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Trail plans released

■ Declan Bush and Warren Hatley

WA Government ministers will unveil a South West master plan on Sunday which will cement Margaret River's place as the State's prime mountain-bike destination.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob will unveil the bike trails plan at Big Pine Trail near Carters Road.

The *Times* understands the master plan is similar to cycling peak body WestCycle's WA MTB Strategy, released earlier this year.

Work started this week to build the first 600m of trails adjacent to the Pines.

The Margaret River network will involve 80km of trails to be built in the next five years.

Former president David Willcox said the Margaret River Off-Road Cycling Association was a founding member of the lobby group which drove the master plan.

"They have played a pivotal role over the past five years building excellent working relationships with Parks and Wildlife and other stakeholders," he said.

"The trail we are currently building is the culmination of five years of advocacy work by MRORCA.

"It is the first of 10km of planned trails to be built by June next year and the first trail to be developed in-line with plans to make Margaret River an international renowned mountain-bike destination."

WestCycle interim mountain bike manager Jodie Stenbridge also said the plan identified Marga-

ret River as a high-priority area for future trails. Ms Stenbridge said the plan aimed to develop a "high quality and cohesive network of trails, which offer varied experiences, and cater for progression and diverse styles of riding while maintaining the local character of the region".

She said the master plan was unfunded, but DPaW and MRORCA grant money would pay for the first trail. "This master plan has the capacity to provide the South West with tremendous economic, tourism, environmental, health, social and community benefits through the planned development of new mountain-bike facilities, fostering community participation, and strengthening regional tourism," she said.

Margaret-River Busselton Tourism Association chief executive Pip Close said her group would push for Margaret River to become a "trail hub".

"We are very excited about the prospect of the strategy to increase visitation to the Margaret River region through the development of new, world class mountain biking trails," she said.

Regional Development Minister Terry Redman congratulated the groups for the master plan, and said the trails would let riders experience the region's natural beauty and support tourism.

WestCycle is preparing a business case for unding hubs in Margaret River, Collie, and Pemberton.