



Mountain Biking in Finnish Protected Areas

IMBA Europe Summit, April 2016

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Parks & Wildlife Finland follows MTB development

Due to the increasing popularity of MTB and rising demand of designated trails in protected areas, Parks & Wildlife Finland has revised the policy towards mountain biking in protected areas

- Currently P&WF has a generally permissive approach towards MTB

Identified benefits of MTB are manifold, e.g.:

- promotion of physical, mental and social health,
- activating new target groups into outdoors (especially physically inactive young males)
- economical benefits to tourism providers

However, we should be prepared and plan for anticipated risks (degradation, social conflicts) and monitor them actively

Mountain biking in Finnish protected areas – a few principles and guidelines

“Cycling and mountain biking are **allowed by public right of access**, generally also in protected areas. They are usually practiced using existing trails, routes, and roads...

Mountain biking can cause erosion on hill slopes, fell areas, and other vulnerable habitats, such as sandy heaths and rocky areas with light vegetation cover.

Mountain bikers and other path users can generally use the same routes, though on the busiest routes, mountain biking can be restricted for security reasons.

If a **management plan** is drawn up for a protected area, it **should take mountain bikers into account** and should involve enthusiasts and mountain biking clubs in the planning process...”

Source: [Principles of Protected Area Management in Finland \(2014\)](#), Parks & Wildlife Finland



Mountain biking offer in Finnish National Parks

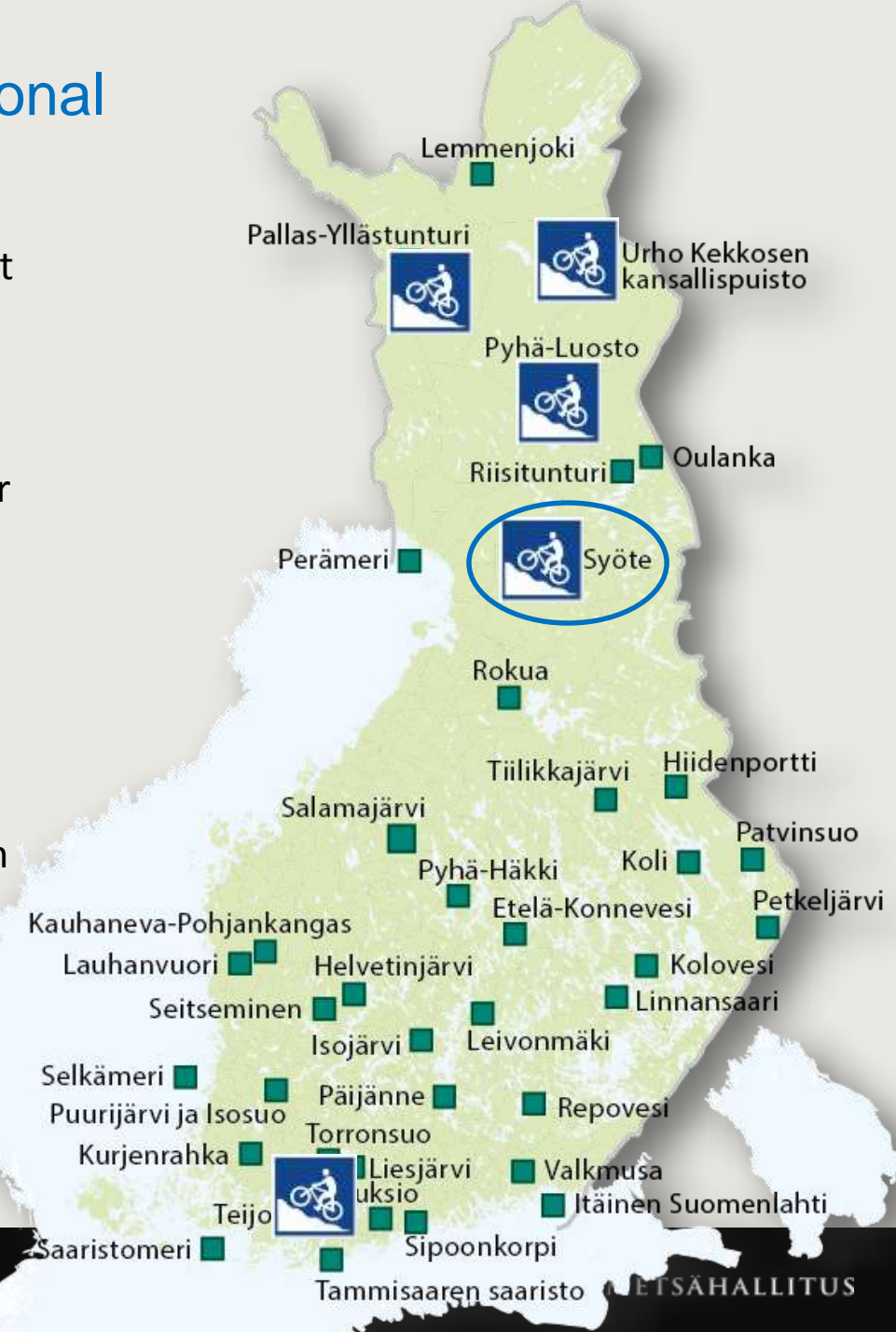
Possibilities for mountain biking in Finland are abundant due to the everyman's rights, which enables access on most natural trails and pathways.

P&WF manages approximately 600 kilometres of designated cycling trails, most of which are intended for mountain biking. New trails are under development in many areas.

Trail characteristics for protected areas: trails of natural origin, long trail distances, remote locations and wilderness-like surroundings.

MTB trail offer in national parks (see map) is focused on northern parks and tourism resorts in their vicinity:

- Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park
- Urho Kekkosen National Park
- Pyhä-Luosto National Park
- **Syöte National Park (case presented)**
- Teijo National Park





Syöte National Park – *Enjoy an active break in the wooded hills of the north*



- European Charter for Sustainable Tourism member since 2004, first in Finland
- Approx. 40 000 visits per year – we offer silence and peace of nature
- Main activities: hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, snowshoe walking

- Key components of ECST in Syöte:
 1. The Charter Forum
 - Advisory body for Syöte National Park management, linking stakeholders together with the park staff. Steering group for park development projects.
 - Forum has recently emphasized the importance of mountain bike development, due to customer feedback and increase in business viability
 2. The Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy (2011)
 - Set an aim to develop diverse and demand-based nature tourism products
 - The strategy will be updated in 2016-2017, strong emphasis in MTB development



Syöte National Park – *Enjoy an active break in the wooded hills of the north*



- Designated MTB trail network of three circular trails, total 70 kilometres, in and around the [Syöte National Park](#)
 - Trails developed in 2009-2010
 - Trail improvements planned for 2016-2017
 - Approx. 10 % of visits to park made by bike
- MTB trails designed with users
 - Mostly natural single track (see photo)
 - User insights utilized in planning
 - User participation enables outstanding attention to important details
- Winter trails for fatbikes (nearly 50 kilometres)
- Commercial services available: bike rental, maintenance/spares, accommodation, food, etc.
 - [Syöte Bike Hotel Concept](#)
- Events: [Syöte MTB](#), [Syöte MTB Winter](#)



Current issues & challenges

Are electric assisted mountain bikes welcome in protected areas?

- P&WF is currently analysing the situation
- Risks: potential safety issues due to increasing speed, increased degradation in slopes due to e-powered pedaling
- For now, P&FW regards e-mountain biking as part of the Everyman's Rights, allowing use in protected areas

How to increase user participation and volunteering in MTB development?

- Mountain bike enthusiasts, groups & clubs are key target group for volunteer events and participatory planning in protected areas
- Good experiences from trail design, implementation and maintenance as well as MTB "mystery shopping"

Lastly, P&WF Finland is interested in international co-operation in mountain biking development!



Photo: Veikko Virkkunen

Thank you!

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