



### **Trailfest is Proof of Hatfield-McCoy's Impact on Southern WV**

Trailfest 2008 is coming up fast, and now is as good a time as any to take a look at the benefits it reaps for the Hatfield-McCoy project area. So, check out the article below for some great information on Trailfest's economic impact and a look back at the history of the event. Also, be sure to check back later this week, when we'll be serving up a preview of Trailfest 08, as well as hooking you up with some registration info.

“For four days in October, the tiny town of Gilbert, WV, swells to almost 10 times its normal size as off-road enthusiasts travel from all over the country to TrailFest, the nation's premier off-road trail riding event. Not bad for a town of fewer than 400 folks located some 30 winding, mountain miles from the nearest four-lane highway.

The story of TrailFest and the hundreds of thousands of dollars it pumps into Gilbert each Columbus Day Weekend is testament to the economic impact the Hatfield~McCoy Trails System has had in Southern West Virginia. “Hatfield~McCoy Trails is first and foremost an economic development engine,” says Jeffrey Lusk, executive director of the Hatfield~McCoy Recreational Trail Authority. “That doesn't mean we can't have fun while doing it.”

This year's TrailFest, from Oct. 9-13 features four full days of riding the Hatfield~McCoy Trails and a variety of evening entertainment: Fisher's Mud Run sponsored by Fisher's ATV World, drag racing and other events. Brian Fisher will also be gathering film for later use on his two off-road shows on the Versus and Outdoor Channel cable networks. Ball of Steel, a motorbike stunt show, will also be performing three days.

TrailFest “is by far the biggest weekend we have all year,” says Tim McCoy, executive director of the Larry Joe Harless Community Center, site of most of the activities. “We look forward to it because of the reunion type atmosphere that has developed in the last several years.

An economic impact study done in 2006 estimated that the Hatfield~McCoy Trails added 146 new jobs to the struggling southern West Virginia economy, as well as \$2.7 million in income and \$7.7 million in output. An important contributor to that impact is TrailFest, begun in Logan in 2000. The event moved to Gilbert the next year and hasn't left. In 2001, about 300 people attended. This year, organizers expect upwards of 3,000 visitors from Oct. 9-13.

## APPENDIX A: TRAILFEST

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“The money is spent in the restaurants ,it’s spent in the gas stations, it’s spent on the ATV rentals, it’s spent on the repairs,” Lusk said. “A lot is spent on repairs.”

Not only does TrailFest fill to capacity the 25 or so Gilbert businesses that offer lodging – from a motel, to guest rooms, the 140 campsites at the Larry Joe Harless Community Center had sold out by July 1 and organizers have been scouring the area securing any vacant 25-by-35-foot plot of land they could find for the influx of ATV- and bike-riders.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is even re-opening the R.D. Bailey Lake campground for the weekend to accommodate visitors. Vendors such as Suzuki, Yamaha, Kawasaki, Polaris, Can-Am and Arctic Cat will be on hand.

“Those are the major off-road machine companies and several of them will be giving demonstration rides,” Lusk said. “Folks can come in and ride their next year’s product today.”

In addition to meals and entertainment, participants will receive a permit to ride the Trails. Most will take to the Browning Fork Trails, a 125-mile system accessible at the Rockhouse Trailhead on U.S. Highway 52 in Gilbert, but the permit they receive as part of their registration is good on any of the nearly 500-mile Hatfield~McCoy system.

Gilbert is one of four ATV Friendly Towns throughout the Hatfield~McCoy system, meaning off-road vehicle riders can ride their machines on the streets. Perhaps more than any other of the towns, Gilbert has opened its arms to four-wheelers, McCoy said. “We’ve pretty much opened up our doors and welcome people in. We want them to know they are not an inconvenience, that they are not a nuisance. They are welcome here, we’re glad they’re here and we want them to continue to come.”

“You really get to see that ATV-friendly attitude during TrailFest,” Lusk said.

“The lines of ATVs, dirt bikes and other off-road vehicles at the McDonald’s drive in window will just astound you.”

Even the fire department gets into the act, offering an “ATV Wash” during the weekend. And the mayor is out putting up signs.

“The whole community gets involved. It’s a great experience for everybody,” Lusk said. “It’s a good experience for the trail rider, the townspeople and us.”



For more information, go to:

***<http://www.NationalTrailFest.com> or <http://www.TrailsHeaven.com>.***

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