

Noxubee Hills Trail System
By Emma Moffett

The Noxubee Hills Trail System is located in the Ackerman Unit of the Tombigbee National Forest, is overlooked, underused and one of the best mountain biking trails in Mississippi.

This trail system has been in the works since 2000 under the supervision of District Ranger Baswell. After 18 years, the trail system now has approximately 30 miles of volunteer built mountain biking and hiking trails. The Noxubee Hills Trail System offers detailed maps and trail descriptions to visitors, so people hiking or biking on the trails can easily navigate around the system. This trail system includes at least two dozen bridges and many board walks around the lake.

The majority of these single-track trails were designed by trail manager Charlotte Faquay, her husband, Hugh Ector, Betty Ector and Mike Murphey, the previous owner of The Bicycle Shop in Starkville. Faquay spearheaded the majority of the projects and work done on the Noxubee Hills Trail System. Through her hard work and dedication, Faquay has earned the nick name of "Lady Nox."

Faquay said that she put in tireless hours working on the trail system and wishes that more people in the community and state were aware of the trail system. Faquay said she fears as it becomes harder for her to help maintain and speak about the trails, the system will be forgotten and fall apart.

Landon Voller, president of Starkville Cycling Club, said last year 400 hours were put towards maintaining the trails through weed eating, clearing trails and removing dead trees. While Voller said he believes the trails are getting more use than they have in the past, there is currently no method in place to determine the amount of trail visitors other than by analyzing the leaves on the trails.

"That is probably one of the best mountain biking trails in the state and it probably gets some of the least use because of a lack in publicity and awareness," Voller said.

Voller said this is a unique resource that attracts people from Birmingham to Jackson to cycle, but many people are still unaware that the Noxubee Hills Trail System even exists.

"A lot of people who live in the area have no idea this exists," Voller said. "College students who want to hike or bike are missing out because they don't know what an amazing opportunity is right out their back door."

The Noxubee Hills Trail System hosts an annual mountain biking race, currently named "Charlotte's Revenge" in honor of Charlotte Faquay's dedication to the trail. However, Voller said this trail system could be used for much more than one race a year.

For example, in Flint Hills, Kansas, there is a gravel biking race called “Dirty Kanza” which started with only 34 racers in 2006. Today, this race attracts around 2200 bikers to participate, with tickets selling out quickly.

Voller said the Noxubee Hills Trail System has the same potential as the trails used for “Dirty Kanza” and hopes that as awareness grows the trails can be the home of many races, fundraising events and biking festivals.

The City of Ackerman recently hosted a gravel biking race as a part of a race happening in three parts across the county. Voller said he and the Starkville Cycling Club encourage more usage of the mountain biking trails for both individual riders and racing.

“We would love to see more people come out to use the trails for hiking or biking,” Voller said. “They are meant to be multipurpose trails even though they are laid out better for mountain bikers.”