

Triathletes, bikers groups present North Trail devt plan



Bikers pass through the Santa Claus Trail during a local tournament in 2018.

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The Triathlon Association of the CNMI and Northern Mariana Islands Cycling Federation have submitted its enhancement project plan for the North Trail in support of the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers' Public Private Partnership initiative.

Under their proposal, the two sports organizations will work on the maintenance and installation of signage (informative and directional) at the North Trail, which includes Banzai Trail, Santa Claus, Autobahn, Bird Island Trail, and Kimikaze Trail. These trails are interconnected and located at the heart of the tourist sites in Marpi, drawing bikers, hikers, and even those just looking for a leisure walk.

TRAC vice president Manny Sitchon said significant

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also had a closest to the pin shot—the longer par-3 hole No. 11 (170 yards). The two other closest to the pin contests were won by Krishnan, who hit the KP on the 150-yard No. 4 and 139-yard No. 6.

The May Ace winner also made a closest to the pin drive on the par-5 and longest hole—the 502-yard No. 18. Guerrero matched Krishnan's longest drive feat on the par-4, 346-yard hole No. 9.

Meanwhile, SGA will continue to hold make-up tournaments with the August Ace event scheduled for this Sunday, also at the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort. The association is catching up with its monthly competitions after missing several tournaments early this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tee time for this weekend's event is 9am, while show time is at 8:30am.

improvements and proper maintenance of the North Trail would ensure the safety of both residents and visitors and help in the promotion of sport tourism in the CNMI.

Some parts of the North Trail were utilized for XTERRA Saipan, which used to be among the signature events of the Marianas Visitors Authority. The off-road triathlon event dubbed as XTERRA's Jewel used to bring hundreds of triathletes from across the globe to Saipan every year since it debuted on island in 2002, but it was discontinued in 2018 due to budgetary constraints.

Trail runs and team building activities are also held at the North Trail.

"As we worked on improvements at the North Trail, we can start planning for events that will cater to both on-island and off-island sports enthusiasts and nature lovers," Sitchon said.

Besides the maintenance and signage construction, TRAC and NMICF have also proposed creating special features at the North Trail, specifically the Banzai Trail. They suggested to create a viewing deck with benches, double bubble ramp, shore-bridge system, teeter totter, and

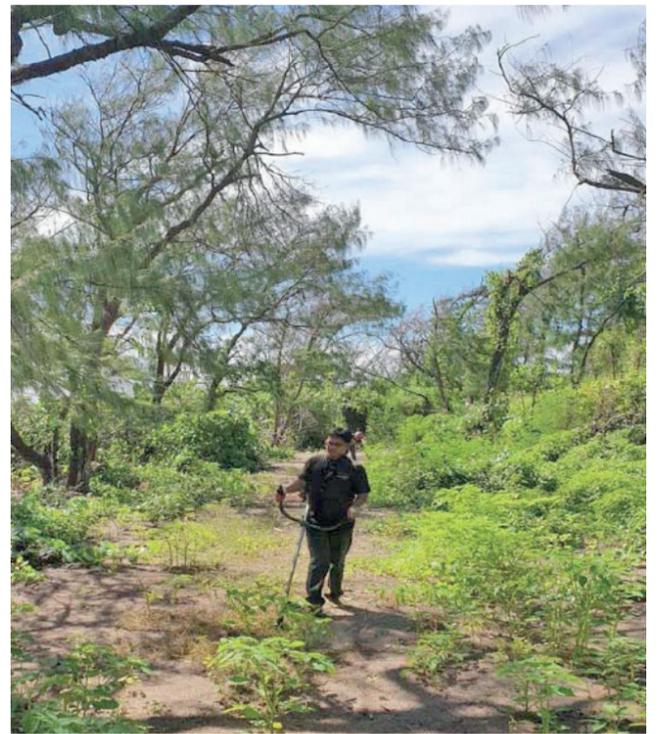
curved wall. All these features will make the Banzai Trail an attraction not only to triathletes, but their family members as well, as the spot can be turned into a bike park that can host a lot of fun activities for people of all ages.

"The proposed development projects at the North Trail are not only for sports-related events, but also for other activities, which the community and our visitors can engage in while still enjoying what Mother Nature has to offer," said NMIFC's Jay Diyco, who joined his group and TRAC in last month's clean-up drive at the North Trail. (PR)



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Northern Mariana Islands Cycling Federation and Triathlon Association of the CNMI volunteers work on the equipment the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers provided to the two sports groups for their clean-up drive and clearing project at the North Trail.



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A volunteer from Northern Mariana Islands Cycling Federation and Triathlon Association of the CNMI clears one of the trails during their clean-up drive at the North Trail.

Buffalo Bills apply to trademark fan base's Mafia nickname



ORCHARD PARK, N.Y.

(AP) — The Mafia is becoming legitimate in Buffalo—the Bills Mafia that is.

The Bills last week filed an application to trademark the fan base's adopted nickname in preparation to launch a series of branded merchandise and apparel available at Buffalo's team store and sold online.

Bills Mafia, which first became popular in 2011 and for years was considered taboo by the Bills and NFL because of

its connotation of organized crime, will be featured on everything from T-shirts to potentially pajamas, and available as early as this week.

"We felt like we needed to embrace this, because it had really turned into a community spirit," said Ron Raccuia, executive vice president of the Bills' parent company, Pegula Sports and Entertainment. "Our players and our coaching staff have really been engaged with it, and it just became very natural."

Just as important, the Bills are collaborating with mem-

bers of the Bills Mafia fan base, including Del Reid, who coined the phrase and has since launched a T-shirt business.

"I don't like using the word godfather," Raccuia joked, "but (Reid) and his partners came up with this idea, they brought it to life. We wouldn't be here without them. And they're certainly going to be a big part of this ride going forward."

That wasn't always the view of Bills management, going back to the days of Hall of Fame owner Ralph Wilson, who died in 2014. Rather than acknowledge the nickname,

the team would go out of its way to avoid its mention.

Another concern was how Bills Mafia became mischaracterized on social media, which focused on the team's rowdier, table-breaking fans, while overlooking the charitable work done on behalf of the nickname over the years.

"Bills Mafia has always stood for support of the team, not just the team in general, but the players themselves individually, like it's a family thing," said Reid, who came up with Bills Mafia as an inside joke.

The nickname stemmed

from former Bills receiver Stevie Johnson questioning God on Twitter for having a sure touchdown pass fall through his hands in overtime of a 19-16 loss to Pittsburgh on Nov. 28, 2010. Johnson's tweet went viral immediately following the game.

Reid and numerous Bills fans, however, took issue with ESPN.com's Adam Schefter for what they viewed as attempting to bring attention to himself by retweeting Johnson's post a day later. Reid and many others were eventually blocked by Schefter.

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crew in the long distance race, recalled how they battled Hong Kong neck-and-neck before gaining some cushion heading back to the shore.

"It's the hardest race out of the three that we won, not only because of the distance, but because of how tough our closest competitor is. They are

more experienced paddlers and are used to long distance races," Cruz said.

The MOC member added that going into the final day of the competition, they don't know how they will be performing in the long course, so topping the race was really a surprise.

"We know we are competitive because we trained and prepared hard for the event,

working on our techniques and conditioning, but we did not expect to sweep all three races, especially win the long course. The thing with the long distance race is you have to be smart and understand the condition of the water and the wind and use them to your advantage. In the long course, it's a matter of who's going to give up first and who's going to hang on tight and trust their

teammates," Cruz said.

With its rare sweep in the 2016 edition of the Micro Cup, MOC was named Team of the Year during the Northern Marianas Sports Association Annual Banquet.

Then in the 19th Micro Cup hosted by Guam, MOC nearly duplicated its 2016 feat after winning the 500m and long distance race anew. The group missed the 1,000m title after

placing second to BKC Men, which posted 5:48.1 in the finals against MOC's 5:49.3.

Meanwhile, the Micro Cup this year was supposed to be hosted by Guam anew, but it was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, making it the second time in three years there's no regional meet for paddlers. In 2018, the CNMI-hosted Micro Cup was scrapped due to Super Typhoon Yutu.