Mountainbikers op de Utrechtse Heuvelrug

Een voorstel voor een uitdagende en financieel haalbare routestructuur waarbij beheer en aansprakelijkheid geregeld zijn

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Mountainbikers op de Utrechtse Heuvelrug

Title
Mountain bikers in National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug. A proposal for a challenging and financially viable route structure, where management and legal responsibility are regulated

Abstract
A strongly increasing number of mountain bikers rides the trails in National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug. However, these trails are (too) short and not linked. This leads to conflicts with land owners, recreationists and nature values. A comprehensive solution to this problem can be found in the combination of the creation of a route structure and a management model (maintenance and liability), within the frameworks of financial and legal feasibility. This integral solution might also be applicable in other areas in the Netherlands and applicable to other user groups such as horse riders and dog owners.

Keywords
Action research, mountain bikers, Utrechtse Heuvelrug Netherlands, trail structure, legal responsibility, financial model, willingness to pay, integrated design, ecosystem services

Summary
National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug (NPUH) is an important area for mountain bikers. Local terrain bikers, but also large groups from other parts of the country, come to the vicinity of Amerongen, Leersum to Veenendaal to ride the trails. However, the current mountain bike trails (4 routes between Rhenen, Veenendaal, Amerongen and Leersum) fail because they are too busy, too short and not challenging enough. Moreover, there are no trails created in the western part of the NPUH. Therefore, some mountain bikers choose (partly) to ride their own routes. Most land owners do not like this unregulated presence of mountain bikers on their site. They are afraid of disturbance of nature (mainly game and birds), of violation of privacy and property rights and of additional conflicts with other recreationists. Over the last years the number of mountain bikers has been growing very quickly. The conflicts between land owners, walkers and nature on one side and mountain bikers on the other side will therefore only grow under an unchanged policy.
To prevent this, a proposal is written in this report in which the main topics are arranged in coherence for the parties concerned. It involves the creation of a consistent route structure for a mountain bikers network with a correct managerial, financial and legal integration. This consistent network of mountain bike trails covers the whole NPUH in first instance and later on the entire Utrechtse Heuvelrug. After all: a continuous and challenging route structure will ensure that the terrain bikers will less often leave the track.
Therefore it is necessary that a real mountain bike trails are present on regular distances. In this regard, there is a gap between Maarn and Leersum (Doornse Gat, Kaapse bossen). Our proposal is to achieve a trail in that area; the recreation authority has indicated that the Doornse Gat can be a part of it. The Doornse Gat is technically challenging, but also too small for a complete trail; it will have to be partly created on the adjoining parcels. Furthermore, the existing and the new mountain bike trails should be connected by ‘connecting routes’. These are situated on existing paths; the mtb-ers should behave as recreational cyclists there. In addition, there are ‘drive up routes’, which ensure that mountain bikers will start the trails at fixed points on the edges of the NPUH. Starting point of these drive up routes are often the Groene Poorten (Green gates) and Entrances.
The land owners stated, as a prerequisite for improving route structure, that the management, legal responsibility and finance should be well regulated. The Recreational authority Utrechtse Heuvelrug can play a central role in this, as it does for the ‘Let de Stichterpad’ (a cycle path across the Utrechtse Heuvelrug).
Research among terrain bikers demonstrated that the willingness to pay for access to an improved route structure is 2 euros for a day ticket and 15 euros for a year card (both conservative estimations). These amounts multiplied by the current numbers of visitors (again conservative estimations) give enough revenue to pay the recreational authority to take over the management and legal responsibility from the land owners and also for rewarding the land owners for opening their terrain. At the current rate of 45 cents per linear metre (also used at the Let de Stichterpad) provides substantial amounts of money for some owners already. When the numbers of mountain bikers continue to rise, the payments can also increase.
Wageningen UR, Wetenschapswinkel

Wageningen UR (University & Research centre) ondersteunt met de Wetenschapswinkel maatschappelijke organisaties als verenigingen, actiegroepen en belangenorganisaties. Deze kunnen bij ons terecht met onderzoeksvragen die een maatschappelijk doel dienen. Samen met studenten, onderzoekers en maatschappelijke groepen die hiervoor zelf de middelen niet hebben, maken wij inspirerende onderzoeksprojecten mogelijk.

NatuurWijs in de toekomst
Verkenning van de haalbaarheid van uitvoering door vrijwilligers en van opschaling naar Nationale Parken

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