

Head to Loudonville, Ohio's canoe capital, to pick up a nice new mountain bike trail

By Bob Downing
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LOUDONVILLE: To me, Ohio's Mohican Country for a long time meant one thing: paddling the Mohican River.

That's what made Loudonville the canoe capital of Ohio, with its multitude of liveries that sent happy paddlers splashing down the various branches of the Mohican.

You can still paddle the knee-deep Mohican in southern Ashland County, but there's something new outside Loudonville: an 8½-mile mountain bike trail.

The trail, one of the sweetest on state-owned land in Ohio, lies in Mohican State Park and the adjoining Mohican Memorial State Forest and overlooks the Clearfork of the Mohican River.

The trail is not only for mountain bikers; it is open to hikers, too.

The trail, the result of five years of planning, is envisioned to be a low-impact recreational facility that is compatible with the state forest and the state park.

The eastern terminus of the trail is at the state park campground off state Route 3 south of Loudonville. Park near the campground entrance.

The western terminus is near the group campground off Ashland County Road 939 near



The new mountain bike trail on the north ridge will give you a high view into the Clearfork Gorge.

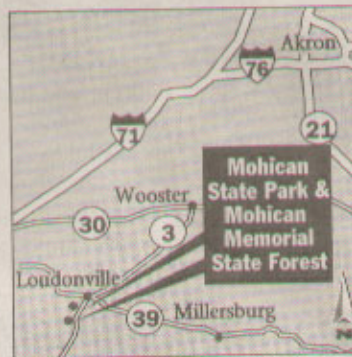
the state forest headquarters.

The trail was built by a partnership between the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the Ohio Mountain Biking Association.

At its eastern end, the trail wends its way uphill and then

curves along a wooded ridge on the north side of the Clearfork Gorge. The new trail repeatedly snakes back on itself in sweeping curves that create a longer trail in a shorter space.

It is moderately hilly, very wooded, wonderfully isolated



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(once you get away from the highway). It gets bone-jarringly rocky and rough near the top of the ridge.

The scenery is especially stellar at the western end of the trail, with steep drops into the picturesque river gorge.

The trail narrows there, with giant hemlocks towering overhead before the eastbound trail drops in a steep wash or gully. It's hard to believe that you're still in Ohio.

Expansion planned

The trail - which opened in April - was designed and built by Ryan O'Dell and the members of the Mohican/Malabar Bike Club.

Plans are being developed for an even bigger mountain bike trail system at Mohican, O'Dell said.

That includes turning the current mountain bike trail into a 20-mile loop and adding a 5-mile beginners loop, he said.

Mohican is now among the 31 Ohio state parks that together have 273 miles of mountain bike

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