

## Handshake Partnership Program Report - FY 2015 Recipients

1. **Name of Corps Project/Lake:** Raystown Lake Project
2. **District / Division of Corps Project/Lake:** CENAB-OPF-R
3. **Handshake Project Name:** Raystown Mountain Bike Skills Park
4. **Amount of Handshake Funds remaining:** \$0
5. **What has been accomplished?** Please provide photographs; before, during, and after!:  
See attached.

	<b>Total</b>
<b>Handshake Program Funding Amount</b>	\$35,000
<b>Local Corps Office Funds</b> (total expended on labor, materials, contracts, etc.)?	\$36,930
<b>Partner's Contributions</b> (total value of funds, goods, services, volunteer hours, etc.)	
<b>Partners Name</b>	<b>Total Value of Contributions</b>
1 Friends of Raystown Lake	\$16,890
2 Raystown Mountain Biking Assoc	\$16,772
3 Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau	\$ 5,000
4 Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development	\$ 3,400
5 Appalachian Regional Commission	\$75,000
6 Dirt Sculpt	\$10,000
7 Nittany Mountain Biking Assoc	\$ 5,300
8 Seven Mountains Conservation Corps	\$ 5,300
9 Waddle Fabrication	\$ 3,750
10 Dunkleberger Carpentry	\$ 1,000
11 Rothrock Outfitters	\$ 5,300
12 Alpaca Map	\$ 1,000

### 6. Handshake Program Recipient Feedback

Please take this opportunity to provide feedback on all aspects of the Handshake Program and the Challenge Partnership Agreement authority. Your productive comments are important to the ongoing improvement of the program. Make sure to let us know how the Handshake funds have benefited your efforts to initiate and/or strengthen your partnerships.

The handshake program is an excellent program for startup costs of a partnership project, however the difficulties involved in the execution of funds through contracting is a limiting factor that may inhibit many programs. If the Corps truly believes in partnering then leadership should work to amend policies and authroirites that allow the government and its partners to

have a true partnering relationship where both parties can contribute equally. There were several critical times in this project where a contractor of the partner was ready to begin work but was unable to do so due to the government's inability to provide materials in a timely manner. The Friends of Raystown was able to use other funds not originally committed to this project to procure the necessary materials to keep the project on track. Other lake projects without a vibrant Friends group may not have the same ability to execute which could create discontent amongst the partners and damage the partnerships this program is working so hard to encourage. In fact, without additional money from the Friends of Raystown this project would not have been able to continue and would have failed. We would have then returned HQ funding.

Instead, just today I watched visitors to Raystown Lake participating in enjoyable recreational activities at the Skills Park and without knowing it, they are thankful for the Friends of Raystown Lake.

The process for submitting and awarding Handshake Projects is excellent and we share the good news and promotion of this program with anyone willing to listen.

### **7. Handshake Summary:**

Please also include a separate newspaper type article describing the project and the benefit to the Corps of Engineers and to the public as a result of this partnership project. Examples can be found on the gateway under Handshake Success Stories.

	Local Corps Office	Handshake Funds	FRL	RMBA	HCVB	SAP&DC
Salaries	\$26,500	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Travel	\$0	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Materials and Supplies	\$9,430	\$35,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Equipment Use	\$1,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,000	\$0	\$0
Funds Contributed	\$0	N/A	\$14,640	\$0	\$0	\$0
Personal Property	N/A	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Volunteer	N/A	N/A	\$0	\$14,772	\$0	\$0
In-Kind Services	N/A	N/A	\$2,250	\$0	\$5,000	\$3,400
Other (explain below)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$36,930</b>	<b>\$35,000</b>	<b>\$16,890</b>	<b>\$16,772</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>	<b>\$3,400</b>
<b>Share of Total Cost</b>	16.7%	15.9%	7.7%	7.6%	2.3%	1.5%

	ARC	DirtSculpt	NMBA	SMCC	Waddle	Dunklebarger
Salaries	\$0	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Travel	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$250	\$0
Materials and Supplies	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,500	\$500
Equipment Use	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$300
Funds Contributed	\$75,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Personal Property	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Volunteer	\$0	\$0	\$5,300	\$5,300	\$1,000	\$200
In-Kind Services	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other (explain below)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>\$5,300</b>	<b>\$5,300</b>	<b>\$3,750</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>
<b>Share of Total Cost</b>	34.0%	4.5%	2.4%	2.4%	1.7%	0.5%

	Rothrock	Alpacka Map	Total			
Salaries	\$0	\$0				\$36,500
Travel	\$0	\$0				\$250
Materials and Supplies	\$0	\$0				\$46,430
Equipment Use	\$0	\$0				\$4,300
Funds Contributed	\$0	\$0				\$89,640
Personal Property	\$0	\$0				\$0
Volunteer	\$5,300	\$0				\$31,872
In-Kind Services	\$0	\$1,000				\$11,650
Other (explain below)	\$0	\$0				\$0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,300</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>				\$220,642
<b>Share of Total Cost</b>	2.4%	0.5%				100%

## **Raystown Mountain Bike Skills Park Final Report**

### **LOCATION**

The Raystown Mountain Bike Skills Park occupies approximately 2 acres and contains berms, natural and wooden features, small vertical drops, and other mountain bike skill features to help bikers improve riding abilities. The Skills Park was built in a borrow area located directly across the Seven Points Road from the Visitor Center. The area was stripped of topsoil during construction of the Seven Points Recreation Area in the early 1970's and existed as an unused successional area prior to the Skills Park.

### **EXPANDED BIKING OPPORTUNITIES**

The Park was the final phase in completing the components identified by the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) for a site to be considered a "Ride Center." The Ride Center™ designation represents IMBA's Model Trail recognition for large-scale mountain bike facilities that offer "something for every rider."

### **SAFETY FIRST**

This skills park provides a training ground where mountain bike riders can practice their skills in close proximity to emergency vehicle access points and services. The skills park recreates and concentrates the riding features of the Allegrippis, giving riders a chance to experience and practice the skills necessary to navigate the remote sections of the Allegrippis.

### **SIGNIFICANT POINTS**

- Improving and expanding existing facilities within the Seven Points Day Use area, including trail systems, was proposed in the 1994 Raystown Lake Master Plan.
- The Corps, the Friends of Raystown Lake (FRL), the Raystown Mountain Biking Association (RMBA), the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau (HCVB), Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission (SAPDC), the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), the Nittany Mountain Bikers Association (NMBA), the Seven Mountain Conservation Corps (SMCC), Waddle Fabrication, Dunklebarger Carpentry, and Rothrock Outfitters signed a Challenge Partnership Agreement in November, 2015 to construct the mountain biking skills park.
- ARC funds were provided to FRL through a grant administered by the Corps of Engineers.
- FRL constructed and donated the Allegrippis Skills Park as a contribution to the Corps as outlined in the Baltimore District Contributions and Donor Recognition Plan.
- The Corps of Engineers accepted the ownership and liability of the skills park the same as any other recreational facility owned and operated by the Corps of Engineers at Raystown Lake.

### **BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION**

- The Allegrippis Trails were constructed and opened to the public in 2009 for use free of charge on the properties of the Raystown Lake Project. The trails are operated by FRL, a non-profit partner, through an easement granted by the Baltimore District.

- The Allegrippis Trails have gained national exposure and acclaim as a world class mountain biking system in the eastern United States due to its length, the variety of trail riding experiences, the excellent maintenance it receives by the volunteer operators, and its location at Raystown Lake, a recreation destination within the state of Pennsylvania.
- The trail is recognized by the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) as a Flagship Trail, and has been recognized by Men's Journal, Mountain Biking Times Magazine, Singletracks.com, and others as one of the best mountain biking trails in the country.
- The completion of the Skills Park provides the opportunity to make the Raystown Region and the Allegrippis Trails eligible to achieve a "Ride Center" designation by IMBA. That designation would provide additional promotional opportunities for the Allegrippis by other partners at Raystown Lake, and increase tourism into the region by identifying the Allegrippis as a place where mountain biking opportunities abound. The Ride Center designation identifies trails that include a variety of riding opportunities within a 30 minute radius of the trail's center point. The skills park would be a critical component for the Allegrippis Trails to achieve this designation. The IMBA website makes this statement regarding Ride Centers: "communities who are designated as a Ride Center are clearly identified as being the best place to go mountain bicycling, and will see an increase in both visitors and the quality of life for residents through improved opportunities for outdoor recreation."
- The Skills Park will use the Pennsylvania recreational use statute to provide tort liability protection.

## **TIMELINE**

- In September, 2002 the Corps of Engineers and IMBA signed a National MOU for development of mountain biking opportunities on COE projects.
- The Friends of Raystown Lake received grant funding from PA-DCNR Growing Greener for \$150,000.00, from Appalachian Regional Commission for \$170,000.00, and from REI for \$5,000 to construct the trail.
- In 2007 the Friends of Raystown was issued a lease agreement by the Corps for the construction and maintenance of a trail corridor at Raystown Lake.
- Construction activities began on 10/17/07 by IMBA Trail Solutions construction crew contracted by the Friends of Raystown Lake.
- A ribbon cutting ceremony hosted by the Friends of Raystown Lake officially opened the Allegrippis Trails at Raystown Lake on May 9, 2009.
- In October, 2011 the Friends of Raystown Lake used \$7,500 in grant funds from Specialized (\$5k) and the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau (\$2.5k) to build the 1 mile Vee Cee Trail around Ridge Campground that connects the existing trail network to the Seven Points Visitors Center.

- The Raystown Mountain Biking Association, the Friends of Raystown Lake, and the Corps identified an area adjacent to the Vee Cee Trail in front of the Visitor Center in Seven Points as a location best suited to build a skills park for improving riding abilities.
- In 2015 the Friends of Raystown Lake received \$75,000 in grant funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission for the construction of the Skills Park.
- In November, 2015 the Skills Park was selected as a recipient of Handshake funds, Corps of Engineers' Head Quarters funds that are provided to encourage and energize partnership projects.
- Twelve partners formally signed the Challenge Partnership Agreement in November, 2015 to be a part of the Skills Park project.
- Construction on the Skills Park began in March, 2016 when Dirtsculpt was contracted by the Friends of Raystown Lake. Initial plans showed a beginner line, an intermediate line, and an advanced line to mimic the levels of trails on the Allegrippis.
- On July 1, 2016 the Raystown Mountain Bike Skills Park opened to the public and saw its first riders.
- The Ribbon cutting ceremony officially designating the Skills Park as open occurred on September 14, 2016.



February 2017

*The*

# Chesapeake Engineer

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## Raystown debuts mountain bike skills park

*First of its  
kind on  
federal lands*



**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

*Baltimore District*



*Designed by mountain bikers for mountain bikers, the Allegrippis is a 30-mile stacked-loop trail system that offers sloping, moderate to rigorous inclines, armored stream crossings, and wildlife viewing opportunities along 4,000 acres of forest, meadow and lake.*



# Raystown debuts mountain bike skills park; first of its kind on federal lands

By Cynthia Mitchell



Nick Gray highlights the skills park at Raystown Lake, Aug. 2, 2016. (U.S. Army photos by David Gray)

Dualie, Gnarl, Shred, Grinder, Grunt, Berm and Bonk.

The average person has probably never heard most of these terms. Are they part of a secret code? A tongue twister, perhaps? Generation-Z slang?

Chances are, if you chat with someone who is part of the local community surrounding Raystown Lake in Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, these terms need no explanation. That's because the Raystown region knows mountain bikes.

This passion for mountain biking brought together more than 50 guests on Sept. 14, 2016, for the grand opening of the Raystown Mountain Bike Skills Park, located directly across from the Raystown Lake Visitor Center. The park occupies two acres of berms, natural and wooden features, small vertical drops, and other skill features. It is the newest addition to the Allegrippis Trail System, recognized by [Singletracks.com](http://Singletracks.com) as one of the best mountain biking trails in the country.

"The skills park is an addition or a supplement to the Allegrippis Trails," said Allen Gwinn, Baltimore District park ranger. "It was built with three lines: beginner, intermediate, and advanced, so that all riders can come to Raystown and use the features at the skills park to safely prepare themselves to ride in the more remote sections of the Allegrippis Trail."

The completion of the skills park provides the opportunity to upgrade the Allegrippis's International Mountain Biking Association designation from Flagship to Ride Center™. This designation represents the association's model trail recognition for large-scale mountain biking facilities that offer "something for every rider."

Prior to the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Col. Ed Chamberlayne, Baltimore District commander, addressed partners in attendance who helped make the skills park a reality.

"None of this would be possible without our local and regional partners who share our passion for upkeep and improvement of the Raystown Lake region," said Chamberlayne. "Together, we accomplish more than we ever could individually."

Raystown Lake is the largest lake located entirely in Pennsylvania and offers 8,300 surface acres of clear water surrounded by 21,000 acres of forested mountain slopes. Raystown is a multi-purpose lake constructed and managed by the Corps of Engineers for flood risk management, recreation and natural resource opportunities and hydropower. ■



*"I think the park will be an impetus for a lot of young riders that may have otherwise not gotten into mountain biking to get out there and see what's in the woods, and ride the Allegrippis."* – Evan Gross, president, Raystown Mountain Biking Association (U.S. Army photo by David Gray)

**2002**

Corps, International Mountain Biking Association sign national agreement for mountain biking opportunities

Corps issues lease agreement to Friends of Raystown Lake for construction, maintenance of a trail corridor

**2007**

**2009**

Allegrippis Trail officially opens

"Friends" receives \$75,000 from Appalachian Regional Commission for Skills Park construction

**2015**

**Nov 2015**

Corps' handshake grant for Skills Park; partnership agreement signed

Skills Park constructed in four months; grand opening

**2016**

Twelve organizations signed a challenge partnership agreement with the Corps that subsequently led to the construction of the skills park: Friends of Raystown Lake; Raystown Mountain Biking Association; Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau; Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission; Appalachian Regional Commission; Nittany Mountain Bikers Association; Seven Mountain Conservation Corps; Waddle Fabrication; DirtSculpt Bike and Trail Development; Dunklebarger Carpentry; and Rothrock Outfitters.

The agreement is part of the Corps' Handshake Partnership Program that provides financial incentive to complete projects that will benefit public lands at Corps facilities.



# THE DAILY NEWS

*Serving All of Raystown Country  
Huntingdon County, PA*

2016-03-21 / Front Page

## **Biking skills park coming to lake**

By CANDY E. PRICE Daily News Staff Writer

With the arrival of spring, crews are expected to break ground on a new project at Raystown Lake today that will bring even more mountain biking enthusiasts to the area.

Bethlehem-based engineering and construction firm Dirtsculpt will be busy in the area for several weeks building a mountain bike skills park in the area of the Raystown Lake Visitors Center on Seven Points Road, Penn Township.

Evan Gross, president of the Raystown Mountain Biking Association, has been coordinating the project with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Friends of Raystown

Lake, Rothrock Outfitters, the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau, the Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission, the Appalachian Regional Commission, Dirtsculpt, Nittany Mountain Bike Association, Seven Mountains Conservation Corps, Waddle Fabrication and Dunkleberger Carpentry.

“(Dirtsculpt is a) crew from out on the eastern side of the state,” Gross said. “They were on site last fall and worked with the Friends of Raystown Lake, the Army Corps of Engineers and Raystown Mountain Biking Association to formulate the best plan of attack for the space we have out there.”

Gross said the park will use the space directly across from the visitors center, which was chosen for a number of reasons, including parking, access to restroom and water facilities, emergency access and also visibility.

“You don’t see people on bikes out there since they’re often out in the woods,” Gross said. “This is a nice way to sort of showcase the trails.”

The skills park will complement the award-winning Allegrippis Trail and give mountain bikers the opportunity to practice riding in a controlled environment before venturing out onto the more remote areas of the trail. The park will contain dirt sections of flowing trails and wooden constructed features to teach slow-riding technical and balance skills.

"It's a great opportunity for people to experience the trails in the condensed version," Gross said. "If they're not quite ready to jump full bore into mountain biking, it's a great place to get their feet wet and get comfortable with the bike before hitting things hard."

Gross said the project has been a concept "almost since the beginning of the trails" to incorporate more options for riders and add what he calls "flair" to the already vibrant biking community.

"Given all the red tape we had to navigate, it certainly took a while," Gross said, adding the Corps, particularly park ranger Allen Gwinn, have been very helpful during the process. "Ultimately, it's going to be a wonderful product and a tremendous addition ..."

Raystown Lake project manager Nick Krupa said he also thinks the trail will be "a great addition" to the existing project.

"Particularly (because it's) located in the middle of our camping loops," Krupa said. "It will be great for kids who bring bikes."

Currently, Krupa said, the only place for children to ride is on the roads and the roads are "not a place for kids to be on a bike."

"This will give them hours and hours of biking experience," he said. "We're always looking for things for younger kids to do."

Krupa said the park will also bring more attention to the Raystown Lake recreation area, especially the Allegrippis Trail system.

"We have worked pretty hard and been very successful in raising the status of this trail system," Krupa said. "This skills park is going to take it up another notch."

Krupa added the new park will "help us plan our future as to what kind of improvements we want to do here."

Matt Price, director of the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau, is also pleased about the addition.

"The addition of a skills park connected to the Allegrippis Trail at Raystown Lake will be a great draw to Huntingdon County," he said. "This skills park will be a great facility for cyclists to practice riding trail features that they may encounter in more remote areas of the trail system while being close to the visitors center and the amenities of the Seven Points Recreation Area. More importantly, this is another step toward Huntingdon County achieving 'ride center' status with the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA)."

Gross said he hopes the project is complete prior to the annual Dirt Fest in May.

*Candy can be reached at [cprice@huntingdondailynews.com](mailto:cprice@huntingdondailynews.com).*

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# THE DAILY NEWS

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2016-04-30 / Front Page

## Mountain bike skills park underway

By DYLAN MILLER

Daily News Staff Writer



**Construction continues on the Raystown Mountain Biking Skill Park near the Allegrippis Trails at Seven Points. A soft opening is planned in early July, with a grand opening to be held later that month. Photo by DYLAN MILLER**

The construction of Raystown Mountain Bike Skills Park (RMBSP), next to the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau (HCVB), is now half way completed, and expected to be finished in early June.

Matt Price, executive director of HCVB, is optimistic about the impact the new trails will have without encroaching negatively on other activities the Raystown Lake region has to offer.

“The great thing about the sport of mountain biking, is that its heaviest-use seasons complement the boating and swimming season which is concentrated in the summer,” he said. “Mountain biking is a year-round pastime with the heaviest concentrations of use being in the spring and fall

of the year.”

Price is also confident the proximity between the park and the HCVB will further increase the traffic and the benefits that follow.

“(The proximity) creates a hub area for families where parents can supervise or be nearby while their kids are on the skills park (if they choose not to ride themselves), and have access to WiFi Internet, shopping, educational and trail opportunities for the rest of the family,” said Price.

The project is a joint effort between Friends of Raystown Lake and Raystown Mountain Bicycling Association (RMBA), but there have been many other organizations that have volunteered a hand. Evan Gross, president of RMBA, explained the degree of involvement.

“The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers through the Handshake Partnership Program has committed to buying many of the supplies needed in construction. The rest of the funding has been through grants and past Dirt Rag Dirt Fest events,” said Gross. “There are a number of community partners

in the project from all over central Pennsylvania that will have committed over 600 hours of volunteer service to assist in the project's completion."

The company overseeing the project is Dirtsculpt, based in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. It has built BMX and mountain biking tracks for different areas with different needs. Co-owner Dave King thinks the park will also complement the Allegrippis Trails.

"Every town is different in regards to their landmarks and trail types," he explained. "During March, before construction started, we rode the (Allegrippis) trails often. We designed this roller coaster type track system to best replicate those trails, and added a few minor jumps and drops on the advanced section."

First-time visitors to the park can expect to see three separate tracks, with difficulty ranging from beginner, to intermediate and advanced.

"Following the concept of the Allegrippis Trail, this allows users to start small and hone their bike handling skills as they progress," said Gross.

After construction is complete, the project will shift into its final phases and end with a soft opening in the beginning of July, followed by a grand opening towards the end of the month.

"The park will have been completed and ridden in by the RMBA before the soft opening," said Rob Rabena, president of the Friends of Raystown Lake. "The reason for the gap (between the soft and grand openings) is that some of the signage will not be available until then and some of the elected officials need a six-week notice for their schedules."

The park will be fully operational after the soft opening, Gross explained. It's only the wait for the final sign installments that will push the grand opening towards a later date.

"The time line for the official signage is a bit longer than we would like, so we are going to get some temporary signs up to notify users of the risks and rules of the trails," said Gross. "Then (we will) have a more substantial sign similar to the one installed for the Greenside Pathway."

A grand opening event will be hosted once the last of the signs are installed and the tracks are worn.

"Think of it as a ribboncutting sort of deal," said Gross.

*Dylan can be reached at [dnews@huntingdondailynews.com](mailto:dnews@huntingdondailynews.com).*

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# THE DAILY NEWS

*Serving All of Raystown Country  
Huntingdon County, PA*

2016-07-07 / Front Page

## Raystown Skills Park now open to cyclists

By DYLAN MILLER

Daily News Staff Writer



**Cyclist Maro Grubb rode the tracks for her first time since the Raystown Skills Park opened this past weekend. The park is separated into three tracks based on skill level. Photo by DYLAN MILLER**

The Raystown Skills Park

welcomed cyclists of every skill level for the soft opening this past weekend. The park is

intended as training grounds for the Allegrippis Trail system.

“The skills park is safer than the Allegrippis Trails because you can see around all the corners and the trails are wider with no roots or rocks,” said Rothrock Outfitters bike mechanic Jake Weller. “There are no surprises in the park, especially if people study or walk the track before riding like they should.”

The park is divided into three separate tracks that are organized by difficulty, such as beginner, intermediate and advanced. However, Weller explained that much of the Allegrippis Trail is comparable to the beginner track on the skills park.

“There are still rollers and berms (sharp raised turns) on the trails, but there aren’t many drops and no jumps. A rider can go at their own speed on the Allegrippis Trails and we don’t want people to think they need to go fast on any of these trails,” said Weller.

“The park is really intended to build the riders’ confidence on their bikes so they can be confident on the trails,” said United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) park ranger Allen Gwinn.

Gwinn also explained that there are a number of things to remember when first riding the skills park.

“Bottom line, we don’t want people to ride faster than they are comfortable, but there are also rules posted at the site,” he said. “We never allow anyone to ride without a helmet. Period. We also don’t allow riding after dark. The park is ride at your own risk.”

As long as the rules are followed, the park can be a lot of fun for both kids and adults.

“There were a lot of people of different ages there when it opened. They built a nice observation deck for those who don’t want to ride, but want to watch, or for parents who want to keep an eye on their kids,” said Huntingdon County Visitor’s Bureau (HCVB) executive director Matt Price.

Price explained that although the park is open, it’s not completely finished yet. “Proper signage has been ordered for the park and we’re waiting on their installation before we have the grand opening. The grand opening will be more of a ribbon-cutting ceremony that will be attended by people who were influential in its completion,” said Price.

The grand opening has not yet been announced, but the park is now open to riders. To learn more about the skills park, contact HCVB at 658- 0060, or visit their website at [www.visitpa.com/pa-local-resources/](http://www.visitpa.com/pa-local-resources/) huntingdon-countyvisitors bureau.

Dylan can be reached at [dmiller@huntingdondailynews.com](mailto:dmiller@huntingdondailynews.com).

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Raystown debuts mountain bike skills park; first of its kind on federal lands

*Posted 9/30/2016*

By: Cynthia Mitchell

Dualie, Gnarl, Shred, Grinder, Grunt, Berm, and Bonk.

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That passion for mountain biking brought more than 50 guests together on Sept. 14, 2016, for the grand opening of the Raystown Mountain Bike Skills Park, located directly across from the visitor center on Seven Points Road. The park occupies two acres of berms, natural and wooden features, small vertical drops, and other skill features. It is the newest addition to the [Allegrippis Trail System](#), recognized by [Singletracks.com](#) as one of the best mountain biking trails in the country.

## Related Content

Related Video [Raystown Mountain Bike Skills Park](#)

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Pictured, from left: Nick Krupa, operations project manager, Raystown Lake; Col. Ed Chamberlayne, commander, Baltimore District; Rob Rabena, president, Friends of Raystown Lake; Jeff Thomas, commissioner, Huntingdon County, on behalf of Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission; Matt Price, executive director, Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau; Evan Gross, president, Raystown Mountain Biking Association; Katie Kinka, program manager for Community & Economic Development, Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission. (U.S. Army photo by David Gray)

“The skills park is an addition or a supplement to the Allegrippis Trails,” said Allen Gwinn, park ranger, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District. The Corps constructed Raystown Lake and owns and operates it for flood-risk management, recreation, and other uses. “It was built with three lines: beginner, intermediate, and advanced, so that all riders can come to Raystown and use the features at the skills park to safely prepare themselves to ride in the more remote sections of the Allegrippis Trail.”

Designed by mountain bikers for mountain bikers, the Allegrippis is a 30-mile stacked-loop trail system that offers sloping, moderate to rigorous inclines, armored stream crossings, and wildlife viewing opportunities among 4,000 acres of forest, meadow and lake. The trail system has quickly gained national exposure since its debut in May 2009, and is currently recognized as a “Flagship Riding Area” by the [International Mountain Biking Association \(IMBA\)](http://www.imba.com).



The Raystown Mountain Bike Skills Park, located on Raystown Lake Project in Hesston, Pa. (U.S. Army photo by David Gray)

Gwinn stressed the importance of the skills park location, which provides close proximity to services such as vehicle parking, bathrooms, clean drinking water, and, if needed, emergency vehicle access.

“Putting the skills park right here at the visitor center, having it right as you come in, it really exposes a lot of kids and visitors to biking,” said Evan Gross, president, Raystown Mountain Biking Association. “I think the park will be an impetus for a lot of young riders that may have otherwise not gotten into mountain biking to get out there and see what’s in the woods, and ride the Allegrippis.”



Evan Gross, president, Raystown Mountain Biking Association. (U.S. Army photo by David Gray)

The completion of the skills park provides the opportunity to upgrade the Alleghippis' IMBA designation from Flagship to Ride Center™. This designation represents the association's model trail recognition for large-scale mountain biking facilities that offer "something for every rider."

Prior to the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Col. Ed Chamberlayne, commander, Baltimore District, addressed partners in attendance who helped make the skills park a reality.

"Today's ceremony is a celebration not only for the skills park, it is a testament to the power of collaboration and partnerships," said Chamberlayne. "The Corps doesn't do anything by itself. Volunteers and partners like the ones present today identified the location for the park, secured funding, and initiated construction."



Col. Ed Chamberlayne, commander, Baltimore District, rides the beginner line at the Raystown Mountain Bike Skills Park. (U.S. Army photo by David Gray)

In November 2015, 12 organizations signed a challenge partnership agreement with the Corps that subsequently led to the construction of the skills park. Signatories include Friends of Raystown Lake; Raystown Mountain Biking Association; Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau; Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission; Appalachian Regional Commission; Nittany Mountain Bikers Association; Seven Mountain Conservation Corps; Waddle Fabrication; DirtSculpt Bike and Trail Development; Dunklebarger Carpentry; and Rothrock Outfitters.

The agreement is part of the Corps' Handshake Partnership Program that provides financial incentive for Corps facilities that engage with their local communities to complete projects that will benefit public lands.

“None of this would be possible without our local and regional partners who share our passion for upkeep and improvement of the Raystown Lake region,” said Chamberlayne. “We are proud to work side-by-side with all of these partners. Together, we accomplish more than we ever could individually.”

[Raystown Lake](#) is the largest lake located entirely in Pennsylvania and offers 8,300 surface acres of clear water surrounded by 21,000 acres of forested mountain slopes. Raystown is a multi-purpose lake constructed and managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for flood risk management, recreation and natural resource opportunities, and hydropower. For more information on Raystown Lake, visit the natural resources program link at

<http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/Missions/DamsRecreation/Raystown.aspx> or call 814-658-3405.

# THE DAILY NEWS

*Serving All of Raystown Country  
Huntingdon County, PA*

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## Raystown skills park reopens for season

By DYLAN MILLER

Daily News Staff Writer



**Dirtsculpt employee Mark Tamasik used a modified ATV with car tires and attached weights to flatten the clay-based sand on the Raystown Mountain Bike Skills Park last week to prepare the park for the season. Photo by DYLAN MILLER**

After a successful opening last year, the Mountain Bike Skills Park near the Raystown Visitors Center at Seven Points received a lot of attention. Although the rain dampened its seasonal opening over the weekend, and assessments of the park condition are pending after Monday night's storm, maintenance is complete and the park is now officially open for this year's tourism season.

"The park is one of a kind for the central PA area," said Evan Gross, event coordinator for Dirt Rag Magazine.

"While the Allegrippis Trails seem to attract largely the 30 and over crowd, the park seems to attract all ages equally, from toddlers on striders to teens on BMX bikes to rad dads and moms riding the expert line. It was great to see the more diverse crowd the park is able to draw."

Part of this popularity can be attributed to its accessibility to all ages while retaining the ability to cater to more experienced riders, Gross explained. Its location across from the visitors center also lends itself to be noticed, promoting the location as a bike destination and inspiring visitors to give it a try.

As a result of this popularity, though, the trail has undergone some wear and erosion which is expected for any new track. To address these issues, the creators of the park were back for complete maintenance before it opened for the season.

"It's a brand new park, so going into the busy tourism season right after a fresh build caused a lot of wear at the outset," said Dave King, owner of Dirtsculpt, an international company that builds and designs bike tracks. "This, in combination with the elements and the lack of bordering grass caused a lot of the track to degrade."

"King explained the grass is starting to grow in around the track, helping to prevent erosion, and a new track material will also help keep everything in place.

"The soil here has a lot of shale in it, so we mixed a clay based sand substrate and re-coating the track with it," he said. "After this, we'll actually be going up to repair parts of the Allegrippis Trail to get it ready for Dirtfest."

Gross explained that if the popularity and overall traffic the skills park saw last season is any indication for this year, it will be a very successful opening once again and will see a lot of traffic throughout its first full season of operation.

Those who build competency on their bike using the skills park can then take these skills to the internationally acclaimed Allegrippis Trails this summer.

"The park is not just a 'bike park' as so many often refer to it," said Gross. "It's more designed around the progression of riding, as the full name implies Mountain Bike Skills Park, hosting three levels of skills trail riders are able to grow their skill set and improve from trail to trail. Following the concept of the progressive trails of the Allegrippis, the three tracks in the skills park are beginner intermediate and expert."

As riders get more familiar with the skills park, they will be able to enjoy all the features offered on all tracks.

"The features at the bike park include dirt rollers, wooden decks, dirt and wood berms, several jumps and even a few dirt jumps," said Gross. "One of the features folks enjoy riding and seeing ridden is the whale tail, a large wooden feature where riders hit a small dirt jump landing on a wooden deck and jump off the deck landing back to the dirt."

Although the skills park can be seen as a place to train in mountain biking skills, accidents can still happen and safety is an important consideration. Helmets are mandatory, and Gross recommends that visitors ride within their skill level and look before they leap.

"While we aren't going to be hosting the next X-Games or Big Air Contest at the park, accidents do happen," said Gross. "The park is located in an area that, should an injury or accident occur, it's easy for the local Marklesburg EMS crew to access the park. While park construction was underway, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers park ranger Allen Gwinn invited Marlin and Brian Hunsicker of Marklesburg Volunteer Fire Co. and Ambulance out to get input on emergency access points and how they might deal with an accident."

Work on the Sunoco Pipeline is currently taking place near the skills park, but Gross told *The Daily News* that will have little impact on the park.

"There is a great deal of noise pollution, but they will fortunately not impact the park," he said. "The pipeline currently crosses the trail five times and will have other impacts though. We are working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Sunoco to mitigate the long-term impacts."

The park is not always open and may be closed during bad weather or after heavy rains. Riders are asked to follow all posted signage. For closures, check out the park's Facebook page or call the visitors center at 658-0060.

"While we love extra help, please don't take it upon yourself to fix or modify any of the park," said Gross. "We have designated work days for that. Email [rideraystown@gmail.com](mailto:rideraystown@gmail.com) to get involved or added to the email list."

For more information and closing updates on the skills park, visit [www.facebook.com/RaystownBikePark/](https://www.facebook.com/RaystownBikePark/).

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