



## Trail system pondered

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has decided to explore possibilities for a shared-use trail system at Philpott Lake, and will hold a meeting in December to get public input. Recently, about 35 volunteers gathered at Philpott Lake Visitor Center for a trail building school presented by the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA).

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At left, volunteers learn trail-building techniques while constructing a multiuse trail at Philpott Lake. In the photo at right, volunteers learn to use a walk-behind mini-bulldozer while constructing the trail. (Photos by Jim Frith)

# Meeting to seek input on Philpott trail system

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has decided to explore possibilities for a shared-use trail system at Philpott Lake.

Public input is being sought during the planning phases of the proposed trail system. A meeting will be held at 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 13, at the Philpott Lake Visitor Assistance Center in Bassett for all interested parties.

This is an opportunity to influence trail location, design and layout as well as communicate with various stakeholders.

A well-planned trail system has the potential to not only increase the quality of life for the surrounding communities, but also to promote tourism. Contact Mary Lawson at 629-2703 or mary.c.lawson@us.army.mil for more information.

On Nov. 10 and 11, about 35 volunteers gathered at Philpott Lake Visitor Center for a trail building school presented by the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA). These volunteers represent a number of organizations that have been working together to plan and build a first-class mountain biking destination at Philpott Lake.

Their vision is to construct miles of carved single-track mountain bike trails that also can be used for hiking and running, while maintaining the pristine nature of the lake area.

A second training session was

held Nov. 17 and 18 to bring together key trail building leaders to learn how to use mechanized trail building equipment with efficient low-impact trail building techniques.

IMBA — an international organization known for its promotion of sustainable, environmentally friendly trails — spent mornings in classroom instruction at the visitor center on trail planning, design and construction. The afternoons were hands-on where students had the opportunity to use hand tools and mechanized equipment to build trails.

"This whole thing would not have happened without the spark set off by the brand new Friends of Philpott group, who had approached the Army Corps of Engineers to save Jamison Mill from closing," said Jim Frith of Martinsville. "They made the public comment that it was a dream of theirs to wrap multiuse and sport specific trails around Philpott."

Franklin County got a section started, and the Henry County Bicycle Club suggested getting IMBA involved to teach those interested how to build trails to be fun to use, to last indefinitely and to not impact the environment, Frith said.

"Naturally, since IMBA is known worldwide, all the additional groups wanted to participate and receive training too. The Southern Virginia Moun-

tain Bike Association out of Danville, which has built nearly 20 miles of trails, had worked with IMBA before and was very interested in the training using the walk-behind mini-bulldozer to work together at Philpott and also in their home area along the Dan River near Dan Daniel Park. The Franklin Freewheelers also led the charge to make it happen. Both Henry County and Franklin County recreation departments stepped up to pay for funding," he said.

"When more folks and groups wanted to participate, the Activate Martinsville and Henry County initiative of The Harvest Foundation graciously filled in the shortfall to complete the financing for the four days of training," Frith said.

Activate's mission is to improve the quality of life in Martinsville and Henry County by increasing active living and active tourism.

"The idea of three bicycle clubs across three counties, a federal agency, a citizens group, several municipalities, along with an international consulting and advocacy group all working together for the local public good is an exciting thing. This will fortify all the trained individuals to not only work together at Jamison Mill but to return to their communities and energize volunteers to build trails there, too," Frith added.