

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**OFF-ROAD CYCLING IN WIRTH PARK
PILOT PROJECT TESTS THE WATERS**

MINNEAPOLIS, MN...Thursday, January 8 2004 ... The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board will host a community meeting to discuss a proposed off-road cycling trail in Theodore Wirth Park. A pilot project conducted over the course of a year will evaluate whether a sustainable, safe and low-maintenance trail can be established in Wirth Park in a manner that both challenges off road cyclists and protects natural resources. The location for the pilot project is north of Highway 55, west of Wirth Parkway and Theodore Wirth Golf Course and east of Twin Lakes.

A successful pilot project will lead to further discussion by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board for establishing a trail network in portions of the Minneapolis Park system, with the understanding that not all parks will be appropriate for off road trails due to soil types, competing uses and sensitivity of plant and animal communities.

Before the pilot project begins, however, the Park Board wants to receive comment from area residents and park users. Those who would like to hear more about the pilot project are invited to attend a meeting on Tuesday, January 27 at 6.30pm at the Theodore Wirth Golf Course chalet.

The off-road cycling trail plan in Wirth Park was initiated by Minneapolis Off-road Cycling Advocates (MOCA), a local group of cyclists who are passionate about off-road cycling. MOCA formed in response to a meeting initiated by Mayor R.T. Rybak and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board as a call to action to increase the development of "silent sports" facilities in the Minneapolis Parks. MOCA is confident that a designated off-road cycling trail in Wirth Park will result in an improvement of the existing trails. The current proliferation of trails used by off-road cyclists will be re-designed and maintained by MOCA in accordance with best practice standards in sustainable trails. "A designated, environmentally sustainable off-road cycling trail in Wirth Park will actually reduce the impact on the environment and other users" said Miriam Taylor, MOCA spokesperson.

Off-road cycling has become a popular mainstream recreational activity, life-long leisure skill and general fitness routine for many urban residents. The establishment of an off-road cycling trail in Wirth Park will meet some of the growing demand for designated areas to engage in the sport.

To be sure that the pilot project is successful, citizen comment at the outset is key; park staff strongly encourages interested folks to attend the community meeting.

For further information contact Jill Andrews at 612-230-6400.

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