

# SEQ Active Trails Management Systems

A report by the Qld  
Outdoor Recreation  
Federation for the  
Department of  
Infrastructure and  
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# South East Queensland Active Trails

## 1.0 Introduction

The SEQ Active Trails Strategy was prepared in 2007 to address concerns regarding the impacts of rapid population growth in SEQ and recognition of a need to cater for a growing number of trails users. Based on background research for this strategy, nine trails were identified as regional priorities, with funding being allocated through Treasury to an initial three trails, namely: Brisbane Valley Rail Trail; Maroochy River Canoe Trail and the Boonah to Ipswich Trail.

Whilst it is increasingly acknowledged that Trails provide a range of benefits to individuals and local communities, they also require support from government at all levels to establish and maintain. In part some of this support can be alleviated through positive and effective community based Ambassador/ Friends of the Trails Groups, along with quality trail design and proactive management. More expansively however, the trails also need to be supported by information for trails users that assists them in understanding the environment/s in which they are recreating, their responsibilities as trails users, and providing details on the range of experiences that can be accessed through the SEQ Active Trails.

The following document provides information that affirms the value of trails for the community, as well as offering safety guidelines to help trail users 1) experience safe access to areas of South East Queensland, and 2) engage with the trails in positive, meaningful and healthy ways.

## 1.1 What are Trails?

Tracks and trails offer the opportunity for communities to move through space along a particular route. While not always explicitly delineated, trails vary from being unmarked to marked, hardened or unhardened; they may be graded or rough, drained or naturally defined. By extension they incorporate footpaths and promenades, as well as less obvious routes resulting from animal footpads or historical tree blazing. In the instance of the SEQ Active Trails, trails predominantly refer to linear pathways or roads used for walking, cycling or horse riding with a few trails allowing access to motorised, support or service vehicles. Further, trail corridors are also planned along water courses. Water based trails can exist on rivers, creeks, waterways or areas of water with particular interest points and are either mapped routes, or represent frequent routes through a waterway.

## 1.2 History of SEQ Active Trails

As described in the SEQ Regional Trails Strategy Report (SEQRTS, 2006), the purpose of the SEQRTS was to inform and guide future investment in recreation trail planning, development and management. The focal area for the project covered the then 18 local governments that constituted the SEQROC, together with the Tweed Shire in Northern New South Wales. In addition, the regional recreation trail opportunities and developments in adjacent local authority areas (in both

Queensland and Northern New South Wales) were considered. The South East Queensland Regional Trails Strategy (SEQRTS) was developed by the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation (QORF), as Project Managers for the SEQ Council of Mayors, and four Queensland Government agencies (Health, Sport and Recreation Queensland, Natural Resources and Mines, and the Environmental Protection Agency).

Since the development of the strategy, the focus of trails development has shifted to become the Active Trails Strategy and the State Government Department of Infrastructure and Planning has taken responsibility as the single lead agency to coordinate the provision and management of regional recreational trails in SEQ as part of its core function (See Recommendation 3, Technical Report 4). The development of the first three trails was enabled by the allocation of Treasury Funds for \$8.8 million over a period of five years to begin a commitment to developing a regional trails network for South East Queensland.

The Department of Infrastructure and Planning (DIP) are developing the trails in partnership with the five local and regional governments which host the trails, namely: Sunshine Coast Regional Council, Somerset Regional Council, South Burnett Regional Council, Scenic Rim Regional Council and Ipswich Regional Council. Other local and regional councils are also liaising with DIP in efforts to expand the existing trails network or to explore developing new trails in SEQ (e.g. Toowoomba Regional Council, Logan City Council).

### **1.3 The Benefits of Active Trails**

Research has repeatedly demonstrated that access to, and participation in, outdoor recreation, engagement with greenspace corridors, and land and water based trails, provide a range of environmental, social, scenic and personal benefits to individuals and to communities. These include opportunities emerging through connecting recreational, cultural and regional areas and providing open space areas that diversify the built environment, promote environmental stewardship, and provide opportunities for recreation, alternate transport and touring. By extension it has also been recognised that trails can contribute to jobs creation, enhance property values, provide expansion opportunities for local businesses, increase local tax revenues, attract new residents/ businesses and promote local community (e.g. Beeton, 2003; National Park Service 1995; Rail to Trails Conservancy, 2008).

#### **1.3.1 Health & Wellbeing**

The high quality of life and liveability of SEQ has been consistently tied to the quality, diversity and attributes of the regional open space (Low Choy & Prineas, 2006) each of which is under pressure from urban development and burgeoning planning requirements. The loss of this space is problematic in terms of enabling health, which the World Health Organisation (2003) defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Active engagement with trails through outdoor recreation can positively contribute to this state of health and wellbeing across a number of life areas, with physical health being an obvious and necessary area for intervention.

Recent studies in Qld, interstate and overseas have revealed that obesity is threatening to shorten life expectancy for the first time in history (e.g. AIHW, 2006; Department of Communities, 2009; Godbey, 2009). One third of the burden of disability and premature death in Australia is due to the

combination of unhealthy lifestyles, bad eating and insufficient physical activity (Department of Communities, 2009). Indeed in Qld alone, 47% of adult men are considered overweight, as are 27% of Qld women. As an intervention, physical activity that takes place in the outdoors have been confirmed as offering positive health outcomes, while there is also an association between sedentary, indoor lifestyles and negative health consequences (e.g. de Vries, et al., 2003; Godbey, 2009).

More expansively research has demonstrated the link between outdoor based physical activity and positive health outcomes, and though not exhaustive, the following attributes have been identified as benefits of outdoor recreational participation:

- stress reduction
- improved self esteem
- an increased sense of exhilaration
- enhanced physical capacity
- enhanced aerobic, cardiovascular and muscular fitness
- improved functioning of the immune system
- pride in community/ connect people & places
- social bonding/ interaction between diverse community members
- enhanced environmental awareness and
- reduced likelihood to suffer from lifestyle related diseases being some of the outcomes that can occur (e.g. Dickson, Gray & Mann, 2008; Godbey, 2009; Lepp, 2009).

### ***1.3.2 Community Capacity Building***

Outdoor recreation and trails use has also been demonstrated to be economically valuable. On a very pragmatic level, trails use can contribute to a community by a) reducing the amount of time people are ill and b) increasing productivity at work. Trails development and trails promotion also create job opportunities and research out of the US has shown that trails have an overwhelmingly positive influence on the quality of life for trail neighbours as well as on the wider community (e.g. The Conservation Fund and Colorado State Parks, State Trails Program, 1995).

Looking at one example of popular trails development it has been shown that Rail Trails, both nationally and internationally, have positive economic and social values. For example, as demonstrated in Table 1, rail trail expenditure across locals, day trippers and overnight travellers can contribute substantially to the economic circumstances of a community or region and consist of sales of food and beverage, accommodation costs, permits, repairs or equipment and sundry expenses.

**Table 1: Outdoor Recreation Trail Expenditure (Australian data)**

Trail and length	Visitation data	Average total trip expenditure per person (transport, food, accommodation etc.)
Lilydale Warburton Vic. 39 km	100,000 annual	\$47 daytrip, \$104 o/n for 3 day trip
Riesling Trail SA 27 km	11,000 annual	\$98 per day, \$216 per visit
Murray to the Mountains Vic 92 km	8,000 Easter 2006	\$258 per day
Bibulmun Track WA 962 km (sectional)	137,000 (2003)	\$153
Mundaring Trails Network WA	210,000, 2.5 M trips	Locals \$4.06; others \$23.71; total \$12.6 M

Further, trails also offer a range of opportunities to a wide range of people. Depending on design, trails can enable the elderly; those with mobility impairments; as well as those seeking a challenge/ adventure or training location. When these considerations are compounded with understandings of the benefits that are accrued i) by engaging in physical activity, ii) within a proximal distance from home, iii) for a relatively low cost, and iv) across a diversity of activities and places, then health and wellbeing can be enhanced. Importantly, so is the potential to engender a sense of belonging in a community which is recognised as a fundamental building block in building social capital (ALGA, National Heart Foundation & PIA, 2008).

### **1.3.3 Environment and Culture**

Although already mentioned, trails also offer the chance for people to engage with the natural environment, leading to a range of environmental and cultural outcomes. These include:

- Localisation of environmental impacts
- Educational and interpretive opportunities for trails users
- Increase in community stewardship to preserve natural and cultural values
- Highlight the living heritage of the area

Each of the benefits will be more readily accrued where the Active Trails are proximal to a local population or tourist centre, are accessible by public transport or a quality road network to trail heads, linkages (established or planned) with other trails networks, enhanced by scenic amenity, and supplied with public amenities including toilets, camp sites, tour information/ visitor centres, food outlets.

## 2.0 Current SEQ Outdoor Recreation Patterns

In 2007 a third SEQ Outdoor Recreation Demand study was completed investigating the type and amount of participation in outdoor activities for the population of SEQ. As with the 1997 and 2001 studies, the 2007 report demonstrated that the outdoor recreation activities continue to play a large role in the lifestyle of many Queenslanders. Across the region, 58% of respondents went on a picnic; 54% participated in water activities; 35% in walking or nature study, 30% camped and 29% went bicycle riding predominantly in at least somewhat natural settings. On average, these activities were done at least on two occasions per year (camping), up to 12 times per year (cycling) and indicate the increasing demand that is likely to be put on very natural and totally natural settings as preferred recreation environments. As seen in Table 2, the combination of number of people multiplied by median frequency of participation illustrates how often these activities are engaged in across a 12 month period.

**Table 2. The number of activity events recorded for the whole population of SEQ ranked in order of popularity (SEQORDS 2007 report).**

Activity	Number of activity-events per year in SEQ
1. Water activities (not in constructed pools)	9,506,865
2. Bicycle riding (all disciplines and types)	7,327,114
3. Walking or Nature Study	3,857,240
4. Picnicking	3,835,902
5. Riding on Motorised Watercraft	1,851,475
6. Driving 4WD Vehicles	1,516,634
7. Camping	1,332,799
8. Driving 2WD Vehicles	1,326,234
9. Driving other Vehicles (e.g. trailbikes)	1,165,379
10. Riding on Non-motorised Water Craft	755,034
11. Horse riding	482,565
12. Abseiling/rock climbing	265,903
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,223,144</b>

Within SEQ, respondents indicated they were seeking to use more natural settings for their activities. For example, while 30% of adults over the age of 15 participate in camping with an average frequency of participation of 3.7 times per year, if they could go camping more, 80% would prefer this to occur in very natural or totally natural settings. In this study, somewhat natural settings are those close to suburbs or cleared farmland and are accessible by conventional vehicles or vessels. Further, 'very natural settings' are defined by few built structures and with few other people around. Recreational access to more remote areas is therefore sought by walkers, campers and those doing nature study.



The survey revealed that the majority of participants in outdoor recreation activities did so for leisure reasons rather than with competitive motives. For example, only 1% of cyclists recorded a competitive motivation. Only the horse riders wished to undertake more 'goal focused' activities in the future. Most people like being in the "Somewhat Natural Setting" (SEQORDS 2007, Tables 19, 20). This setting is similar to the farmland environment through which the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT) and Boonah to Ipswich Trail (BIT) will traverse (refer to SEQORDS 2007, Table 3). Horse riders preferred even less disturbed settings and walkers indicated they sought 'Totally Natural' settings. These settings are to be found in the more remote aspects of the Linville to Moore section of the BVRT, (for canoeist/ kayakers) in some reaches of the Maroochy River Canoe Trail and parts of the northern end of the Teviot Brook on the BIT. The availability of these areas can increase with re-vegetation programs which not only make the trails more shaded for summer use, but also enhance the desirability of the trails to meet the preference for even more natural experiences in the future (SEQORDS 2007, Table 25).

## 2.1 Outdoor Recreation Trends 1997-2007

With three SEQORDS completed, a Trends Analysis has been possible, exploring patterns and changes of the 10 years of surveying. This demonstrates there has been a steady increase in participation in bicycle riding and camping over the three SEQORDS; that the activity-events for almost all activities in 2007 are higher than in 1997; and that while participation rates in walking or nature study has declined, an expanding population base has led to an increase in visitation for areas that support outdoor recreation activities.

The studies also explored reasons preventing further participation in a chosen activity and 'lack of time' was found to be a dominant reason (SEQORDS 2007, Table 23). Further, the Trends Analysis 2008 suggests there may be a relationship between the major constraint of 'time' on further or new participation and an emerging preference for use of less natural settings. The constraint of 'nowhere to go' appears to be an increasing constraint for many participants who, never-the-less, are generally participating more frequently in their activities now than in 1997. The analysis suggests this apparent paradox is explained by the fact this group encounters the constraint of areas to use because of their continuing experience in the outdoors and because there is ongoing pressure for open space from built infrastructure and development.

The BVRT, BIT and Maroochy Canoe Trail all offer relatively easy access from major population centres, and present new recreation opportunities for both current and potential participants who feel constrained. As such they offer both somewhat natural settings, and relatively proximal access to defined, trail based experiences. Given the multi-use aspects of the terrestrial trails, the BVRT and BIT can accommodate horse trail riding and mountain bike riding (both of which have demonstrated an increase in activity-events over the three SEQORDS), and walking/ nature study. While shared trails are not the sole answer to meeting the outdoor recreational needs of participants, they do provide opportunities for diverse experiences; offer linear and extended opportunities for a journey in more natural environments; and provide support services through the local communities. These services can enhance the recreationists experience and provide positive returns to the local regions in which the trails reside. When it is considered that ABS data shows Australians purchased over 1.2 million bicycles in 2008; that cycling (paved and off-road combined) is the fourth most popular physical activity for adults in Australia (ERASS, 2007); that 72% of children in Australia participate in some form of cycling (ABS, 2007); and that 6.4% of the Australian population bushwalk (ABS, 2008), the use and value of trails to enhancing lifestyle is evident.

### 3.0 Benefits of Sharing Trails

In order to use trails, people need trails that are close to them, easily accessible, and that meet the needs of the community. While no one trail will fulfil the diverse needs of trail users, it is increasingly recognised that trail sharing can occur in certain circumstances and across some trail users. The three major non-motorised users of trails tend to be walkers/ runners (including people walking their dogs); mountain bikers and horse riders. Both mountain bikers and horse riders have established codes of conduct for sharing trails with other users, designed to educate both riders and walkers, and to encourage safe practice to enhance the experience and opportunities for all (see for example 4.2.1 & 4.3.1).

For each user group, trails such as the BVRT provide safe access to the surrounding area with rare exposure to vehicular traffic and the chance to pursue their activity on friendly inclines. Both short and longer distance opportunities are available to suit a range of time scales, ability levels and interests. Importantly shared trails also provide the opportunity to extend the education of outdoor recreation participants as they encourage individuals to engage with other users, thereby expanding knowledge of others interests and building empathy rather than user conflict.

Shared-use trails are also effective as they provide a number of benefits for users, the local community and the environment. Single-use trails require more accessible land to be available and overall become a greater cost for developers (Felton, 2004). When shared-use trails are created, less land area is required. This not only reduces environmental impact, but saves money in areas such as track grading, human power, signage, maintenance, fencing and gates. Further, the community see benefits as trail users tend to develop a holistic culture as outdoor recreationists, rather than reinforcing individualised cultures such as mountain biking trail users (Felton, 2004). Given emerging issues of user conflict and the need to engage more people, being more active, in a limited amount of available space, such outcomes are strengths to be encouraged and promoted.

## 4.0 SEQ Active Trails Management & Education

The demand for recreational trails is growing with increased evidence of the popularity of participating in unstructured recreational activities. Market Equity research in 2004 found that trails provide people with a good incentive to exercise and people use trails to spend time with family and friends (up to 89% of users). To support this trend and to enable sustainable and responsible trails use, positive experiences and marketing of the trails, the following information expands on the contextual information above, exploring particular information that can enhance and promote 'Active Trails' usage. Based on advice from the Department of Infrastructure and Planning, the following topics are examined highlighting the (health) benefits and best practice experience of:

- Dogs on the Trail
- Horses on the Trail
- Bikes on the Trail
- Sharing the Trail

In addition information is provided on safety issues for Active Trails including data on potential dangers including fire ants, severe storms, snakes and bushfires on the trail. It is recommended that each of these topics be formulated into information brochures to assist recreationists to safely use and share the Active Trails of SEQ (refer to Appendix 1 for basic exemplar).

### ***4.1 Walking Dogs on the Trail***

According to the 2000 National Physical Activity Survey, 54.2% of Australia's adult population were not getting enough physical activity to remain healthy at this time. Even if this number has remained constant (and not increased), in 2009 in excess of 11 million adult Australians would be at risk of ill health, chronic disease and reduced quality of life due to insufficient physical activity. Walking as a form of physical activity is recognised as being suitable for most people. It is low impact, requires minimal equipment, can be done at any time and at an individuals' own pace (from leisurely to vigorous). Importantly it can also help to reduce body fat, maintain healthy weight, improve fitness, reduce the risk of developing chronic disease, improve balance and bone strength and assist in stress reduction (Kinect Australia, 2009; Medibank Private, 2007).

Extending beyond the benefits of basic walking, walking with dogs is seen to amplify the benefits for some people, and encourage walking by the population as individuals commit to the health and wellbeing of their pet/s. Studies have demonstrated that people who walk with their dogs experience social benefits as they are often perceived as friendly and approachable and subsequently more people are likely to engage in conversation with, or acknowledge, people walking dogs (Kinect Australia, 2007). Walking with your dogs has also been found to enhance mental health as the stimulation that comes from playing with a dog relieves stress; patting a dog can reduce the number of physiological indicators of stress; and the non judgmental companionship and

unconditional love offered by dogs is considered to offer self esteem benefits (De La Cruz, 2009; Kinect Australia, 2007).

Walking of dogs on trails however has a wider range of benefits as it is not only the human population who are better off. It is estimated that there are 3.1 million pet dogs within Australia, meaning that 40% of households own a dog (ABS, 2009). The RSPCA also points out however that as of the year 2000, 41% of dogs in Australia were obese or overweight, and as with humans, dogs need regular exercise to prevent conditions such as heart disease, to maintain healthy weight and to build muscle tone and endurance (RSPCA, 2000). Active Trails provide the opportunity for open space where dogs can exercise and explore new environments, and again just as with humans, dogs require change in their environment to remain happy and healthy (City of Tea Tree Gully, 2001).

Walking dogs on shared use trails also assists in socialising dogs and builds their resilience and social skills – both these outcomes assist with healthier communities (Eims, 2009; Estep & Hetts, 2004). When these benefits are combined with the known physical, emotional and psychological returns of walking, the additional incentive dog walking offers owners can encourage healthy trails use.

#### **4.1.2 Sharing Trails with Dogs**

Both owners and other trails users need education to enable effective trail sharing. When exercising, dogs will produce serotonin which relieves stress and thus increases a dogs' tendency to "play" and run around (De La Cruz, 2009). This can potentially cause trail user conflict where, for example, a dog decides to "play" with other trail users unexpectedly. Thus owners need to be reminded that keeping their dog on a leash is important as:

- it teaches dogs an element of discipline,
- it encourages dogs to walk in unison with their owner therefore enhancing the bond between owner and their dog, and
- it protects dogs from running off into potentially dangerous situations i.e. finding snakes or running into other trail users.

For an example of the type of information that would be useful to trails users who are taking their dog for a walk on SEQ Active Trails, please refer to Appendix 1 for an exemplar brochure.

#### **4.2 Horses on the Trail**

According to Trails SA there tend to be three types of horse riding groups, namely:

- Recreational/ "weekender" riders who ride for exercise purposes and tend to spend a few hours exploring rural areas;
- Endurance riders, made up of competitive riders that enjoy large circuits to train or hold an event on; and
- Long distance riders who are non competitive and often travel along trails overnight or on week long trips.

Each of these riding groups could be accommodated along the BVRT and proposed BIT, if yards are made available or nightlines permitted in close proximity to the trails themselves.

Reasons for creating opportunities for trail horse riding on SEQ Active Trails are closely related to the general beneficial returns from trails use. As with other trails users, horse riders benefit from access to the scenic amenity of the trails and the chance to experience the variety of flora and fauna to be found. It has also been argued that trail horse riding serves to uphold an historical link with Australian equestrian culture and interpretive signage and infrastructure help to enhance this link with the past. Avis (2008) has argued that these elements are very fulfilling and riders accompanied by their horse benefit from stress relief, while others have noted the positive physical impacts of cardiovascular and muscle conditioning, improvements in balance and posture, and hand agility (MacKinnon et al., 1995).

Importantly, horse riding, engagement with green space and physical activity are all seen to contribute to individuals' wellbeing. Though variously defined, wellbeing is seen to be composed of three parts: autonomy (having a sense of control over one's life); competence (a sense that one is functioning effectively); and relatedness (having positive interactions with others) (Newton, 2007). Others have similarly argued that personal growth, environmental mastery and self acceptance contribute to well being (e.g. Ryff, 1989), as does being fully engaged with activities and finding them challenging (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Trail horse riding, which involves a close and trusting interaction with a horse, often includes a social group experience, and demands individuals to express their competence through riding skill and meeting the challenges and occurrences of the ride, helps to contribute to an individuals well being through enhancing their psychological and physical health.

#### 4.2.1 Sharing Trails with Horses

Trail horse riders have established Codes of Conduct for riding on trails and sharing with other users:

- Ride only on designated trails
  - Do not take short cuts or form new trails
  - Avoid using trails when muddy or eroded
  - Comply with signage
  - Treat other trail users, residents and facilities with respect
  - Politely indicate to other trail users how to pass
  - Approach road crossings cautiously
  - Ride appropriately to suit the terrain, visibility and possible interaction with other trail users
  - Minimise impact on plants and animals by staying on the trail
  - Take with you all rubbish, manure and excess feed from the float parking area
  - Let others know of this Code
- (Horse SA, 2008)

The Australian Trail Horse Riders Association have acknowledged the benefits of shared trail use, indicating that *"ATHRA fully supports the concept of multi use trails as they allow limited funding to be used to benefit multiple user groups"* (Avis, 2006, p. 2).

### **4.3 Bikes on the Trail**

As with horse riding, there are different types of cycling and cyclists. Very generally this includes on-road and off-road riders with the latter also consisting of a number of sub-disciplines. For example, as defined in the Queensland Adventure Activity Standards, mountain bike riding generally involves riding on un-sealed surfaces such as gravel roads, fire trails, single-track, open or rocky ground and often incorporates some degree of maneuvering through obstacles. The most common and easily accessible form of mountain bike riding is referred to as cross country (XC) and requires trails of medium distance (10 -100kms). Though the SEQ Outdoor Recreation Demand Study (2007) has demonstrated that cycling in (at least) somewhat natural areas is a growing activity in terms of participation and frequency of rides, there remains a lack of dedicated trails for bike riders, and mountain biking in particular has been deemed to be difficult to locate, at times clashing with the needs of other shared trail users.

The growth in cycling as an activity is evident nationally as well, with ABS data showing that Australians purchased over 1.2 million bicycles in 2008, continuing a trend for more bicycles to be sold than cars. Cycling (paved and off-road combined) is the fourth most popular physical activity for adults (ERASS, 2007) and 72% of children in Australia participate in some form of cycling (ABS, 2007).

Bicycle facilities, including trails, enhance the quality-of-life for many individuals. Trails encourage the use of non-polluting transportation. Further, the increase in the level of walking and bicycling due to the creation of trails and usable pathways leads to a cleaner environment and a healthier population (National Bicycle and Pedestrian Clearinghouse, 1995). More explicitly it has also been demonstrated that as with other trails based physical activity, cycling as a form of regular, moderate exercise can reduce the risk of developing coronary heart disease, stroke, colon cancer, hypertension, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, and depression. Cycling is also known to protect against injury and disability because it builds muscular strength and flexibility, which helps to maintain functional independence in later years of life (National Bicycle and Pedestrian Clearinghouse, 1995).

In quick overview, cycling can enhance people's physical and mental health by:

- Developing fitness without joint stress
- Increasing aerobic fitness
- Improving muscle tone and strength
- Helping to prevent disease (heart disease, diabetes)
- Managing weight
- Heightening energy levels
- Managing pain
- Assisting in reducing stress, anxiety and depression, partly through the physical activity itself, but also due to the pleasure and satisfaction of riding a bike.

(Better Health Channel, 2009)

### 4.3.1 Sharing Trails with Bikes

The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) has developed rules of the trail that promote responsible and safe shared use of trail systems. These guidelines for trail behaviour are promoted within the cycling community, and offer a framework for shared use and safe riding.

#### 1. Ride on Open Trails Only

Respect trail and road closures -- ask a land manager for clarification if you are uncertain about the status of a trail. Do not trespass on private land. Obtain permits or other authorization as may be required. Be aware that bicycles are not permitted in areas protected as state or federal Wilderness.

#### 2. Leave No Trace

Be sensitive to the dirt beneath you. Wet and muddy trails are more vulnerable to damage than dry ones. When the trail is soft, consider other riding options. This also means staying on existing trails and not creating new ones. Don't cut switchbacks. Be sure to pack out at least as much as you pack in.

#### 3. Control Your Bicycle

Inattention for even a moment could put yourself and others at risk. Obey all bicycle speed regulations and recommendations, and ride within your limits.

#### 4. Yield to Others

Do your utmost to let your fellow trail users know you're coming - a friendly greeting or bell ring are good methods. Try to anticipate other trail users as you ride around corners. Bicyclists should yield to all other trail users, unless the trail is clearly signed for bike-only travel. Bicyclists travelling downhill should yield to ones headed uphill, unless the trail is clearly signed for one-way or downhill-only traffic. Strive to make each pass a safe and courteous one.

#### 5. Never Scare Animals

Animals are easily startled by an unannounced approach, a sudden movement or a loud noise. Give animals enough room and time to adjust to you. When passing horses, use special care and follow directions from the horseback riders (ask if uncertain).

#### 6. Plan Ahead

Know your equipment, your ability and the area in which you are riding -- and prepare accordingly. Strive to be self-sufficient: keep your equipment in good repair and carry necessary supplies for changes in weather or other conditions. Always wear a helmet and appropriate safety gear.

Extending on these foundational rules, Mountain Bike Australia (MTBA) has also created a code of conduct for mountain bikers. Three areas of respect have been identified namely:

#### ***Respect Others; Respect Yourself and Respect the Environment***

(Details of these codes can be found at: <http://www.mtba.asn.au/trails/respect.asp>)

Going beyond these lessons in courtesy, it is worth noting that all trail users need to be aware and educated of the needs and nature of other trail users and how to be courteous and cautious with each other. Mutual awareness and education are seen as necessary to calming the fears of non-cyclists sharing trails, and promote greater cooperation in caring for trails (See 4.4).

#### **4.3.2 Environmental Impacts of Mountain Biking**

There is no significant difference between environmentally sound hiking and bicycling trails. For example, some studies of relative user impact have shown that the physical impact of cycling on trails is similar between hiking and bicycling (Seney, 1990). In another study Cessford (1995), concluded that the "downhill effects of mountain bikes, where they have their greatest erosive potential, are not greater relative to those of other activities (e.g., walking)". Some trails, of course, are not constructed in an ecologically sound manner, and both hiking and bicycling will negatively impact them. For this reason, trail construction and rehabilitation are critical and necessary for all areas which receive significant use.

#### **4.4 Education: General - Sharing the Trail**

There is an increasing range of information that infers the value of sharing trails usage. Whilst this is not always suitable, multiple user trails can be more cost efficient, encourage a collaborative environment, and engage people to value the experiences of others. History has shown that shared trails do not have to be problematic. For example, (though now dated) Cessford (1995) found that only 10% of walkers reported safety concerns in relation to sharing trails with mountain bikers. Although the perception that mountain bikers compromise safety was higher, this was found to be related to the anticipation of a potential threat rather than the result of hazardous experience.

From a users perspective, ATHRA as the peak organisation for trail horse riders, have publicly commented that they "fully support the concept of multi use trails as they allow limited funding to be used to benefit multiple user groups" (Avis, 2008, p. 2). Similarly IMBA have advocated for shared use trails on the basis that:

- Shared use trails can accommodate a wide range of users
- Shared trails help build a trail community
- Shared trails reduce costs - in terms of land use as well as maintenance, signage etc
- Less environmental impact by not having to create single use trails
- Shared trails empower users to be responsible and encourage peer regulation (Felton, 2004).

Bearing these understandings in mind, a standard shared trail protocol is needed to establish how multi use trails should be properly used. Kendall (2009) identified the following etiquette to promote the safety of all trails users:

- Respect one another
- Follow right of way guidelines: move to the left



- Follow yield rules: wheels yield to heels: Bikers yield to walkers, foot yields to horse riders. If unsure stop and let the other party pass.
- When travelling downhill yield to uphill users
- If passing downhill, announce which side you'll be passing on e.g. 'passing on the right'
- Never use a bike bell as you may startle a horse
- Follow speed limits, leashed pets and fire restrictions.

Similarly, Moore (1994) identified that the following techniques serve to help overcome or prevent any user conflict related problems and increased the potential for effective shared trail use:

- Signage
- Education
- Meeting with user groups
- Expanding facilities
- Ranger patrols
- Enforcement of any regulations
- Brochures and articles in newsletters or local newspapers
- Imposing speed limits
- Volunteer trail patrols.

#### ***4.5 Managing Potential Dangers on Trails***

While trails offer a range of benefits there are also responsibilities for trails users that will enhance their experience. In Queensland the weather can change abruptly, storms can be severe, and snakes and fire ants are aspects to be aware of.

##### **4.5.1 Snakes**

Australia has approximately 160 snake species, with 31 residing within the Greater Brisbane Region (Queensland Museum, 2009). As Active Trails run through predominantly rural areas, the likelihood of users encountering snakes is quite high, thus it is vital they are provided with information about snakes species as well as what to do if a snake is encountered. According to Queensland Museum (2009) Carpet Pythons, Common Tree Snakes, Keelbacks, Yellow-faced Whip Snakes, White-crowned Snakes and Small-eyed Snakes are most commonly found within the Greater Brisbane area; with Taipans, Red-bellied Black Snakes, Death Adders, Australian Coral Snakes and Pale-headed Snakes falling in the less common category.

It is worth noting that snakes will bite in defence if they are accidentally disturbed or are deliberately provoked, however deaths from snakes bites within Australia is extremely rare (Qld Museum, 2009).

Most bites occur when people taunt or attempt to catch or kill snakes, thus the best way to avoid being bitten is to leave snakes alone and stay well clear of them. Snakes will commonly give people a chance to retreat before biting by demonstrating characteristic defensive positions such as flattening their head, raising their head and body up, hissing or striking repeatedly (Qld Museum, 2009).

#### **4.5.1.1 Snakebite First Aid**

It is important to treat any snakebite or suspected snakebite as a medical emergency. Apply first aid and seek medical help at the nearest hospital. If possible identify the snake species to assist the hospital.

1. Using a compression bandage, start at the bite site and bandage down the limb then continue back up to the top.
2. Using a pen, mark an X on the bandage where the bite site is to assist medical help.
3. Call 000

(Snake Handler, 2007)

#### **4.5.2 Fire Ants**

Fire ants are originally from South America but were first detected in Australia in 2001. When disturbed, the red-brown ants will sting repeatedly with each sting releasing a small amount of venom which will cause the bitten area to feel like it is on fire. The sting will cause pustules & blisters which can be itchy for a week (Gee, 2001).

Fire ants have been identified within South East Queensland, particularly near Brisbane & Ipswich (Qld Gov't, 2009). When using the Active Trails network it is particularly important that users are on the lookout for fire ant nests, not only to alert relevant authorities but to protect themselves from being stung.

How to identify Fire ants & their nests (Qld Gov, 2009):

##### **Ants**

- Small 2-6 mm
- Variety of sizes within each nest
- Head and body are coppery-brown, abdomen is darker
- Aggressive, particularly near the nest
- Inflict a painful sting

##### **Nests**

- Contain a range of ant sizes
- No obvious entry or exit holes
- Various shapes and sizes
- Often appear as dome-shaped mounds, up to 40 cm high

##### **Location of nests**

- Mounds are not always evident, but are usually found in open areas such as lawns, pastures, along roadsides and unused cropland.
- Nests are also found next to or under other objects on the ground, such as timber, logs, rocks, pavers or bricks.
- Nests are also found in buildings and near electrical equipment.

#### 4.5.2.1 Fire Ant First Aid

- Fire ants inflict a fiery sting, which can cause a severe acute allergic reaction (anaphylaxis). If stung, apply necessary first aid. **Seek medical attention if allergic to insect stings.**

#### 4.5.2.2 What to do if you think you see a fire ant

Avoid contact with the ants.

- Call QPIF on 13 25 23 or fill out the web form at ([http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/cps/rde/dpi/hs.xsl/4790\\_4547\\_ENA\\_HTML.htm](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/cps/rde/dpi/hs.xsl/4790_4547_ENA_HTML.htm)). Under Queensland legislation, fire ants are a notifiable pest and must be reported to QPIF.

#### 4.5.3 Severe Storms

Severe storms are localised events that usually affect small areas. More injuries and deaths occur when strong winds cause tree limbs to fall or debris to become projectiles (BOM, 2000). Providing information for trail users regarding severe storms is vital as the Rail Trail area will experience the impacts of storms, especially during the summer period (BOM, 2000). Thunderstorms develop when warm humid air near the ground receives an upward push; storms can occur at any time of year but are most commonly seen during summer.

- *What to do:*  
Listen to local radio station for thunderstorm warnings before embarking on your trail journey.
- *During a storm:*
  - Seek solid enclosed shelter; never take shelter under a group of trees.
  - If no shelters can be found, crouch on the ground (alone, feet together, preferably in a hollow). Remove all metal objects from your person. Do not lie flat on the ground; however avoid being the highest object.
  - If driving, stop clear of trees, powerlines and streams.
  - Distance of lightning flash (in kms) can be estimated by dividing the time delay in seconds between the flash and the thunder by 3.
  - When you hear thunder take shelter immediately especially if the time delay is less than 30 seconds.
  - Try to remain sheltered for at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder.
  - If your hair stands on end or you hear a “buzzing” from rocks or fences, **move immediately.**
  - Do not ride horses, bikes or travel in open vehicles.
  - Stay away from metal.

- *First aid tips*
  - If someone is struck by lightning, apply immediate heart massage & mouth to mouth resuscitation (CPR) to victim until medical help arrives. This will increase the chance of survival. You will not receive shock from the victim.
- *Helpful tips*
  - If your clothes are wet, you are less likely to be seriously injured if struck by lightning. Most charge will conduct through the wet clothes rather than your body.

**Source:** Bureau of Meteorology, 2000

#### **4.5.4 Bush Fires**

Fires can be both natural or created through human causes. Fires are essential for the regeneration of much natural Australian bush, but are also rapid and dangerous occurrences for trail users. With some forward planning and local knowledge trail users can understand how to be safe both during bushfire season and for unexpected bushfire events.

##### **4.5.4.1 Useful Sources of Information**

The Department of Environment and Resource Management provide information on how to remain safe in parks and forests available from their website: [www.epa.qld.gov.au/](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/);

Qld Fire and Rescue Service offer advice on fire safety and provide fire warnings: <http://www.fire.qld.gov.au/communitysafety/bushfire/default.asp>;

The Bureau of Meteorology provide Fire Weather Warnings when fire danger conditions become extreme and these can be found either on the BOM website or messages deliver through radio and television updates: <http://www.bom.gov.au/weather-services/bushfire/about-bushfire-weather.shtml>.

Further, the Adventure Activity Standards (Severe Weather) from Victoria also offer specific advice on bushfire safety and some of these considerations are noted below as useful guides for trails users. Elements from these Standards are provided below.

##### **4.5.4.2 Bushfire Guidelines**

- A. All trail groups should have a predetermined fire plan
- B. If threatened by bushfire:
  - Remain calm
  - Beware of radiant heat and smoke
  - Cover all exposed skin
  - Do not wear any synthetic material
  - Make a clear plan that everyone understands and stick to it
  - Avoid wandering or driving around
  - Find an open area or an area with low fuel, e.g. already burnt ground

- When moving:
  - Move *out of the path* of the front of the bushfire. The safest location may be towards the rear of the fire
  - Move *across* any slopes
  - Move *downhill* as fire and smoke move very fast uphill
  - If you need to move faster, consider leaving backpacks and other loads, and carry only life essentials including communications, first aid kit and water
- C. Avoid:
  - Trying to out-run the fire
  - Travelling uphill
  - Going through flames, even low flames
  - Any above ground water tanks (they boil)

If you cannot avoid the fire, protect yourself from radiant heat by lying face down under an embankment, rock, loose earth, or in a hollow, or if possible get into a pond, dam or stream.

#### 4.5.4.3 Emergency contacts

- Emergency: 000
- If you have difficulty connecting to 000 from your GSM mobile phone try: 112
- Consider taking a satellite phone to areas that do not have mobile phone coverage.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The benefits and opportunities of trails as a form of access to outdoor recreation/ physical activity pursuits are vast. Not only can trails provide individuals and communities with access to diverse, proximal space to pursue their activity of choice, they also offer the opportunity to educate society on how to share, on the value of the non built environment and the historical and cultural significance of place, and enable health through encouraging physical activity and engagement with the healing power of nature.

Increasingly it is recognised that there is a heightened need to address rising health issues related to physical inactivity. Research reveals that the cost of physical inactivity in Australia is \$1.5Billion/annum (Medibank Private, 2007) and the cost of obesity is identified as being \$8.28Billion/annum (Access Economics, 2008). Well managed and planned trails that help people to engage in outdoor recreation, education and tourism, can positively intervene in these rising costs and social impacts.

Important to bear in mind however, is that the existence of Active Trails is not a panacea to ill health, nor a guarantee of activity. Rather, education is needed to help people to share trails safely and courteously; trails need to be maintained to a standard that attracts visitors; and attendant services in the local region (e.g. food, beverage, accommodation) will enhance the overall experience of the visitor, encouraging their return and positive marketing of the trail. With the growing population in SEQ, quality opportunities for trail based recreation and tourism offer a wonderful opportunity to expand the realm of spaces available for the growth in outdoor recreation participation and to contribute positively to the health and wellbeing of the population.

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## Appendix 1: Dogs on Trail Brochure

# Dog-walking on Brisbane Valley Rail Trails



*The Brisbane Valley Rail Trail is Queensland's first major rural rail trail from Wulkuraka to Blackbutt. It will take you on a 148 kilometre journey winding through the picturesque Brisbane Valley. Multiple rest stops, acting as entry and exit points of the trail, exist along the 148 km's providing users with the opportunity to explore local townships along their travels. Major stops include: Wulkuraka, Fernvale, Lowood, Coominya, Esk, Toogoolawah, Harlin, Moore, Linville, Benarkin and Blackbutt. Most trails are made of compacted gravel therefore providing a solid base for your journey. With moderate slopes along the trails it is important that your canine is ready to take on the trails. Picnic facilities are located along the trails, providing ideal areas to rest.*

*The Brisbane Valley Rail Trail follows the old railway line along the western side of the Brisbane River and will take you through attractive farming landscapes, native and plantation forests, rural residential and country town settings.*

For more information contact:

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**Queensland Government**

Department of Infrastructure and Planning



# Dogs On Trails

## Why bring your dog

- ❖ Provide your dog with the opportunity to socialise with others
- ❖ Just like humans, dogs thrive on variety – walk somewhere different with your dog.
- ❖ Regular exercise for dogs is vital for a healthy and happy animal

## Keep on a Leash

Dogs must stay on a leash at all times to prevent disturbance of wildlife and conflict with other users, for example, horse or bike riders.

Ensure that your dog is well trained and will listen to your commands. It is vital that you can keep your dog under control whilst using the rail trail.

## Rubbish

When using the Rail Trails:

- ❖ Bring plastic bags to clean up after your dog as these are not provided along the trail.
- ❖ As the Rail trails are not continually monitored for rubbish, the responsibility lies on the users to keep the trails clean. Your assistance in cleaning up after your dog is greatly appreciated and will keep the trails an enjoyable and usable area.

## Sharing trails with other users

- ❖ Give way to others users when necessary, for example, horses.
- ❖ Approach horses with care as they may negatively react or become uncomfortable around your dog
- ❖ Keep your dog on the outside of the trails when passing other users.

## Don't Forget

- ❖ Ensure you bring lots of water for both you and your dog.
- ❖ Remember dogs can suffer strained muscles and tendons or sore paws and become overheated easily so include plenty of rest stops.

