

## Trail Dreams: New Group Pushes for NYC-Based Mountain Biking Paths

By [Jeremy Shweder](#)



Joseph W. Carey  
**Matt LeBow in Staten Island**

On a cold winter morning, Matt LeBow stands in a wooded park in Staten Island. Near the park's entrance an abandoned, rusted-out car gathers weeds. Three kids, probably skipping school on a weekday, hang out in another section. To LeBow's eyes, this park is beautiful, simply because of its potential.

LeBow is the head of a newly formed group of New York City residents who are trying to do the impossible: create legalized mountain-biking trails in New York City. The group, dubbed the New York City Mountain Bikers, is focusing its efforts on Wolfe's Pond Park and Long Pond Park, two wooded and mostly unused city-run parks in Staten Island.

"I'm selling it as a multi-use trail system," LeBow says. "Hikers, bikers, walkers, cross-country skiers, everyone should be able to use it, just like everywhere else in the country."

The problem is that the New York City Parks & Recreation Department does not allow off-road mountain biking on any parks in the five boroughs. That's not to say that some illegal mountain biking doesn't already happen, but technically, mountain biking is not permitted.

LeBow, with a big assist from the International Mountain Bicycling Association, wants to change that. Last fall Tim Blumenthal, executive director at Boulder, Colo., based IMBA, walked through Wolfe's Pond Park and Long Pond Park and saw enough terrain to make about 10 miles of solid mountain-biking trails.

"I was super impressed," Blumenthal says. "I had forgotten that Staten Island was so hilly and had that much forest. It has a lot of potential."

Building and maintaining trails is one challenge. A bigger hurdle is the political negotiation involved in getting the go-ahead from the city.

"The New York City parks department," Blumenthal says, "when you say mountain biking, traditionally they haven't responded well."

But that's partly because legalized mountain biking in an area like Central Park could cause too many multi-user problems, Blumenthal says. In parks like Wolfe's Pond and Long Pond, which currently get limited use, it would be easier to work out the user conflicts.

So far, neither Blumenthal nor LeBow have had a formal meeting on the issue with the parks department, something they hope to do this spring. In the meantime, LeBow is trying to get as many people on board with the New York City Mountain Bikers as possible.

"There's no downside to this," LeBow says. "Tourists are going to come here to do this. If you can come to New York and mountain bike in the morning, then get on a kayak and go to the Statue of Liberty in the afternoon, and then go see Les Miserable on Broadway, where else in the world are you going to do that?"

To get more information about the New York City Mountain Bikers, see [NYCMB](#).