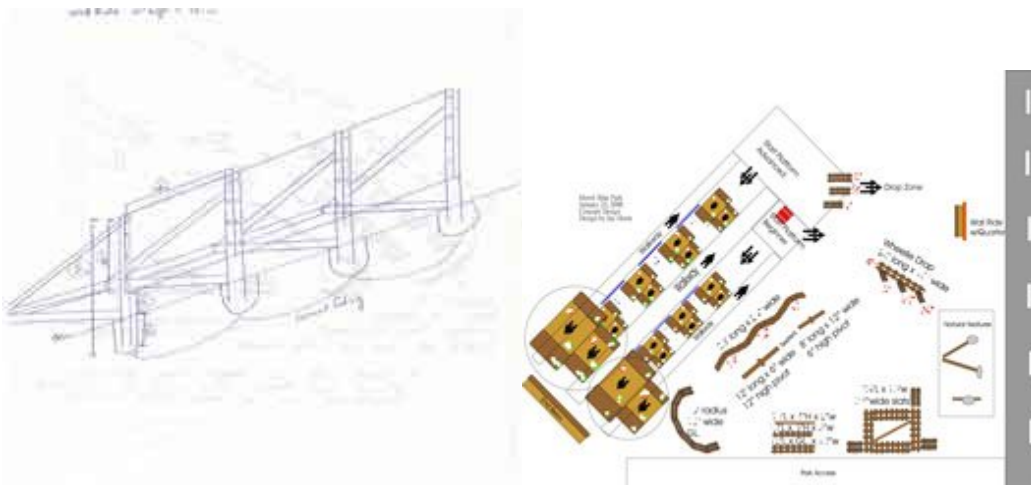


Merrit



In late 2005 I was contacted by Darren Coates, director of the Merrit Mountain Bike Association with questions regarding process and information on building a bike 'Skills Park'. After months of on and off again information exchange it was decided that Hoots could help with both design and build process and a site visit was made to meet the club and get a grip on the scope of the project.

During the site visit, Darren provided feedback and ideas from the local youth and riders which provided an amazing baseline for the design process. A local rider and active contractor provided an extraordinary amount of local information on the site, dirt, slope, and natural water flow which again helped so much when the design hit paper.



Coming into January after several design alterations, the Merrit Skills Park design was ready to go and final details on some of the technical features were worked out on paper so that pre fabrication could take place before the scheduled build day in the first week of April 2006.

Spring weather held and I got into town bright and early on a Saturday morning to find the 5 main contractors for that area had all showed up in full force ready to go. All of these guys (business competitors) synched their radios in and worked together for 2 days to build one of the best parks to date! Being a total equipment nerd I feel compelled to list what showed up because the long and short of it, close to \$3 million dollars worth of machinery went crazy!

If you want to build a park fast and right, check this list:

- 4 200 series full size excavators
- 2 900 series front loaders
- 1 Huge DIRT screening plant
- 1 Mini excavator
- 1 tracked bobcat
- 4 dump trucks serviced by excavator at another site loaded dirt and unloaded removed duff

Every piece of equipment came with fully versed and experienced operators who knew the lay of the land as well as Al did. We had to strip out the vegetation from the ride sections before we could even think about building, and because of slope shifting and instability we did not disturb the preexisting bank, the entire park was backfilled and shaped load at a time with processed dirt.





Once the duff was removed and ride surfaces were prepped, volunteers started to show up around noon, as did more local businessmen who had contributed the wood structures which were prefabricated ready for installation. With the help of volly's and operators the technical features were installed while the jumps were being shaped. Day 1 was over around 7pm and when everyone left to go home after a huge day, Dwayne stayed and screened materials to prepare for the next day of building! What a super star!





Early Sunday morning brought the sweet sound of multiple diesel engines and eager volunteers with tools banging together in hand, and building once again commenced. With a very experienced crew of DIRT monkeys, sifted DIRT piles were shaped into jumps and the first bikes were challenging the runs during lunch time.



As the afternoon continued it became apparent that we were going to have 80% of the park built in 2 days!!! Other than the bobcat, 4pm Sunday night saw a close to all heavy machinery operation and shaping soon turned to riding.



The following weekend was scheduled for the park finish but I ended up in California filling some riding and business obligations while the Merrit folk got down to business and dialed in the balance of the park less teeter totters. We agreed that I would show up the next weekend for the final finish of the park and some teaching/coaching, a terrific decision and highly recommended.



Saturday morning after quick installation of 2 teeter totters the men's clinics began and not only did the riding locals come out but the local trail builders to. XC bikes for traded for a new school jump bikes and we had a riot! For lunch the mayor, councilor's and representatives from the Rotary Club (funding behind the park) came out and the local newspaper covered the ribbon cutting.



After some freeky riding with the local youth for some newspaper shots, the afternoon kids camp covered basic riding skills and everyone ended up both challenging technical features and jumps. When the day of clinic's was finished Eric the BOBCAT kid showed up with several build youth and we took the opportunity to perect in the jump sets. I assure you it was worth waiting for dinner that evening, when we were finished those sets were killer! Every jump trickable.



Sunday morning clinic's kicked butt. Super keen XC women that by the end of the 3 hours were jumping and dropping like pro's, look out Merrit I think the lady's may take over! A very very very hot burrito at the local taco shop and the last clinic started with ages 13 thru 55 represented.



Merrit knows how to gett'r-done! Merrit offers a fantastic bike park, terrific trails of all types and solid, good people. Biggest of shout outs to Darren Coates for his vision, perseverance and organization, the Coates family for allowing me into their comfortable home, the town and contractors of Merrit for allowing and building a responsible choice.

Al a local rider and active contractor provided an extraordinary amount of local information on the site, dirt, slope, and natural water flow which again helped so much when the design hit paper.