



P.O. Box 771471  
Cleveland, Ohio 44107  
(xxx) xxx-xxxx

August 12, 2004

Mr. John Debo  
Superintendent  
Cuyahoga Valley National Park  
15610 Vaughn Road  
Brecksville, OH 44141-3018

Dear Mr. Debo:

Since the inception of the Cleveland Area Mountain Bike Association (CAMBA) in 2001, our members have repeatedly asked us why mountain bikes are not permitted on trails in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP). Despite our numerous meetings with the park, we do not feel that we are able to effectively explain the reasoning behind the park's position. Today we are seeking an explanation of the CVNP's decision-making process as it relates to trail access, the specific reasons for denying mountain bikers access to trails, and the information used to determine why off-road cycling is not an appropriate activity in the park.

As you are aware, representatives from CAMBA including Bill Braum, Mindy Kuth and Mike Farley had the opportunity to meet with CVNP Deputy Superintendent Bill Carroll on March 25 of this year. The purpose of this meeting was to further discuss the inclusion of mountain biking as an activity allowed in the CVNP.

Our discussion topics during this meeting included:

- CAMBA's desire to make mountain biking an activity that is permitted in appropriate areas and on appropriate trails in the CVNP.
- Federal regulation and park management guidelines that do not expressly forbid mountain biking in the park, but do require an environmental impact study to assess whether or not it is appropriate in the park.
- The cost associated with conducting an environmental impact study and the possibility that matching funds or grants to supplement CVNP funding sources could be obtained by a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization such as CAMBA.

We appreciate the CVNP's willingness to meet with CAMBA and discuss the situation. However, we are disappointed that no progress has been made in our discussions since our first meeting in 2001. CAMBA is now an established organization with a proven track record for building sustainable trails and educating mountain bikers and other trail users. We are well organized and our membership continues to grow. Access for mountain bikers to the CVNP is at the top of our priority list and we do not plan on changing this anytime soon.

Based on our previous conversation in the Summer of 2001, our meetings with members of your staff, and your statements in The Plain Dealer article in the fall of 2003, we understand that it is your position that cycling on narrow, dirt trails other than the park's towpath is not an appropriate activity for the CVNP.

To summarize CAMBA's position and understanding of the issue:

- CAMBA recognizes the CVNP administration's need to protect the natural and cultural park resources and manage the park in accordance with the law and within regulatory policy.
- Off-road cycling is a form of exercise and helps combat the societal trend towards unhealthy lifestyles, including obesity.

- Including mountain biking as an activity that is permitted in the CVNP combined with the proximity of the CVNP to the City of Cleveland has the potential to help our area attract and retain people, thereby combating the "Quiet Crisis" that has been widely publicized by local media.
- Off-road cycling is a legitimate and appropriate way for visitors to experience and enjoy the CVNP. It is a low-impact, muscle-powered activity that is suitable for certain areas and on certain trails. There are numerous examples within Ohio and across the country that demonstrate that hikers, equestrians, and mountain bikers can co-exist successfully.
- There is no federal, state, or local law that expressly forbids mountain biking in the National Park System. In fact, several other National Parks currently allow mountain biking.
- While there are procedural barriers that make it time consuming to allow biking on trails in a National Park, the process has been done before and is well known and documented by the International Mountain Bicycling Association.
- Scientific studies have shown that the impact of cycling on trails is not distinctly different from hiking and is less than that of horseback riding, two activities allowed and designated appropriate for trails in the CVNP.
- A united trails community that includes mountain bicyclists and other trail groups is a powerful and effective voice for increased federal, state, and local recreational trails funding and increased awareness of conservation issues among the general public.

Given these points, CAMBA and the 225 paid members that it represents is seeking a written response that explains the CVNP's decision-making process as it relates to trail access for specific user groups, the specific reasons for denying mountain bikers access to trails, and the information used to determine why off-road cycling is not an appropriate activity in the Park. Our members frequently ask us for this information and we are currently unable to give them a clear answer. A written response from the superintendent will allow us explain the current situation to our members.

We look forward to your response and the opportunity to continue this discussion.

Sincerely,

Michael Farley  
Founder and Advocacy Director

William Braum  
President

cc: Bill Carroll, Assistant Superintendent