



City of
Greater Geraldton
a vibrant future



CHAPMAN RIVER REGIONAL PARK MOUNTAIN BIKE MASTER PLAN



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in conjunction with



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Contents

Introduction	2
Background	3
Precinct Concept Plan	11
Trails Rationalisation	18
Trail Maintenance	19
Signage	20
Information & Promotion	26
Memorandum of Understanding	27
Development Funding	28
Conclusion	30

Introduction

Mountain biking is one of the world's fastest growing recreational and tourism activities, and Western Australia is following this global trend:

- Almost 120,000 mountain bikes are purchased every year in Western Australia
- 19% of Western Australians own a mountain bike
- Mountain bikers are seeking places to ride in increasing numbers with 'Camakazi' and 'Scorpion', just two of the 30+ trails in the Kalamunda Circuit network, ridden over 50,000 times in 12 months.

According to the Western Australian Mountain Bike Strategy, the recent rapid rise of mountain biking now provides Western Australia with a unique opportunity to grow and evolve into a world-class mountain bike destination. This will support the growth and diversification of the state's tourism industry whilst also securing meaningful economic and social outcomes for our local and regional communities.



Demand for mountain biking experiences significantly exceeds supply. This provides opportunities for forward thinking local governments to target mountain bikers with diverse and quality experiences. The South West region is emerging as an area of long-term international level potential, but there is also a need for quality trails and facilities in Perth and the Mid West.

As well as the potential to attract visitors, the provision of mountain bike facilities as a recreation resource for local residents reflects the changing nature of recreation.

There is a trend away from structured sport towards recreation activities that can be undertaken informally and at any time¹. Mountain biking is just such an activity.

This Mountain Bike Trails Plan identifies opportunities within the Chapman River Regional Park to provide high quality mountain biking experiences for Geraldton ratepayers and visitors, while also protecting the unique biodiversity values of the area.

¹ The Future of Australian Sport – Australian Sports Commission, 2013 p7

Background

History of the Area

Cycling is a popular sport in Geraldton. In the early 1990's a group of keen road cyclists decided to have a go on the new style 'mountain' bikes appearing in the local bike shop and so was born the Geraldton Mountain Bike Club.

Local land owner Forbes Spillman kindly provided an unused paddock, "Mills Park", as an arena for both downhill and cross country riding. Local riders were also keen to locate trails closer to home and the Chapman River proved ideal.



The Club soon made its mark on the state mountain bike scene with Cross Country (XC) and Downhill (DH) events hosted in 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998. Many Geraldton Mountain Bike Club members featured on the podium which provided further impetus for promotion of mountain biking within the city. Geraldton Mountain Bike Club became an incorporated association on 24th February 2000.

Downhill state rounds were again offered at Mills Park from 2006-2009.

After a challenging period from 2010-2012 with limited membership and lack of full committee, the Club reformed in 2013 with founding member Darryl Sheilds taking on the role of President and driving the trails discussion around the Chapman River Regional Park and ongoing use of Mills Park. Through regular riding of the Park, the Club became aware that mountain biking remained a popular pastime within the city, attracting riders of all ages and abilities.

The Club has evolved in line with the sport, especially in relation to trail advocacy and sustainability and is now working hard to establish grassroots programmes for junior riders, whilst also seeking to support the many skilled male and female riders who live in the region.

In 2015, the Club was proud to have a junior rider crowned State Open Male Champion - evidence of the value of the Club's development program, the Mid West Academy of Sport and the quality of the local trails network.

Geraldton Mountain Bike Club is thrilled to have the Chapman River Regional Park formally recognised as a mountain bike trail in 2016 and looks forward to ongoing shared usage with other user groups.

Recent Planning

The Chapman River Regional Park has been the subject of two recent studies:

- Trail Assessment and Recommendations (Jamie Campbell, 2012) – provided an assessment of sustainability, functionality (dual use areas), safety (walkers and bike riders), trail rating (mountain bike only) and other relevant environmental considerations. It included detailed recommendations for improvements to the existing trail.
- Chapman Regional Wildlife Corridor Trails Masterplan (2014) – mapped current and future cycling, pedestrian and dual use paths and associated infrastructure.

This project expands on the 2012 Trail Assessment and Recommendations, with a specific focus on the mountain bike user group and a recognition of the different riding styles and demographics that can be catered for within the precinct. It was noted that many of the recommendations of the 2012 project have since been adopted, however it was not within the scope of this project to evaluate the works that resulted from the earlier Assessment.

The trail alignments as proposed in this project align with the Trails Masterplan, with the addition of new elements such as the skills area, pump and jump tracks which are becoming increasingly popular as recreational facilities and represent a logical extension to the existing mountain bike trail.

Scope of this Project

There are several desired outcomes from this project:

1. Provision of a well integrated and sustainable mountain bike trails network for users of varying technical ability.
2. Informing the mountain biking and wider community about the trails and the values of the area.
3. Enhancing partnerships between the City of Greater Geraldton (CGG), the Geraldton Mountain Bike Club (GMBC), other trail user groups and stakeholders of the Chapman River Regional Park.
4. Enhancing and protecting the conservation values of the area through effective trail management and informational signage.

Stakeholders

City of Greater Geraldton

The City of Greater Geraldton (CGG) is the responsible land manager for the Chapman Valley Regional Park. CGG is also responsible for facilitating opportunities with sporting organisations to meet local recreational facilities needs and, where possible, add to the inventory of attractions that make Geraldton an enticing place to live and visit.

As such the CGG seeks to balance conservation and recreation objectives to achieve the best sustainable outcomes within a finite, and currently tight, annual budget.

Geraldton Mountain Bike Club

Members of the Geraldton Mountain Bike Club (GMBC) have been the unofficial (and in most cases unauthorised) developers of, and are currently the most regular users of the Chapman River Regional Park trails network. The Club has a sense of pride and stewardship of the area and seeks to have its status confirmed, ideally by means of a Memorandum of Understanding with the CGG.

Other bicycle riders

The GMBC does not, and does not seek to have any exclusive rights to the area. Non-member riders use the trails and would be likely to use the trails more if they were more officially designated and promoted, and if better ancillary facilities were provided. The lack of alternative facilities such as jump parks or other cross country trails within Geraldton means that any development of the Chapman River network or Spalding Park would have the potential to draw riders of all ages from a relative wide geographic catchment. This raises some issues of access, capacity and visitor behaviour to consider.

Other trails users

Mountain bike riders are not the only users of the area. Walkers and horse riders (individuals and in organised groups) want safe and preferably separated access to the area.

Local residents

A significant increase in use of the trails could potentially have some traffic impacts on local residents and might involve a partial re-purposing of Spalding Park.

Batavia Coastal Miniature Railway

The Batavia Coastal Miniature Railway Society has a lease over part of Spalding Park and operates on the first Sunday of every month.

Context

Conservation

The Chapman River Regional Park forms an important Regional Linkage between the coastal foreshore and the southern extent of the Moresby Ranges. It has been recognised as being of regional significance for conservation and recreation since the 1970s. Since that time the adjacent land use has changed and less than 15 per cent of Geraldton's native vegetation remains; recreation pressure is increasing, illegal access is continuing and the climate is changing, all of which increases the regional significance of the corridor.



The Trails Planning project aligns with the broader State Natural Resource Management (NRM) Program aimed at preserving and protecting the flora and fauna of the area. As such, the conservation objectives of this project are a high priority and this plan should deliver a net conservation benefit to the area.

Outdoor Recreation

There is a growing movement recognising the value of outdoor recreation in building resilience in young people, increasing physical activity in people of all ages, and restoring our connection with nature in an increasingly isolated world.

This trend is characterised by a shift away from traditional structured sports and a reaction to the 'cotton wool kids' phenomenon that strips from young people the important practice in assessing risk.

The NaturePlay concept embodies this movement, encouraging urban planners to lure young people out from behind their Xboxes and Playstations and into the real world by creating places at the intersection of adventure and nature.

The rapid growth in the activity of mountain bike riding, whether on long distance touring trails, loop trails or pump tracks, reflects this awakening of the need to be active and adventurous outdoors.

CGG Sporting Futures Report

The 2013 report makes no specific reference to mountain biking, however the omission should not be construed as a rejection of mountain biking as a recreational activity, nor of the City's interest in providing (or in this case formalising) quality facilities for mountain biking enthusiasts.

2013-2023 Community Strategic Plan

Recreation and sport is mentioned at 3.1.2: Encouraging informal recreation through well planned and developed public open spaces, cycle/ walk paths and green streetscapes.

The Chapman River Regional Park and Spalding Park are public open spaces that are already providing significant informal recreation in the form of mountain biking and can be enhanced to deliver a better quality experience to a wider cross-section of the community.

State Mountain Bike Plan

“It’s time for Western Australia to unlock the potential of mountain biking”

The recently released State Mountain Bike Strategy developed by WestCycle highlights the need for a statewide network of sustainable trails to address the increasing imbalance between supply and demand.

The Strategy recommended regional master planning and the establishment of a development process to ensure that all aspects of trail planning, design, construction

and maintenance are realised in a sustainable manner. The need for marketing to realise the tourism and participation of mountain biking was identified, with the potential to unlock significant benefits in tourism, local community engagement and enjoyment, increased participation in healthy outdoors activity and economic benefits to local businesses.

A mountain bike planning hierarchy was proposed, and the Chapman River Regional Park Master Plan can be seen to sit within the Local Trail Planning focus.

Specifically, the Master Plan will align with the following recommendations of the State Mountain Bike Strategy:



STRATEGIES		RECOMMENDATIONS		ALIGNMENT
2.1	Reduce barriers to participation and grow a healthy, balanced mountain bike community	2.1.2	Increase the availability and accessibility of different styles of trail offering different levels of technical difficulty	Deliver new trails and facilities catering for a range of skill levels and interests
		2.1.4	Develop trails within or in close proximity to population centres	Capitalise on the proximity of Chapman River to the major population centre of Geraldton.

		2.1.7	Enhance availability and accessibility of bike and equipment hire	Create an iconic facility that will attract tourists to the region, creating opportunities for commercial support operations such as hire, equipment and tours.
3.1	Develop a statewide network of national, regional and local mountain bike facilities	3.1.2	Undertake regional master planning to identify and prioritise locations for mountain bike facilities	Contribute the Chapman River Master plan as a component of the regional plan
3.2	Enhance the understanding of the need for sustainable trail development	3.2.3	Continue to work with local, national and international experts to upskill and understand sustainability best practice	Involvement of TC Trail Design in planning and construction of trails and facilities, sharing knowledge with the GMBC
3.3	Facilitate sustainable trail development in environmentally, socially and culturally appropriate areas	3.3.1	Establish and implement a development process to guide local trail planning and take trails from conception to implementation	Adoption of mountain bike development framework developed by Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW)
		3.3.2	Develop and apply general principles to provide clear benchmarks for sustainable trail planning, design, construction and maintenance	Conformance with DPaW mountain bike development guidelines and International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) trails development best practice principles.
3.4	Build the Western Australian trails industry	3.4.1	Support the development of the Western Australian trails industry to partner landowners, land managers and volunteers in trail planning, design, construction and maintenance	Involvement of TC Trail Design in planning and construction of trails and facilities, knowledge sharing with GMBC, MOU between GMBC and CGG
3.5	Implement appropriate trail maintenance options	3.5.1	Develop a maintenance plan for existing sanctioned trails and include as part of the planning process for every new or rejuvenated trail	Maintenance plans to be developed as part of detailed trail design phase
4.1	Build awareness and recognition of the benefits and value of mountain biking	4.1.1	Advocate the economic, tourism, environmental, health, social and community benefits and value of mountain biking to landowners, land managers, other stakeholders and the wider public	The Chapman River Trails Plan will provide a new mechanism for attracting visitors to the area, with strategic placement of regionally significant facilities close to the key commercial centre.
4.2	Enhance the recreational and tourism profile of Western Australian mountain biking	4.2.3	Integrate mountain biking with other recreational activities, attractions, infrastructure and services	By providing a destination activity to complement existing tourism services and creating a new promotional focus for day tourism.
5.2	Establish a self-sustaining mountain bike community with reduced reliance on government support	5.2.5	Explore opportunities to secure the direct application of developer contributions to mountain biking infrastructure	Supporting the GMBC in securing commercial sponsorship and volunteers to reduce maintenance costs.

Sustainable Trails Development

The Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW), in conjunction with WestCycle and the West Australian Mountain Bike Association has published a set of mountain bike management guidelines.

The objective of the guidelines is to provide guidance to ensure a consistent approach to planning, designing, constructing and managing sustainable mountain bike trails across the State.

The guidelines are derived from published International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) best practice standards for sustainable trails development and these principles have guided the development of the Chapman River Regional Park plans.



Urban Mountain Bike Parks

“A new, exciting era of bike park development is underway. Today, bike parks are getting built in attractive, easily accessed locations, and municipalities are funding them at the same level as other types of recreational facilities. Modern bike parks are designed to appeal to every skill level, with enough variety to keep riders coming back for years. Well-considered plans for maintenance and regular improvements ensure that these parks will be attractive and fun to ride for the long term.”

– International Mountain Biking Association

The City of Greater Geraldton has an opportunity to build on the existing Chapman River Regional Park trail to develop a compact but high quality urban mountain bike precinct.



Vision

The following vision is proposed for mountain biking in the Chapman River Regional Park.

By 2020 the Chapman River Regional Park will be recognised as an iconic mountain bike 'Top Trail' in regional Western Australia and a source of pride for Geraldton residents and mountain bike enthusiasts. Through the stewardship of the City and the Geraldton Mountain Bike Club it will serve as a model for how recreation and biodiversity can thrive in parallel.

Objectives

Conservation Objectives

1. Reclaim land for rehabilitation and revegetation by identifying unused or unnecessary trail segments that can be removed from the trails inventory;
2. Prevent the *ad hoc* creation of trails by users by instilling a system of proposals, assessment and authorisations for any desired trail realignments or extensions;
3. Ensure a sustainable increase in visitor numbers that can be accommodated without further environmental impacts.

Recreation Objectives

1. Formalise a loop trail to provide assurance of legality to riders and the GMBC;
2. Progress development of a mountain bike precinct by incorporating Spalding Park as a trailhead;
3. Broaden the range of mountain bike activities available within the precinct to include beginners;
4. Provide a master plan that can guide the City and GMBC for future development of the precinct.

Community Objectives

1. Ensure that any increase in mountain bike usage in the area does not adversely impact on community amenity

Precinct Concept Plan

Overview

The current trails inventory consists of a single loop trail of approximately 11 kilometres in length which can be ridden in either direction. For safety purposes the GMBC encourages clockwise direction on even days of the month and anti-clockwise on odd days. This convention is not strictly enforced and is probably not known to some users of the trail.

The trail is consistently of intermediate (blue) difficulty level, with only one short section considered beyond this level of difficulty.

The concept is to transform the area from a single trail catering to intermediate riders to a more comprehensive mountain bike precinct. This entails providing additional trail options, more formalised trailhead and facilities, and ensuring that trails are available for all levels and ages of riders.

Spalding Park is considered an ideal location for this purpose and the modifications necessary to create the mountain bike precinct would not preclude its continuing use for non-cycling uses.



The following elements have been identified to achieve the precinct concept and are depicted visually in Map 1:

- Trailhead and facilities – utilising the parking, picnic and toilet facilities of Spalding Park;
- Loop Trail (Blue) – the existing trail with minor alignments to ensure a consistent intermediate level of difficulty, with occasional optional technical sections at no greater than advanced (black) difficulty level;
- Beach Trail (Green) – a new easy trail linking Spalding Park to the river mouth. This would be a bi-directional trail on the southern side of the river;
- Skills Loop – a short (300-500 metre) loop trail with representative trail features that can be used to prepare riders for the main trail;
- Pump Tracks – two or three short circuits ranging from 40 metres to 120 metres;
- Jumps Lines – an elevated starting mound leading to three parallel jump lines.

The skills loop, pump tracks and jumps lines would be adjacent to the car park so that parents can keep an eye on small children.



Figure 1: Possible Trails Network Overview – Indicative Layout

Trailhead

Creating a 'congregation point' provides the best opportunity to ensure that signage communicating messages of safety and visitor behaviour expectations is seen. It maximises social amenity and reduces the risk of anti-social behaviour occurring.

Spalding Park will be the main trailhead and will have parking, toilets and picnic facilities. Its proximity to the main road and the river makes it an ideal location for the social aspects of mountain bike riding.

For an initial concept plan of Spalding Park please refer to Map 2, bearing in mind that this is an illustrative concept and would require the more extensive involvement of City landscape designers.

Secondary Entry Points

Secondary entry points are locations from which a trail can be accessed but are not encouraged as part of the Master Plan.

There are six identified secondary entry points:

- Kempton Street provides access to the green trail;
- Bridge, north east provides access to the blue trail;
- Bridge, south east provides access to the blue trail;
- Fairfax Drive, provides access to the blue trail;
- Tersonia Way provides access to the blue trail (south-east corner);
- Honeysuckle Boulevard provides access to the blue trail (south-east corner).



Cross Country Trails

Style	Description	Bike type	Terrain Requirements
Cross Country (XC)	Cross country mountain biking utilises a broad variety of track types such as dirt roads, dedicated paths, single tracks and short or long (anywhere from 1 km to hundreds of km's) circuits. Usually, this type of track involves climbing and descending, and depending on the location can cover various steepness and includes a wide variety of terrain. Cross country riding is one of the most popular and caters to both recreational and competitive riders.	Hard tail or suspension bicycle	Varied

Loop Trail

The main 'feature' trail of the precinct will be the existing 11km circuit. This trail is in generally good condition given its age, level of use and soil type. Some points require maintenance, and there are many offshoots or deprecated trail sections that should be closed and revegetated.

The difficulty level of the current trail is consistently blue, with just a couple of sections of higher difficulty that can easily be treated as optional.

There are opportunities for some realignment, for example the section adjacent to the river on the north side (just east of the bridge) could have a higher bypass trail developed to provide safer dual access.

Beach Trail

A new, green rated, trail will provide less experienced riders with an easier but no less attractive route. The quickest and most economical way of achieving this, and one that will have the least environmental disruption, will be to depart from Spalding Park westwards along the southern bank of the river towards the coast.

This will utilise an existing trail with few modifications required, specifically one steep and eroded climb and a wet spot that floods in winter on the corner of the river. The wet spot could be crossed using a boardwalk style trail surface keeping it above the water when required. This would give the trail anchor into the landscape improving its usability and its visual impact.

The large portion of the trail would remain the native soil type stabilised where required. The one steep section could be remedied by using stabilised clay gravel road base material constructing it to mellow out the gradient at the same time.

It is envisaged that this will be a two-way out-and-back trail.

Skills Loop

Style	Description	Bike type	Terrain Requirements
Skills Loop (XC)	A Skills Loop is like a cross country 'sampler', designed to expose new and young riders to the types of terrain and technical terrain features they are likely to encounter on a cross country trail. By creating purpose-built trail features such as those naturally occurring on the main trail, riders can experience and practice on these features so that they gain competence and confidence.	from kid's bikes, to BMX and full-size mountain bikes.	Planned and manually constructed representations of typical terrain features

The Skills Loop is intended to provide new and junior riders with a taste of what they can expect on the main Blue trail. before venturing out onto the 11km loop trail.

The trail would be kept tight, both to reduce speed and to ensure that the focus is on technical skills acquisition. The trails may require trail surfacing in selected areas due to the sandy nature of the native soil close to the river. These sections could be developed to replicate sections of the main Blue Trail with rock ledges and other features designed into the trail. The opportunity exists to make a compact trail system close to the car park and amenities that is challenging and fun for all levels of riders.

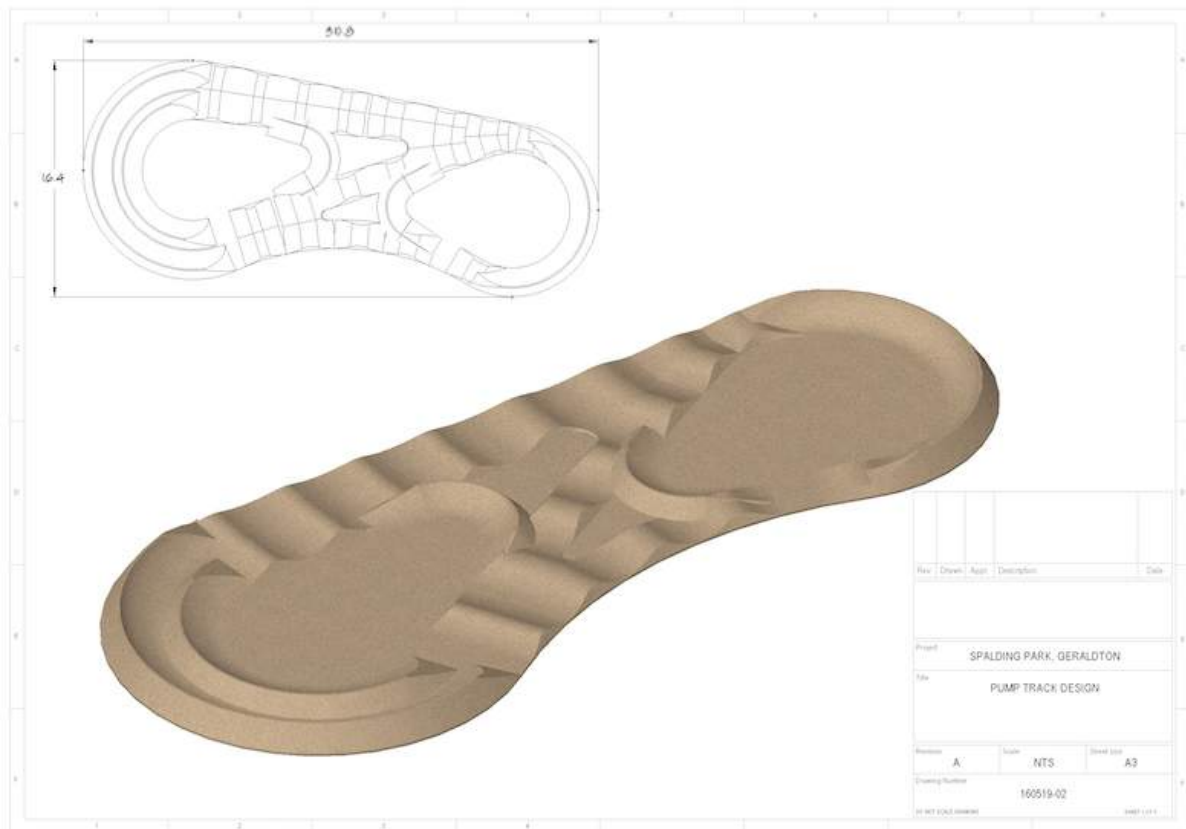


Figure 2: Potential Skills Area – Indicative Layout

Pump Tracks

Style	Description	Bike Type	Terrain Requirements
Pump Track	A pump track is a progressive style of track that uses an up and down 'pumping' motion to propel the bicycle forward instead of pedalling. Pump tracks are a perfect track style for riders to progress on. Beginners can learn how to make the bicycle move without pedalling and more experienced riders can work on a number of skills such as 'manualing' between mounds or even jumping from one mound to the next. Pump Tracks are great for practicing balance, learning new skills and improving confidence and overall fitness on and off bike. They are fun to ride for all ages and skill levels.	Any size bicycle – from balance bikes and kid's bikes, to BMX and full-size mountain bikes	Specially designed trail with a smooth clay gravel surface

The area could support the creation of a extensive pump track area with the potential for multiple loops developed over time. For initial concept supplied it is envisaged that this trail would cater for the younger riders, whilst still offering a challenge to the more experienced rider to develop their skills and have fun.



Jump Tracks

Style	Description	Bike Type	Terrain Requirements
Jump Track	In Dirt Jumping the rider jumps off of mounds of dirt or other material with the aim to gain lift into the air. While in the air, the goal is to perform tricks with the best style. The jumps are usually large with a number of jumps usually done in one run, and are relatively close together so that the rider can get a flow going with their trick riding. Dirt jumps are meticulously built by both machine and hand to allow for particular attention to detail. Dirt Jumps can include doubles, tabletops, spines, step-ups, hip jumps and berms.	BMX to full-size mountain bikes	Specially designed trail with a smooth clay gravel surface

The plan includes a concept for three jump lines coming off the existing Western mound.

These lines are conceptual, however the opportunity exists for the creation of jumps catering for all rider ability levels. With clever design the jump lines would stay fresh and fun for future generations of riders.

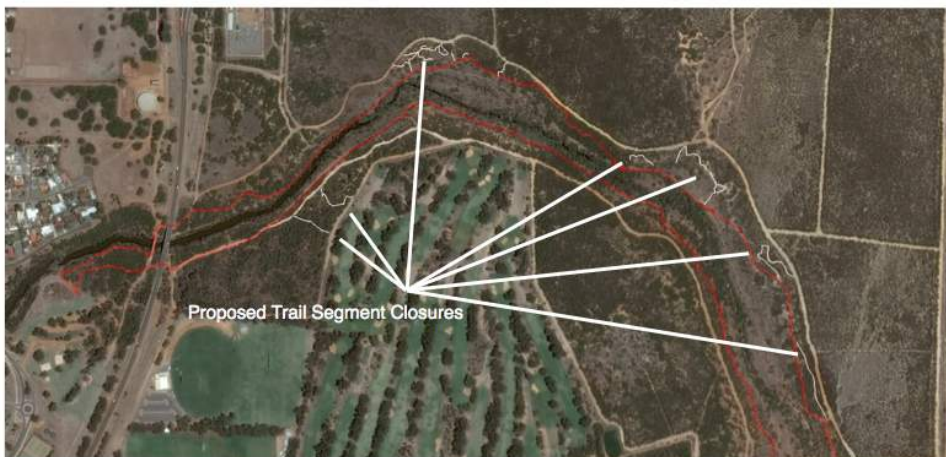


Trails Rationalisation

A key conservation objective of the Trails Plan is the rationalisation of trails on the main blue trail. Eliminating deprecated trail segments will enable rehabilitation and revegetation works to occur, which will improve both the biodiversity and aesthetic values of the Park. It will also provide greater certainty about the trail alignment which will help avoid user-created shortcuts being created in the future.

A review of the Park has revealed a potential total of 2.5km of trail segment closures (Detailed in accompanying .KML file). Some of these user-created trail segments have been developed by riders to provide jumps sections and other challenges. The development of proper jumps lines and a pump track at Spalding Park will provide a better rider experience and will render these ad hoc constructions unnecessary.

The GMBC Club has reviewed and agreed to these closures, and members will assist the City and other trail user groups in the closure process, which will generally be achieved by utilising local vegetation debris to obscure the entrance to deprecated trail segments, thereby allowing natural revegetation and providing the opportunity for selective re-planting.



Trail Maintenance

This Master Plan does not prescribe specific remediation or maintenance recommendations. Rather it takes the approach that if the GMBC is properly equipped and its members coached in best practice trails maintenance principles, then any maintenance requirements can be addressed early, before serious erosion sets in.

The requirements for this are:

1. A commitment by the GMBC to regularly monitor and report on emerging problems;
2. A process for requesting and approving remediation projects which may include trail realignment;
3. A shared understanding of the limits of acceptable change along the trail.



From observation and discussions with members of the GMBC the Club has demonstrated its members with the understanding, skills and enthusiasm necessary to undertake this work.

It is recommended that the Club would operate under an MOU with CGG similar to the 'Trail Adoption Program' offered by DPaw. The MOU would provide guidelines for maintenance scope and approvals processes, documentation templates and communications.

The Club would nominate a 'Maintenance Champion' who would act as a liaison point between the Club and the City, reporting on issues and coordinating approved maintenance activities.

It is also recommended that at least one traffic counter² is installed and monitored on each trail to enable prediction of maintenance requirements and benchmarking with similar trails in other areas.



It is envisaged that the Club would also continue to work cooperatively with CGG and the Chapman River Friends group on general maintenance and conservation programs within the precinct.

² TRAFx counters (www.trafx.net) are recommended as suitable for mountain bike monitoring as they are easily installed and read, have 3-6 month battery life and provide a date / time stamp to help assess patterns of trail use.

Signage

Branding and themed signage serves several purposes:

1. Creating a sense of place. The Chapman River Mountain Bike Precinct should have a strong, contemporary visual theme which can tie together the various elements to identify the area as a cohesive precinct rather than just a collection of trails. All signs should be dual-branded (CGG and GMBC).
2. Providing trail directions. The trails are clearly defined and do not require extensive directional signage. Over-use of signage can detract from the wilderness experience and increases maintenance costs. Signage should be used to ensure that riders have confidence when they encounter a 'Y' junction – particularly in cases of an option where the difficulty level changes. Such signage should enable a rider to see where they are within the loop and how far they have come / have to go.
3. Providing emergency information and contacts. Emergency egress, location identifiers and contact numbers. Local emergency services, eg ambulance, should have a copy of sign plan for identifying caller locations.
4. Guiding visitor behaviour. Interpretive / informational messages can provide the necessary visitor behaviour guidelines such as the need to stay on trail, the alternate direction policy (on the blue loop), courtesy to other trails users and the requirement to not litter.
5. Empowering a sense of pride and care. Associating the precinct with the Geraldton Mountain Bike Club will encourage members to treat the precinct with respect. It will signify to other users that the precinct is cared for by volunteers and that mountain bike riding is a sustainable and permitted activity within the area.

Main Trailhead Signage

The DPaW Mountain Bike Management Guidelines specify that trailhead signage should display the entire trail system and provide key navigation and trail user information. The trail user should be able to identify the location of trailhead signage from the access point e.g. the car park.

Trailhead signage should include:

- Map of the trail system. The map should clearly show how trails link up. Maps should always be orientated so north is up, and include a legend and scale;
- The classification system with a short description;
- Short description of the trails – using standard trail classification colours;
- Code of conduct/rules of the trail;
- Land manager and local group logos and contacts;
- Sponsor logos where appropriate.

It is envisaged that the Spalding Park trailhead would have a multi-panel signage format, featuring:

1. Welcome and branding (to be determined)
2. Map of Trails – with descriptions and grading
3. Explanation of gradings
4. Cycling Code for the area

It is envisaged that this information could be contained on 2 x A1 sized screen-printed signs (594 x 841 mm), ideally housed within a shelter. Content mockups have been provided as Appendix 1.



The trail entry points at Spalding Park should be marked, ideally with a gateway or arch.

Signage should reinforce the alternating direction of travel for the Blue trail.



Examples of trail entry arches

Secondary Entry Points

Signage on the secondary entry points should be an adaptation of the single panel trailhead sign, showing current location and alternating direction of travel for the Blue trail.

Directional Signs (Route Markers)

Directional signs or route markers are positioned along the trail to serve four purposes:

1. Provide confidence to riders that they are still on the trail and optionally how far they have ridden / have to ride
2. To remind all trail users about permitted uses of the trail
3. To alert riders to trail branching, eg where an optional more difficult section begins
4. To guide riders where the direction of the trail is not completely clear.

The DPaW Mountain Bike Management Guidelines specify that directional signs should be attached to posts located at the start of trails and at intersections to direct trail users and keep them on the correct trails. Specifically;

- Beginning of the trail
 - The user must clearly be able to see where to go from the trailhead sign to the trail access point. If the entrance to the trail cannot be seen from the trailhead, directional signage may be used to point the way.
 - At the beginning of the trail attach a trail difficulty symbol marker to the post along with a directional arrow of the same colour. The trail name may also be attached to this post.
- Intersections
 - Trail markers should be installed a couple of metres prior to an intersection.
 - A trail marker should be installed 10 – 20 metres after the intersection to confirm the trail user has taken the correct path. (Trail users should be able to see this confirmation marker from the intersection).
- Location and destinations
 - Where a trail meets another trail or multiple trails it may be useful to install directional signs that point to a destination e.g. to the trail head, or to a car park.
 - It may be useful to use orientation signs with a map and 'you are here' points at these locations. The map should always be orientated so north is up.

The Green Trail is relatively short and has no options or branching, so technically does not require route markers. However given that the route is intended for beginner riders and families it is recommended that directional signage be installed at the trailhead, both sides of the bridge, at approximately 100 metres from end of the trail, and at the beach end of the trail.



Figure 3: Indicative Signage – GreenTrail

The Blue Trail route is generally clearly evident with no major intersections and few areas of branching points or increased difficulty options. On this basis it requires little in the way of route markers.

Minimising the number of markers reduces installation and maintenance cost and also contributes to the wilderness feel of the trail. In some cases it is possible to remove route markers in the future as the trail direction becomes more obvious with repeated use over time.

It is recommended that twenty (20) directional signs be installed as illustrated, together with the trailhead signage at the five secondary access points – Bridge NE, Bridge SE, Fairfax Drive, Tersonia Way and Honeysuckle Boulevard.



Figure 4: Indicative Signage – Blue Trail

Route Marker Specifications

It is recommended that the WA Mountain Bike Management Guidelines for route markers be followed for the Chapman Valley trails. This will ensure a consistency with other mountain bike trails throughout the state which will aid riders, particularly those unfamiliar with the area in instant recognition and understanding. These specifications state:

- Trails should be marked by a white square with a triangle in the middle. The triangle should be the same colour as the classification of the trail.
- Trail markers and posts should be highly visible.
- Minimum size is 95mm x 95mm
- 1.6mm aluminium
- Reflective coating
- Pre-drilled 5mm holes in each corner
- Rounded corners

All trail markers should be mounted on posts, never attached to trees.

Posts can be crafted from a variety of materials, but the predominant standard is aluminium (yellow). Post specifications:

- 1100mm height (above ground level).
- If steel or aluminium it is best to pre-drill the 5mm holes for markers.
- No more than four trail markers to a post.

Trail marker posts should be installed in a clearly visible position. This may require minor pruning of vegetation to ensure visibility. If ongoing pruning is required it will be a maintenance issue later on.

Ensure the location of marker posts does not create a hazard. Avoid installing posts next to a technical terrain feature.

Posts to be installed 500mm into the ground leaving 1100mm above the ground, at 90 degrees to the trail. Markers to be fixed to the top with four rivets.



Information & Promotion

The developed precinct will be a tourism and recreational asset for the City of Greater Geraldton.

Promotion of the area will:

1. Entice visitation from local residents and travellers;
2. Provide an understanding of the trails network and facilities;
3. Foster an appreciation of the unique and fragile environment;
4. Encourage safe, responsible and courteous behaviour.

Printed and electronic media can be utilised. A DL tri-fold flyer with information and a trails map is a recommended medium for distribution by local businesses and tourism operators.

Given the penetration of Facebook, a Chapman River Trails Facebook page, jointly administered by the CGG and GMBC could provide current information and promotion, whilst reinforcing the branding of the precinct. In making this recommendation it is noted that the GMBC already list information on events, maintenance days and photos from the trail on their web site.

No recommendations have been made at this stage about brand design or naming of the area or trails.

These decisions should be made in concert by the CGG, GMBC and perhaps Chapman River Friends or other user groups as part of creating a shared vision for the precinct.

Memorandum of Understanding

The Memorandum of Understanding should set out the broad objectives for the area and set the policy parameters for the actions of the parties.

It is envisaged that the MOU would include a schedule specifying:

1. The number of trails (or metres of trail) to be closed off and remediated by the CGG and GMBC;
2. Undertakings by the GMBC to ensure ongoing adequacy of trails monitoring and maintenance skills by Club members;
3. Process for requesting approval to conduct maintenance works, including trail realignment;
4. Allowable new trail development (from pre-agreed authorised list);
5. Process for adding new trail proposals to the list;
6. Guidelines for submission and approval of new trail proposals such as realignment to bypass trail segments that cannot reasonably be remediated.

Development Funding

Funding for trail developments is available via one of two Lotterywest grants.

1. **Community Spaces Outdoor grants** can help create spaces for people to come together and join in activities that benefit their well-being such as skate parks, playgrounds, memorials, and community gardens. This would be an appropriate grant to fund the development of the pump and jump tracks as well as any ancillary equipment required for the Spalding Park Trailhead. The criteria for these grants align well with the Spalding Park precinct:
 - Community and stakeholder support including any foreseeable increases in community involvement resulting from the grant project
 - Planning that demonstrates the facility will meet community need
 - Ability of your organisation to manage and maintain the outdoor space
 - Long term viability of the space and your organisation
 - Contributions from relevant sources. These grants are intended to be complementary
 - Safe, secure and affordable spaces that are open to the whole community and are accessible and usable for people with disability
 - Planning and building approvals and compliance to relevant codes, standards and legislation
 - Consideration of heritage and environmental factors

2. **Trails grants** provide funding for trails upgrades, signage and promotion. Lotterywest Trails grants can be used for a range of trails related activities, excluding regular maintenance. They can cover:
 - Planning – e.g. trails master plans; design and development of Aboriginal cultural trails.
 - Construction – e.g. construction of trails for walking; mountain biking and horse riding.
 - Upgrade – e.g. additional infrastructure such as a viewing platform; track signage improvements.
 - Promotion and resources – e.g. website providing information on local trails; trail maps.

As with the Community Spaces Outdoor grants, the Trails grant criteria aligns well with the broader scope of the precinct:

- Community involvement in trail management, upkeep and promotion
- A consultant's brief or project scope
- Trails designed for multiple users
- Consultations and planning with trail users
- Agreement of stakeholders including local government(s) and land managers
- Strategies for trail promotion
- A trails management plan including trails management, maintenance and sustainability
- Design considerations and specifications
- Active involvement of Indigenous people and communities (as appropriate)

Additional funding for conservation-specific projects may be available via Coastcare or Quickstep grants administered by NACC.

Conclusion

The Chapman River Trails are already a well-used, well appreciated asset for mountain bike riders in Geraldton.

Although the main trail has evolved in an ad hoc manner over many years, the GMBC has displayed a responsible and willing attitude to protecting and preserving it.

CGG has obviously waged a long battle with incompatible uses of the area, such as extreme four wheel driving, and the evidence is that this persistence has paid off.

With signage, closure and rehabilitation of deprecated trail segments, and the ongoing enthusiasm and maintenance of the GMBC the main 11km loop trail can be promoted as a quality mountain biking experience.

The addition of a shorter, simpler trail towards the beach, and the development of Spalding Park as a well equipped trailhead with Jump and Pump tracks and a skills area, will convert the area from an unofficial riding spot to a mountain biking precinct that Geraldton can be proud of.

It will add significantly to the recreation inventory in Geraldton at a time of increasing recognition of the importance of diversity in recreation opportunities.