

FARMER JOHN TIRES NO LONGER "PLOW the fields." The stubble-bearded "Total Domination" racing team has vanished. And fewer bikes with names such as "Prairie Breaker" hang on the racks of your local bike shop.

We're talking about creations of the bicycle industry—advertisements and product names—that have hurt the sport's image by crossing the gonzo line into reckless, environmentally insensitive imagery.

Now those ads and abusive labels rarely appear. The bicycle industry has realized that proper presentation of off-road cycling is crucial to the sport's growth—maybe even to its survival. Manufacturers see the link between land access and sales.

"The bottom line is mountain bikes are the industry's life blood now," says Bob Holderith, owner of Ramapo Valley Cycle Shop in New Jersey.

INDUSTRY REPORT CARD

Many companies have gone further, and are now supporting trail maintenance efforts and the education campaign of the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA). Some 3 dozen companies have joined IMBA, including the largest manufacturers, bicycle trade associations, and national magazines. While IMBA and other volunteer groups that support our sport need more help—from individuals, clubs, dealers, and firms—the situation has improved dramatically.

The manufacturers that are contributing to the effort deserve your backing. Here's a partial list:

- **Specialized**, by far, has done the most. It created the first trail access water bottle fund-raiser, imprinting pint bottles with IMBA's *Rules of the Trail* and donating a portion of the proceeds to the non-profit access group. This program, plus direct donations, has brought thousands of dollars to IMBA.

Specialized also has donated several bicycles. One gift became the top prize in a raffle that netted \$800 for the Mt. Wilson Bicycling Association of Los Angeles. Another was given to the Kokopelli's Trail group in Grand Junction, Colorado. Two more were donated to ranger patrols in Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park.

"We're hoping that if rangers get on bikes, bikes will be more ac-

MANUFACTURING GOODWILL

HOW THE BIKE INDUSTRY IS BOOSTING OUR SPORT'S IMAGE

BY GARY SPRUNG

cepted in national parks," says Specialized's land access coordinator, Linda DuPriest.

Specialized also promotes responsible riding through its dealers by providing a point-of-purchase easel display that holds a bicycling ethics brochure and an IMBA water bottle.

"We feel the industry has a responsibility to help land managers handle the new user group," says DuPriest.

- **Trek Bicycle Corp.** of Waterloo, Wisconsin, has met with state park officials and the Department of Natural Resources to promote the tourism revenue that cyclists bring. The company sent its technical support team to a trail maintenance day sponsored by the Southern Wisconsin Off-Road Bicycle Association at Kettle Moraine State Forest. Trek also backs the Michigan Off-Road Bicycle Association.

"We're trying to get a handle on how [trail access decisions] happen," says Mary Zellmer of Trek's marketing and promotions department. "Later, if a dealer's having a problem, we can tell them what we've discovered in our state and what is effective."

- **Merlin Metalworks** of Somerville, Massachusetts, has assisted the New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) in its efforts to educate mountain bikers who use Metropolitan District Commission parks near Boston ("City Singletrack," May). On the day we spoke, Merlin president Ashley Korenblat said she and her employees had just finished a lunch-hour project for NEMBA, stamping and addressing notices for a hearing on trails access. The com-

pany also paid for a trails expert from the Appalachian Mountain Club to speak on NEMBA's behalf at the hearing. Merlin and NEMBA hope to establish a 15-mile loop in Middlesex Fells, a 2,000-acre park located 6 miles north of downtown. Both agree, though, that trail riding there should be restricted during eastern Massachusetts' wet season.

Merlin and NEMBA are negotiating with state parks to pay a state employee to supervise trail volunteers. Finally, the company plans to donate some of its older computers to IMBA, "...if we can get enough of the titanium dust out so they don't croak," says Korenblat.

- **Fuji America** of Oakland, New Jersey, supports IMBA by donating bicycles at race raffles. It also sends IMBA \$1 for every company catalog it sells.

Holderith, a Fuji dealer, is also a race promoter. "Before every race heat, I talk about IMBA and the need to respect other trail users' needs," he says. Holderith also tacks a \$1 surcharge onto every race entry, and sends the money to IMBA.

- **Ibis Cycles**, of Sebastopol, California, pays the \$15 fee to enroll every new Ibis purchaser as an IMBA member. "Ibis has always been at the forefront of new designs and quality manufacturing," says president Scot Nicol. "We feel that showing leadership in land access will encourage other manufacturers to follow our lead." Ibis also puts a removable sticker on its top tubes that says, "Buy an Ibis, save a trail."

- **Diamond Back** (Western States Imports) encourages its dealers to join IMBA by paying half the \$60

membership. If the dealer pays the full \$60, the manufacturer sends a matching contribution to IMBA.

Diamond Back constructs large trail signs that include a yield triangle symbol and trail courtesy tips, and also sells a bicycle ethics water bottle. Proceeds from the sale of both go to IMBA.

Diamond Back's marketing director Steven Miller says, "Trails are a limited resource." He's learned the lesson firsthand. Park trails near the company's Camarillo, California, headquarters have been closed to bikes. "It's no fun," he says. "I like to ride off road [as do] a lot of people in this building. It's an emotional and personal issue for us. We really can see it from the riders' side."

• **Bridgestone Cycle USA** of San Leandro, California, devoted 1½ pages of its '90 catalog to low-impact trail riding.

"Speed only matters in races, or when mom is ringing the dinner bell," it read. "How about evaluating our riding skills by how little we impose on other trail users, and how little trace we leave?" The booklet explained the impact of bicycles on soil and advised how to avoid damaging trails and minimize user conflicts. The catalog cost \$3, and the company donated \$1 to IMBA and \$1 to the Worldwatch Institute, which promotes transportation alternatives.

"The role of bicycles in solving our nation's transportation dilemma is crucial," says Grant Petersen, Bridgestone's marketing manager.

• **Schwinn**, the nation's largest bike manufacturer, is an IMBA member. Its advocacy efforts focus on the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and an extensive recycling program.

AN EVER-GROWING LIST

The number of companies involved in promoting responsible mountain biking is growing each month. Others who are contributing include **Raleigh, Klein, West Coast Cycle, Dia-Compe, Shimano, and Interbike**. Also: **Blackburn, Giro, Pearl Izumi, Bike Boyz, Yeti, Service Cycle Supply, Rocky Mountain Bicycle Co., Mountain Goat, and Ocean State International**.

One of the most significant industry contributions last year wasn't a bike, bottle or cash donation, but a book, *Mountain Bikes on Public Lands: A Manager's Guide to the*

State of the Practice, published by the Bicycle Federation of America (BFA), a bicycle promotion organization based in Washington, DC. The book is recognized as the most comprehensive source of mountain bike access and trail design information available. (It costs \$20 per copy, postpaid, from the Bicycle Federation of America, 1818 R St. NW, Washington, DC 20009.)

Bill Wilkinson, BFA executive director, has seen how the burgeoning

land-access issue has awakened the industry to problems faced by off-road cyclists.

"The presidents of Huffy, Schwinn, and Raleigh are up to their eyeballs writing to senators and representatives," he says. "In 20 years, I've never seen so much activity."

If you know of a company that's supporting the effort but is not mentioned here, please let us know. We'll include the information in an industry update in an upcoming issue. ●