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**SNOWSHOE HIGHLANDS RIDE CENTER LEVELS UP – ANNOUNCES SILVER-LEVEL RIDE CENTER DESIGNATION**

Pocahontas County, W.Va. – Only a year after its debut, the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) has designated Snowshoe Highlands Ride Center as a Silver-Level Ride Center.

“Our communities and partners have been planning and working very hard the past year to achieve the Silver Ride Center status,” said Cara Rose, Executive Director at the Pocahontas County Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB).

“Our designation is leveraging our extensive public lands and trails, our partnerships with Snowshoe Mountain and the US Forest Service and our unlimited natural beauty to enhance our tourism economy through mountain biking and outdoor recreation.”

With its induction into IMBA as a Bronze-Level Ride Center in August 2019, the Snowshoe Highlands Ride Center has extensively grown its trail systems and amenities over the course of the last year, with the help of many talented and hardworking organizations.

“The SHARC Team has done an incredible job over the last year improving existing trails, building new trails and adding signage,” said Steve Kasacek, IMBA Project Manager.

“Most importantly, the SHARC team is working collaboratively as a diverse partnership of stakeholders to improve the riding in the region. If you haven’t been, the Wild and Wonderful riding in the Snowshoe Highlands is rugged, fast and fun.”

### **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A BRONZE & SILVER-LEVEL RIDE CENTER?**

IMBA utilizes three different rankings to denote a Ride Center’s status: bronze, silver and gold. Using seven different factors including, trail experience, services, community involvement, tourism, promotion, marketing, evaluation and measurement, IMBA then decides if a Ride Center is gold, silver or bronze.

“The Ride Center designation represents IMBA’s Model Trail recognition for large-scale mountain bike facilities that offer something for every rider,” says IMBA’s Ride Center Application Guide on their website.

The basis of IMBA’s criteria focuses not only on the mountain biking product, but the experience and culture of the community applying as well. The IMBA application itself encourages growth of all Ride Centers, as they expand through the three different rankings adding to and improving the quality of the trail systems, amenities and building the community culture within the IMBA Ride Center.

### **REGIONAL COLLABORATION:**

The Snowshoe Highlands Silver-Level Ride Center designation highlights the collaborative effort and the talent of many countywide organizations.

The Monongahela National Forest plays a significant role in the success of the Snowshoe Highlands Ride Center. With over three hundred miles of mountain biking trails just in the section of the Monongahela National Forest in Pocahontas County alone, these public lands and the trails that weave throughout, have significantly helped achieve Silver-Level Ride Center status.

“We are proud to be a part of the Snowshoe Highlands IMBA Ride Center,” said Forest Supervisor Shawn Cochran of the US Forest Service. “The IMBA Ride Center is generating a lot of great energy and we look forward to continuing the work with partners to enhance the local rural economy and quality of life for residents and visitors.”

Snowshoe Mountain is the epicenter of the Snowshoe Highlands IMBA Ride Center. A significant portion of the trails included in the Snowshoe Highlands Ride Center are on Snowshoe property, both in their lift-accessed bike park and their 11,000 acre backcountry. Recently, Snowshoe Mountain announced the return of the UCI MTB World Cup Finals, set to take place Sept. 18-19, 2021.

“In 2019 we played host to the World Cup Finals and it ended up being one of the most memorable events in the history of the sport.” said Snowshoe PR Manager, Shawn Cassell. “Hosting an event of that magnitude, with the global, live broadcast on Red Bull TV, really put a bright spotlight on the quality of mountain biking to be found here in the Snowshoe Highlands Ride Center. We’re beyond excited to have that opportunity to showcase our area again in 2021.”

The local IMBA chapter, Pocahontas Trails, has been a pivotal partner in the success of the Snowshoe Highlands Ride Center from the beginning. The Pocahontas Trails mission is to improve and promote the trails in Pocahontas County as they work with countywide communities and organizations to repair, design and build trails.

### **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT FOR THE SNOWSHOE HIGHLANDS RIDE CENTER?**

As the goal was set a little over a year ago to reach Silver status after obtaining Bronze-Level designation last year, Snowshoe Highlands IMBA Ride Center now aims to go for gold.

“We can do this,” said Eric Lindberg from Pocahontas Trails. “The community efforts over the past few years to obtain Silver status have demonstrated how much we can achieve. Aiming for gold sets the bar pretty high, but with the support of all the stakeholders is it clearly possible. New bike optimized trails, including adding more green trails, maintenance, wayfinding and connecting trails to support epic rides are all elements we are actively working on. Our plan is aggressive, we would like to see Gold in five years. Riding in the Snowshoe Highlands IMBA Ride Center is only going to get better.”

### **ABOUT INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN BICYCLING ASSOCIATION (IMBA)**

The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit educational association established in 1988. Its mission is to create, enhance and protect great places to ride mountain bikes. It is focused on creating more trails close to home to grow the quantity and quality of mountain bike trail communities from across the U.S., so everyone has access to close-to-home rides and iconic backcountry experiences.

For more information, please visit [IMBA.com](http://IMBA.com).

### **ABOUT POCAHONTAS COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU**

The Pocahontas County Convention and Visitors Bureau is the destination marketing organization for Pocahontas County, West Virginia. Pocahontas County is home to Green Bank Observatory, Pearl S. Buck Birthplace, Monongahela National Forest, Snowshoe Mountain Resort, five state parks, two state forests and eight rivers.

For more information, please visit [NaturesMtnPlayground.com](http://NaturesMtnPlayground.com), or call (304)799-4636.

## **ABOUT THE MONONGAHELA NATIONAL FOREST**

Nearly one million acres in size and spanning across 10 counties in West Virginia, the Monongahela National Forest is the largest expanse of public land in the state. Rugged topography, intact forests, fast-moving mountain streams and small communities interspersed with pastoral farmland combine to create a sense of seclusion and solitude. It also provides a stunning backdrop and hundreds of miles of trails that are open to biking. Established in 1920, the Monongahela National Forest is one of the most ecologically diverse areas in the U.S. The highest elevations in the Mountain State are in the Monongahela National Forest, including Spruce Knob at 4,863 feet. The Monongahela National Forest is a working forest providing timber, clean water, grazing, minerals and recreational opportunities for current and future generations.

For more information, please visit [FS.USDA.gov/MSF](https://fs.usda.gov/MSF) or call (304)636-1800

## **ABOUT SNOWSHOE MOUNTAIN RESORT**

Snowshoe Mountain Resort is the perfect year-round destination for adventure-filled vacations in West Virginia. Snowshoe Mountain Resort covers a total area of 11,000 acres in the Appalachian Mountain Range and includes the second highest point in the Mountain State at 4,848 feet elevation. Snowshoe Mountain Resort was named “Best Ski Resort” in the region by readers of Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine. The Snowshoe Bike Park was recently named the #1 Bike Park in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic regions by MTBParks.com, and will carry on their second year playing host of the UCI MTB World Cup Finals in September 2021. Snowshoe Mountain Resort offers the most skiable terrain in the region, extensive lodging options, fully developed mountain biking trails, a popular golf course designed by Gary Player, wedding and convention areas, and a wide variety of outdoor activities. Apart of the Alterra Mountain Company, and included on the Ikon Pass, the new standard in season passes.

For more information, please visit [SnowshoeMtn.com](https://SnowshoeMtn.com), or call (877)441-4386.

## **ABOUT POCAHONTAS TRAILS**

Pocahontas Trails is the local IMBA chapter in Pocahontas County, West Virginia. Their goal is to improve and promote the mountain biking trails in Pocahontas County by working with the community and other organizations to repair, design and build trails. Their vision is to enhance trail sustainability, safety and the rider/hiker experience.

For more information, please visit [PocahontasTrails.com](https://PocahontasTrails.com)

## **ABOUT WV EXTENSION SERVICE – RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

Sustainable rural tourism development is a complex process. The WVU Extension Rural Tourism Specialist provides participatory research, planning and training programs with support of a transdisciplinary team of WVU faculty and students. Partnerships with Recreation, Parks and Tourism Resources, Landscape Architecture, Natural Resources Analysis Center, Graphic Design, Public Administration, Business and Economics and other Colleges and Departments at WVU

provide a depth of knowledge and expertise strategically targeted to support the development of a sustainable tourism economy in the Mountain State.

**ADDITIONAL MEDIA:**

SNOWSHOE HIGHLANDS – VIDEO ANNOUNCEMENT

onedrive to download:

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Youtube:

[https://youtu.be/buXN\\_d3Kd\\_Y](https://youtu.be/buXN_d3Kd_Y)

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