

BREAKING OUT

New Paris Mountain trail emerging

Work continues on Sulphur Springs Trail reroute

By Mike Foley

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One of Paris Mountain State Park's most popular trails is getting a facelift. Actually, it's more like an extreme make-over.

Sulphur Springs Trail starts near the summit of Paris Mountain and trickles down the mountain side toward Lake Placid. Over the years, the roots, ruts and rocks that give the trail character have become more cumbersome. That was never more evident than the third annual Paris Mountain Downhill Race on Nov. 13.

While bike racers don't mind rough terrain — they actually embrace it — Sulphur Springs was showing its age. Jerret Peek, the race director and a member of Upstate SORBA, said a re-route of the trail used by hikers, bikers, runners and everyone else in the park has been planned for years.

With a \$10,000 grant from sporting goods store REI, and \$3,000 in proceeds from the Downhill Race, momentum began to build to start the re-route. And that momentum got a big push when SORBA, GE employees and others rallied for a pair of volunteer trail days in November and January.

"In November, we had 80 or 90 people out there working on the upper section," Peek said. "Then we had 75 people registered for the second work day, and probably another 15 who showed up beyond that."

"I was really shocked. I thought it would be more grass-roots, just local riders. But we had people from North Carolina and Atlanta come to work."

That amount of help can cut costs dramatically for the professional trail-building crew, which will smooth the edges, add drainage and do all the heavy lifting that makes a trail permanent and more likely to weather years and foot traffic.

"When you have five or six people, you can do about 50 or 100 feet of trail," Peek said. "But with the crowd we had, we got a lot of the trail rough cut. It's a very good start."



Volunteers work on a re-route of the existing Sulphur Springs Trail at Paris Mountain State Park. JAY SCHULTZ/CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

YOU CAN HELP

The next trail work day at Paris Mountain State Park is in the planning stages. Watch for an announcement at <http://upstatesorba.org>.

The re-routed trail will roughly parallel the current Sulphur Springs Trail. And when work is completed, one plan being floated is to extensively repair the current trail and reserve it as a one-way, downhill trail exclusively for mountain bikers, Peek said.

"Mixed-use trails are hard to manage," Peek said. "There are safety concerns when you mix hikers and bikers."

Chip Batson, the president of Upstate SORBA, said the non-profit off-road bicyclists group plans to continue to raise money for new trails and help more in the community. The \$3,000 donation toward the trail was half of the proceeds from the Downhill Race.

SORBA hopes to raise \$10,000 from the 2012 Paris Mountain Downhill Race and again put that money to work benefiting the Upstate.