and various types of forest vegetation.

An Essential Energy power service runs overhead through the southern parts of the site.

Currently the land is vacant, zoned 1E (Rural) – Extractive and Mineral Resources, and is not used by Council for any purpose. Recreational bike riding is permissible within this zone.

Access to the site is presently available via an existing RMS approved driveway which is set back from the road (Bruxner Highway).

The site contains an extensive network of existing vehicle tracks, some of which have become overgrown with vegetation and weeds but are still visible in the landscape.

Figure 2: Site Location



Usage

On a day-to-day basis we expect that riders will come as individuals or in small groups of possibly up to 6 riders. Many riders would cycle to the site or car-pool; however, parking for about 6 vehicles near the site at any one time could be required. No parking within the site is proposed during day-to-day use.

Initially there will be a number of days required to 'rough in' the trails. Once the trails are established trail maintenance days will be held as required and will be undertaken by volunteers who are members of NRDW. Access will be required to the site for maintenance vehicles carrying equipment via the existing driveway.

At this stage, NRDW does not propose to hold any competitions at this site. However, once the facility is established, there may be opportunities to hold club events.

Proposed Works

Site Layout and Design

Appendix 1 contains a site plan that shows the approximate location of existing vehicle tracks and conceptual single-track trails, access points, car parking and ancillary facilities.

It is proposed to create a graded network of trails throughout the site with technical features that are designed for various skill levels. The general location of trails shown on the site plan has been interpreted from aerial photography, Council supplied GIS data and on-site investigations.

The general philosophy is to utilise the extensive network of existing vehicle tracks for 'cross-country' style trails and create a series of 'single-track' loops off these trails.

The specific location of trails will be determined on site having due consideration to:

- Grade and topography
- Local drainage patterns
- Soil types
- Location and type of individual trees and vegetation
- Opportunities to incorporate technical features such as berms, drop-offs, rock gardens or jumps
- Opportunities to pass by interesting topographic, geological or natural features to enhance interest

The trail network will be designed in accordance with the guidelines produced by IMBA 'Designing and Building Sustainable Trails' which state that an ideal trail will simultaneously incorporate the five sustainable trail principles, which are:

1. The Half Rule: A trail's grade shouldn't exceed half the grade of the side slope
2. The 10-Percent Average Guideline: The average grade should stay under 10 percent (with grade reversals)



3. Maximum Sustainable Grade: The maximum grade should be 15 percent (except for natural or built rock structures)
4. Grade Reversals: Build on the contour and use frequent grade reversals
5. Outslope: Use bench-cut construction, and excavate soil from the hillside

The trails will be constructed by club members with the guidance of an experienced trail designer and builder as part of organised trail construction and maintenance days.

Signage

Entry Signage

We propose to install signage at the entrance to the site which contains the 'rules' for riding at the site, a trail map and contact details for the club. Additional signage detailing any proposed trail closures or special requirements will also be installed.

Trail Signage

Trail difficulty rating signage will be installed on all trails. The IMBA Trail Difficulty Rating System is a basic method used to categorize the relative technical difficulty of recreation trails. The IMBA Trail Difficulty Rating System can:

- Help trail users make informed decisions about their ability to ride the track.
- Encourage visitors to use trails that match their skill level
- Manage risk and minimize injuries
- Improve the outdoor experience for a wide variety of visitors
- Aid in the planning of trails and trail systems

The trails will be graded in accordance with these standards and include green (easy), blue (intermediate) and black (difficult) trails.

Ancillary Works

Access Gate

There is presently no gate on the driveway restricting access to the site. A gate will need to be installed at this location to prevent vehicular access. The gate shall include a generically keyed lock suitable for emergency vehicle access.

In order to allow mountain bike access but prohibit motor bikes, we propose to construct a bicycle and pedestrian access bar adjacent to the gate. This means that the rider must lift their bicycle over a horizontal bar which is about 600mm above the ground to access the site. This eliminates the need for each member to have a key whilst still restricting access to other vehicles (such as motor bikes).

Storage Facility

We propose to construct a storage shed /container at the site for secure storage of maintenance tools and equipment.



Access and Traffic Management

Access to the site is presently available via an existing driveway which is set back from the road.

A Traffic Management Plan is provided in *Appendix 2*.

NRDW has consulted with RMS regarding access and car parking. Correspondence from RMS is provided in *Appendix 3*. RMS are satisfied that the site can be accessed via the existing driveway safely by cyclists from off-site car parking in various locations around the site.

On a day-to day basis it is proposed that vehicles park off the site within the neighbouring road reserves. RMS and NRDW identified four suitable off-site car parking locations within existing road reservations:

- On the gravel verge parallel to the road outside the site's main entrance (the location preferred by RMS)
- Gap Road
- Duck Creek Mountain Road
- Uralba Road

Riders would park and cycle to the site, obeying standard road rules.

RMS stated that no formal approval is required from them as all options presented are legal ways to access the land. The existing driveway is the access point designated by RMS.

During trail construction or maintenance days when some vehicle access to the site itself is required, vehicles will enter from the west with a left-in manoeuvre and exit to the east with a left-out manoeuvre in accordance with standard road rules. No slowing or turning lane is required as this is the normal site access location and the number of vehicle movements is minimal.

Bicycles will be required to abide by the RMS NSW Road Rules.

Emergency access to the site will be available through the main access off the Bruxner Highway.

Management and Maintenance

The trails will be constructed by club members through voluntary labour, time and tools. Although any contributions from Council in terms of staff time, equipment or resources would be very much appreciated.

The club will use surplus membership funds, sponsorship funds raised and any money provided from successful grant applications to purchase or hire essential equipment and facilities.



Funding and Resources

Funding for trail construction and ancillary structures and services will be sought from various sources if permission to use the site is granted. Some of these sources may include:

- NSW Sports and Recreation via the Sport and Recreation Facility Grant Program.
- Federal Government Volunteers Grant Scheme
- MTBA Trail Fund
- Ballina Shire Council
- NSW Tourism

Local sponsorship will also be sought. Many businesses within the shire have already expressed an interest in assisting the club by providing sponsorship in the form of cash contributions, supply of equipment, equipment and plant hire, advertising, provision of meeting venues, advertising and voluntary labour.

Insurance

Membership of MTBA and IMBA includes public and product liability of \$20,000,000- for the club and each individual member.

If permission is granted to use the site for recreational mountain bike riding, NRDW will liaise with Ballina Shire Council regarding insurance requirements to ensure that adequate cover is provided for the general public, NRDW riders and voluntary trail builders.

Future Opportunities

Tourism

The Bicycle Federation of Australia states that cycle and nature based activities are a growing market within the tourism sector in regional Australia. There is evidence available which demonstrates cycle tourism (in particular the mountain bike experience) *"has the potential to make an active contribution towards the economic revitalisation of regional Australia as well as improve quality of life for its residents"* (Bicycle Federation of Australia). Mountain biking is an ecologically sustainable tourism niche which is expected to improve in popularity in the future. Providing a mountain biking experience within the shire has the potential to bring people to the area for individual rides or group ride days, whereby local businesses may benefit from visitor expenditure, business exposure or return visitation.

School Sporting Venue

If implemented, the site could provide local schools with an opportunity to offer mountain bike riding as an optional sporting activity for the students (similar to the way that schools offer surfing, soccer, volleyball and other fitness activities to their students).



Adjoining Quarry Site

The adjoining quarry presents an opportunity to expand the mountain bike trails in the future once the quarrying operations have ceased. The quarry area would allow for creation of different styles of trails or facilities for younger children such as a 'pump track' or 'BMX track'. If the quarry site was available in the future it would also provide a secondary access to the site and on-site parking opportunities. This could increase the stature of the facility to one suitable for competitions and formal sporting events.

Conclusion

Ballina Shire (and adjoining shires) presently do not have a legal public mountain bike riding venue which provides graded or single-track trail facilities. The nearest similar community facilities are about 1.5 hours' drive away. Use of this site for recreational mountain biking presents a valuable opportunity to address an existing community recreational demand and to provide meaningful, sustainable, nature-based experiences which advocate positive environmental custodianship.

With the permission of Council, NRDW is committed to establishing and maintaining quality sustainable single-track trails at this site, generally in accordance with the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) model which has been used successfully in other locations.



References

Bicycle Federation of Australia, cited in **AROC Sport Pty Ltd** , 2008, *Mountain Biking as a sustainable tourism option in national parks and other state reserves*, n.p.

IMBA Trail Building and Design, <http://www.imba.com/resources/trail-building>

OEHS NSW, 2011, *Sustainable Mountain Biking Strategy*

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the NRDW committee for your enthusiasm and report input, as well as Dave Hegerty, Sheryn Da-Re, Belinda Atkinson, and Geoff Parry for assisting with formation of the club, desk-top and site investigations, mapping, preliminary trail design and preparation of reports.

Thanks to Jillian Pratten at Ballina Shire Council for assisting with this application and provision of GIS information.

Contact Details

Northern Rivers Dirty Wheels Mountain Bike Club Incorporated

27 Swift Street,

Ballina NSW 2478

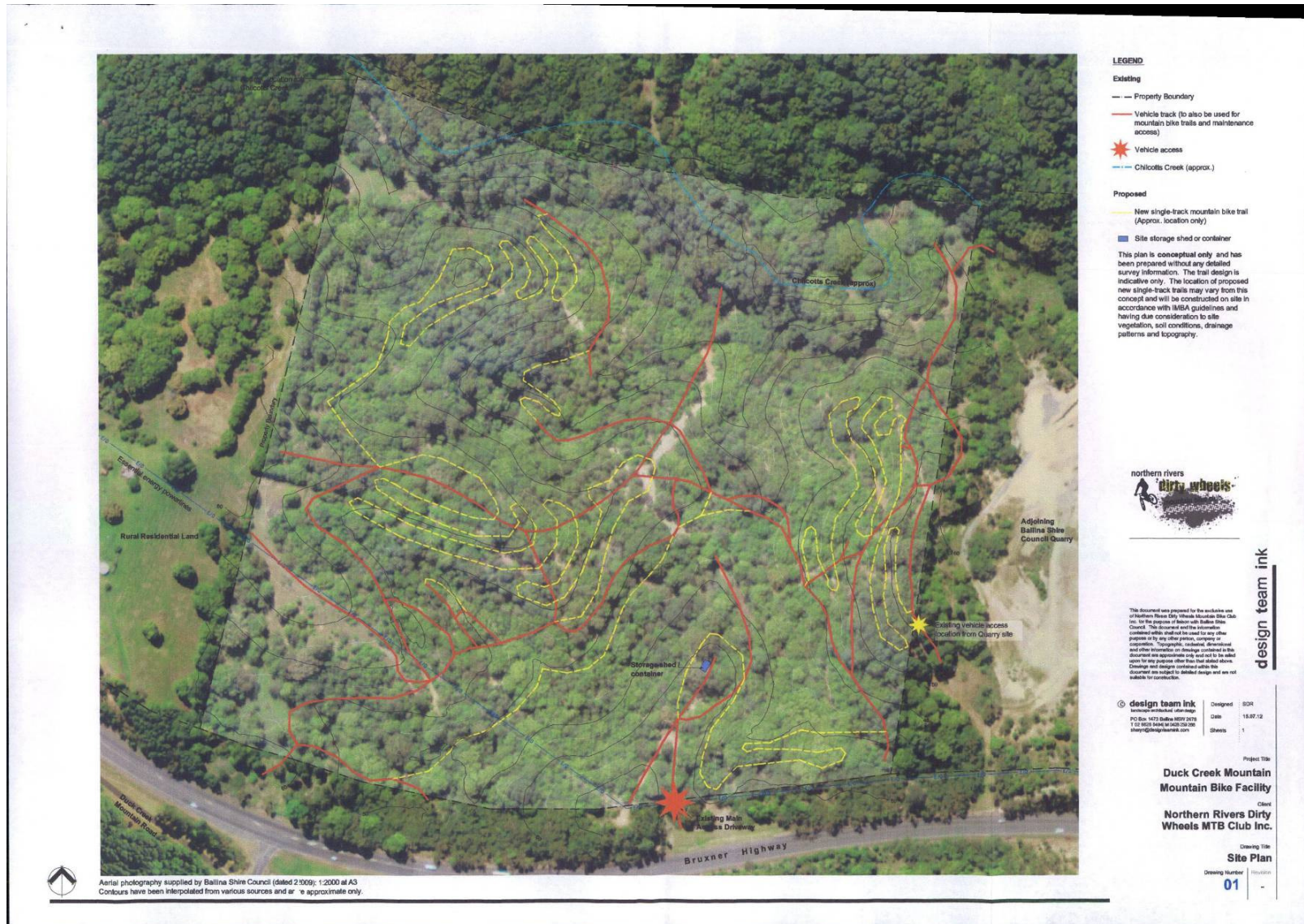
nthriversdirtywheels@gmail.com



Appendix 1: Site Plan



11.1 Mountain Bike Park.DOC



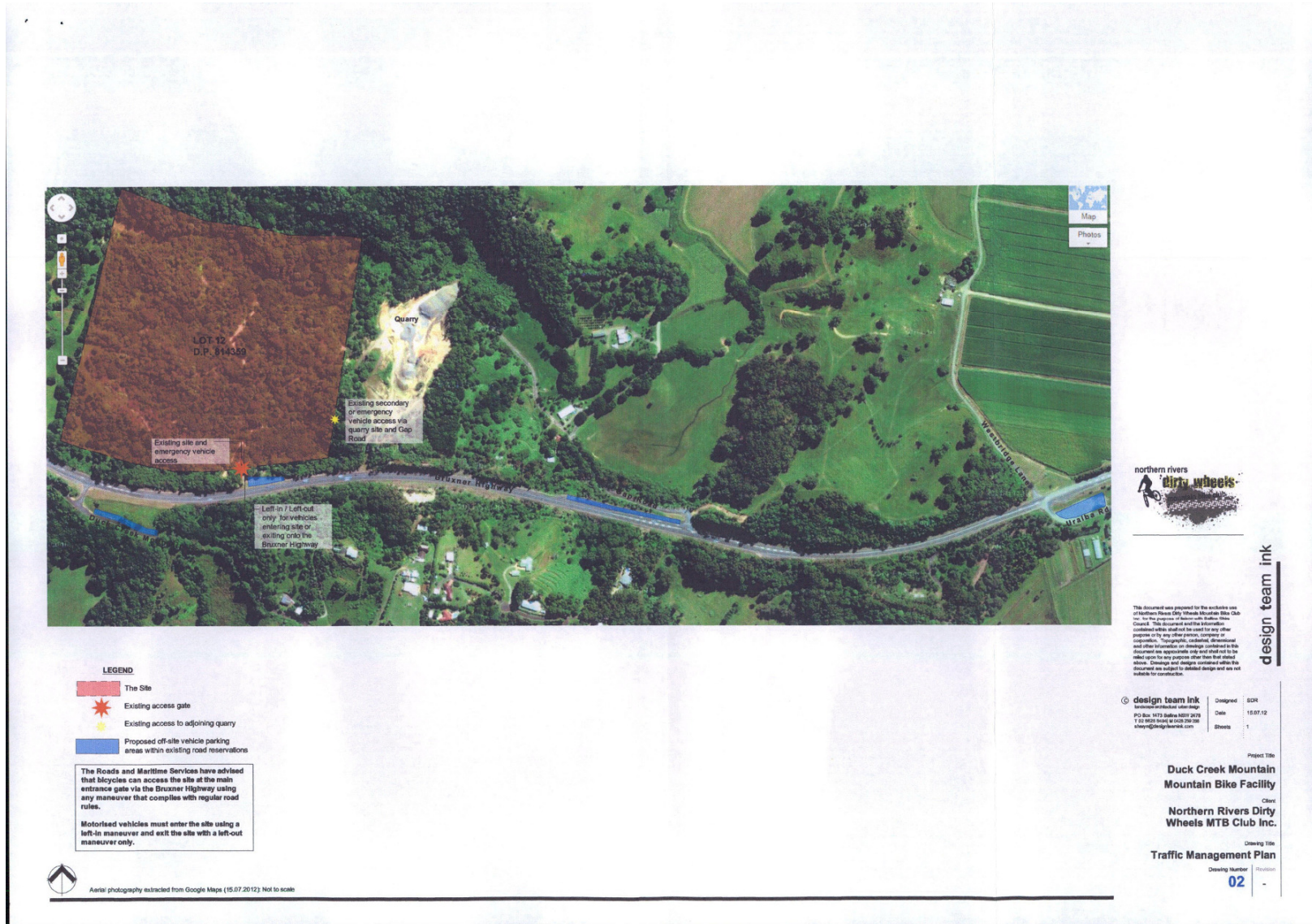
Appendix 2: Traffic Management Plan

Northern Rivers Dirty Wheels Mountain Bike Club Inc. |

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11.1 Mountain Bike Park.DOC



Appendix 3: Letter from RMS

Northern Rivers Dirty Wheels Mountain Bike Club Inc. |
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Transport
Roads & Maritime
Services

File No. NTH12/00064 CR2012/006648

Northern Rivers Dirty Wheels
Mountain Bike Club Inc.

C/- Mr Dave Hegerty
dave_hegerty@hotmail.com

Dear Sir

Access to Lot 12 DP 814359 Bruxner Highway

I refer to your site meeting with Michael Baldwin on 4 May 2012. Attached is an extract of the acquisition plan for the Bruxner Highway in the vicinity of Gap Road. This plan shows Lot 12 DP 814359 (circled) having a dedicated access to the Highway. Use of this access and Lot 12 by the mountain bike club would be a matter for the property owner. In this case the owner is understood to be Ballina Shire Council.

While it is preferred that access for Lot 12 is gained from Gap Road, in the case of a use such as a mountain biking facility with minimal traffic impact, normal road rules would apply when entering or leaving the property.

It should be noted that right turns into and out of Lot 12 have limited sight distance, in the interests of road safety, it is suggested that if permission were to be granted by Council to use this site, a traffic management plan for access be developed by the mountain bike club to limit access to left turns in and out.

Should you have any further enquiries regarding the above comments please do not hesitate to contact Michael Baldwin on 6686 1832 or email development.northern@rms.nsw.gov.au.

Yours faithfully

- 6 JUL 2012

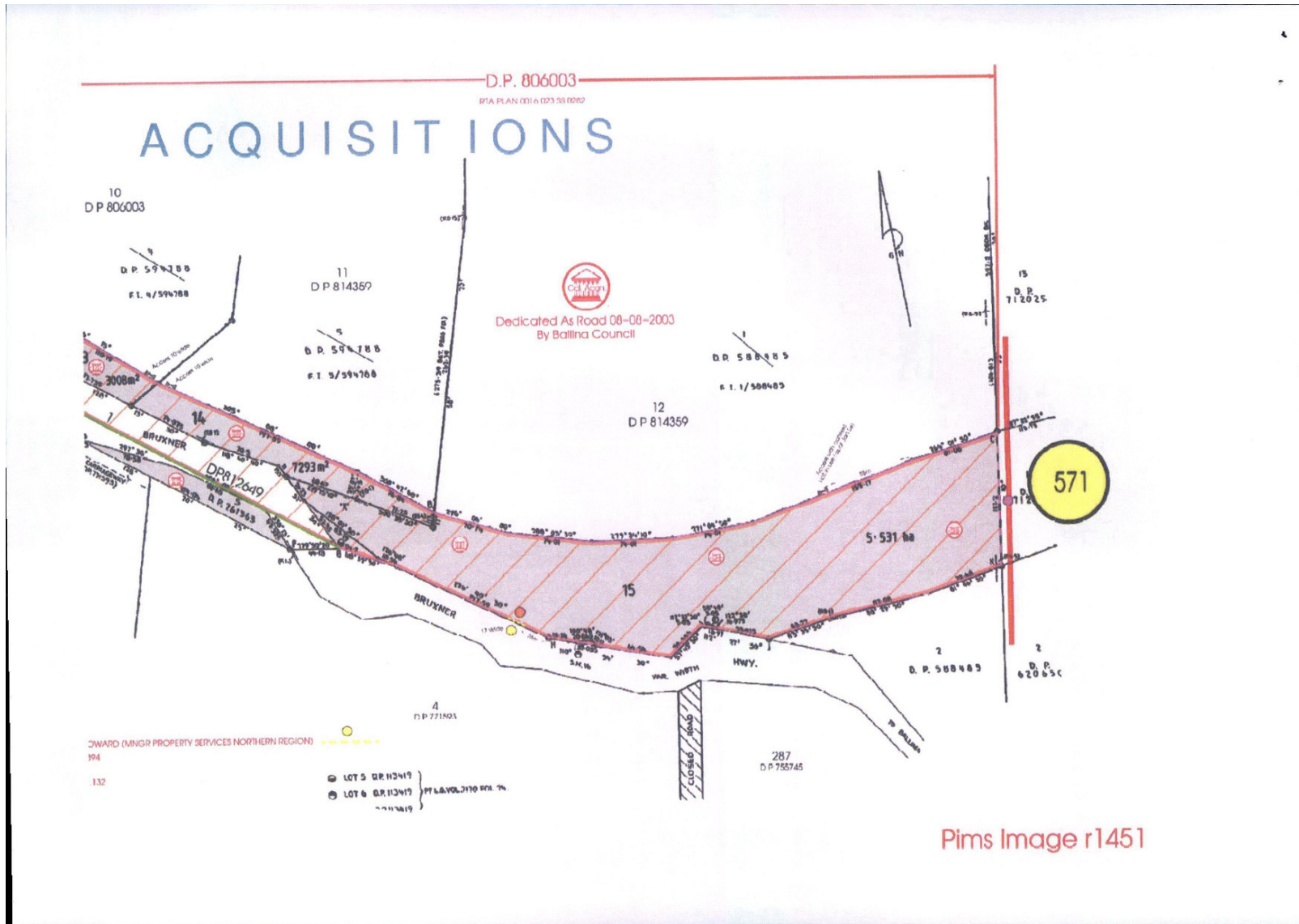
Brett Butcher.
A/Regional Manager, Northern Region

Roads & Maritime Services

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www.rms.nsw.gov.au | 13 17 02

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|  <p>PO Box 450 BALLINA NSW 2478 Ph. (02) 6686 4444 Email: council@ballina.nsw.gov.au</p> | <p>Disclaimer The information contained within this plan is for pictorial representation only. The location, depth and height of all features must be confirmed by survey. Whilst all care is taken in the preparation of this plan, neither Ballina Shire Council nor Land & Property Information NSW makes any representations or warranties about its accuracy, reliability, completeness or suitability for any particular purpose and disclaims all responsibility and all liability (including without limitation, liability in negligence) for all expenses, losses, damages (including indirect or consequential damage) and costs which you might incur as a result of the data being inaccurate or incomplete in any way and for any reason. © Land and Property Information NSW 2013 © Ballina Shire Council 2013</p> | <p>Proposed Site - Mountain Bike Park</p> <p>Date: Monday, 1 July 2013 Map Scale: 1:11,830 Prepared For: Cost: Aerial Photography: Contour Interval:</p>  |
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