

Gippsland Trail Bike Safety Pilot Project

Community Information Update – October 2019



The Victorian Government has committed \$2.8 million from the *Motorcycle Safety Levy* to boost safety for trail bike riders in the popular Neerim State Forest.

What is the Gippsland Trail Bike Safety Pilot Project about?

In August 2019, the Minister for Roads, Road Safety and the TAC, Jaala Pulford, announced the Gippsland Trail Bike Safety Pilot Project at an event held at Noojee.

The pilot project is a first for the State and will cover a 40-kilometre trail for the next six years.

It includes designing and maintaining a new dedicated single-track network for trail riders that still provides the technical and challenging environment that recreational riders seek while maintaining safety. Other improvements will include new location markers, track mapping and better access for emergency services.

The aim of the pilot project is to:

- Improve safety for trail riders
- Maintain the physical and technical challenges trail riders seek
- Protect the environment for other users and for the future.

The pilot project ensures that visitors and locals can continue to enjoy the unique recreational environment offered by Neerim State Forest but in a safer and more sustainable way

It will be managed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) - the manager of roads within the Neerim State Forest, in partnership with Regional Roads Victoria (RRV) now part of the Department of Transport.



How did the project come about?

In the 2017-18 financial year, the Victorian Government provided \$106,000 for RRV and DELWP to explore options that will improve safety for trail bike riders.

Gippsland Trail Bike Safety Pilot Project

RRV and DELWP engaged closely with stakeholders, riders and the community to gain an understanding of the issues and experiences of trail bike riders in the Neerim State Forest.

Over 850 people provided formal feedback about three options to improve safety for trail bike riders in the Neerim State Forest.

The options were:

- Repair - repairing the formal track network in the forest
- Redesign - redesigning current formal tracks incorporating the safety and needs of trial bike riders
- Build - building a new dedicated track network for trail riders.

A proposal for a trail bike safety pilot project was recommended to the Victorian Government.

The Andrews Labor Government recognised the importance of undertaking a pilot project of this nature and is providing \$2.8 million in funding towards implementation.

Why was Neerim State Forest chosen as the location for the pilot project and who uses it?

The most popular destination for trail bike riding in Gippsland is in the Neerim State Forest, so this was the obvious choice.

The forest is located along approximately 100km east of Melbourne along Latrobe River Road, 9km east of the town of Neerim South. It is situated within Baw Baw Shire and is a popular day ride location for trail bike riders, especially with those from the eastern and south-eastern growth areas of Melbourne.

Safety statistics

Trail bike trauma is a significant road safety concern in Baw Baw Shire where almost half of all motorcycle crashes take place on forest roads.

From the beginning of 2014 to the end of 2018, there were 36 reported motorcycle crashes in the Neerim State Forest that resulted in serious injuries.

Motorcycle Safety Levy

The Motorcycle Safety Levy was introduced in May 2002, with the funds going directly to initiatives that improve safety for riders. Over \$75 million raised from the levy has been committed to motorcycle safety projects since it was introduced.

Evaluation

To assess the success of the pilot project, a significant evaluation process will take place mid-way and at the end of the pilot, and if successful, consideration will be given to develop similar initiatives in other locations across the state.

Community engagement

Engagement with landowners, riders and members of the community will be undertaken in the development of the design of the new bike trail with implementation occurring over a period of three years.

Next steps

A Project Officer will be employed to manage the project. The position will be advertised over the coming months and is anticipated to commence early in 2020.

Engagement on the Concept Designs will occur when the Project Officer has commenced in their role.

A tender process for construction will commence upon approval of the final bike trail track design. Works are anticipated to commence towards the end of 2020.

Next project update is expected early in 2020.

For further information and to be kept informed about the project, please email us at trail.bikes@delwp.vic.gov.au.

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