

Statewide Trails Advisory Committee (RSA 216-F:5)
 November 29, 2023
 DNCR Conference Room (172 Pembroke Rd, Concord, NH 03301)

Attendance

STAC Committee Members: need at least 9 for a quorum.

| | Name | Organization | Attended? |
|----|----------------------------------|--|------------------|
| 1 | Craig Rennie | Chief of NH Trails Bureau (BOT) | Yes |
| 2 | Captain Mike Eastman | NH Fish & Game Department | No |
| | VACANT | NH Office of Strategic Initiatives | N/A |
| | VACANT | NH Department of Transportation | N/A |
| | Director Charles Saia | NH Gov. Commission on Disability | No |
| 3 | Terry Callum | NH Snowmobile Association (NHSA) | Yes |
| 4 | Larry Gomes | NH Off Highway Vehicle Association (NHOHVA) | Yes |
| 5 | Amanda Peterson | Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) | Yes |
| 6 | Dennis Pavlicek | NH Municipal Association | No |
| 7 | Matt Scaccia | Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF) | Yes |
| 8 | Jason Soukup | NH Heritage Trail | No |
| | Director Robert Johnson (VACANT) | NH Farm Bureau Federation | No |
| 9 | Debbie Briscoe | NH Horse Council (NHHC) | Yes |
| 10 | Tom DiMaggio | NH Mushers Association (Chairman) | Yes |
| 11 | Tom Thomson | Landowner Representative | No |
| 12 | Nicholas Sanders | NH Department of Transportation-Bike/Ped | Yes |
| 13 | Tim Blagden | Human-Powered Winter Sports | Yes |
| 14 | Peter DeSantis | New England Mountain Bike Association | Yes |
| 15 | Abby Evankow | NH Bike-Walk Alliance (NHBWA) | Yes |
| 16 | Stanley Carte | White Mountain National Forest | Yes |

Guests:

| Name | Organization |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Avis Rosenfield | DTR Trails |
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DNCR Staff:

| Name | Organization | Attend? |
|-----------------|---|------------|
| Brian Wilson | Director, Division of Parks & Recreation | No |
| Alexis Rudko | Bureau of Trails, Deputy Chief | Yes |
| Jay Scarborough | Bureau of Trails, RTP Coordinator | Yes |
| Andrew Pacuk | Bureau of Trails, Non-Motorized Coordinator | Yes |
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Open Meeting

6:30PM, meeting called to order.

Introductions and Review Minutes

Introduction of members and guests made. Minutes from the 6/28/2023 meeting reviewed. Minutes approved.

Poll of members:

- **Debbie Briscoe** (NHHC) – I attended the New Hampshire Rail Trail Coalition Conference, which was very nice and well put together. It's great to have a conference

here in New Hampshire. I also recently attended a DOT 10-year plan meeting. I have two questions; will NH State Parks & NH Fish & Game adopt the Slow Down and Say Hello program? We were looking into this last time. Also, will the gate at Pisgah Rd. be done by next year? I know there was a lot of storm damage in Pisgah, so maybe it was put on the back burner. I am very happy with the three trail improvements done in Bear Brook - Salt Lick trail, the reroute, and the new connector trail that prevents going through the campsites. These were really good, and well done. **Craig** – You can thank the Nonmotorized Coordinator Andrew, he worked on them all.

- **Terry Callum** (NHTSA) – We are right on doorstep of Snowmobile season. Everyone's pretty positive, and clubs getting geared up. We are all looking forward to a great season, I know some folks are riding up near Bear Notch already.
- **Larry Gomes** (NH OHV) – last meeting I reported on SB256, which was to establish a safety program for OHRVs modeled after the existing boat operator training program. The bill passed through both the NH House and Senate but was vetoed by Governor Sununu. Despite the veto, we're not going to give up and will introduce it again in the next administration. Over the summer the Milan Trail Huggers worked on a trail signage program, we're printing the signs up and will be installed in Spring 2024. Coos county has put up street signs on all the logging roads, it's pretty amazing to see. It's going to help first responders, tow operators, and friends trying to help other friends. **Alexis Rudko** – We have talked in the Bureau of Trails about the possibility of adding What3Words stickers on existing signs since they are already in a fixed location. **Terry** – We should work with our respective user groups to distribute QR codes to educate people on how to get the What3Words app and use it. I think we should take this to all of our respective groups and encourage its use through all of our own websites.
- **Stanley Carte** (White Mountain National Forest) – The WMNF has over 1600 miles of trails. This year with the help of US Forest Service employees, there was just over 1500 miles of trails maintained. We are starting the process of putting together an oversnow vehicle use map. We are working on looking at a state map, and a Forest Service map and coming up with common trails names so everyone sees the same names. The Forest Service has its own names for many of these trails, were looking to include references to the state names so everyone can put the info together.
- **Amanda Peterson** (Appalachian Mountain Club) – AMC had a busy summer this year, it was very positive. We completed the Cardigan Mtn trail, which was RTP funded, and it is very beautiful. We had a great grand opening ceremony with a great turnout. We also worked on the Franconia Loop project, which is a big multi-year project. There is work on relocations, and really technical rock work involved in that project. This was the second year of our AmeriCorps project; we had 22 young folks join us this year and were able to get a lot done.
- **Tom DiMaggio** (NH Mushers Association) – One major thing in the Mushing community, in Hill Village where we do a lot of our training, is a pending agreement with the Army Corps that will allow us to open a couple of side trails for turnarounds. All the side trails have been closed due to damage, so we are hopeful the snowmobilers will honor the "mushers" only rule. By the end of the week, I will have that agreement signed and back to the Army Corps. The second thing that is kind of important, the older, larger kennels don't really exist in New Hampshire anymore. Most of the Mushers today have 2 to 4 dogs and don't have a lot of experience. We try to go through the whole training and explain to them what to do, but they are not tremendously experienced, so please be aware. This is more of a safety thing, again because many of the new mushers are not experienced. Be aware we are out there, not everyone is experienced, please be aware.

- **Matt Scaccia** (Society for the Protection of NH Forests) – The Forest Society is in full swing with stewardship projects. We held a record number of workdays this year, so kudos to our stewardship team on that. Our RTP-funded Mt Major project has been pushed off into next spring due to all of the weather that we had this summer. No new issues with user group conflicts to report.
- **Abby Evankow** (NH Bike-Walk Alliance) - Our members are wondering if there is an anticipated date for the signage guidelines? **Craig** – we are hoping for the Spring. **Alexis** – I am the limiting factor here, I have a lot going on with the vacant GIA Coordinator position and have to go through all of the info that Andrew is working on. The southwest part of the state has been asking for years for this, and we are very aware of how important it is to everyone.
Abby - One of our big projects this year was the Rail Trail Calendar, I have a few here with me, and we were able to have them at the NHRTC Conference. We have noticed an increase in Electric Unicycles, or One Wheels being on the Rail Trails. This is another fast-moving vehicle that could be potentially hazardous to other users. I can send additional information to the group via email.
- **Gerry Bedard** (NHDOT - Bike/Ped) - NH DOT Updated bike/ped plan there is mention of Rail Trails, but mostly just safety information. Right now, we need to be working on updating the mapping, we have some GIS maps, but they could use updating which is limited by staffing. Continuing with the 10-year plan, info is available on our website.
- **Peter DeSantis** (New England Mountain Bike Association) – In the Mountain Biking community we're getting ready for winter, everyone is gearing up. There have been some questions from users... Can Class 1 and Class 2 e-bikes can go anywhere a bike can go? Still a lot of confusion about what is allowed and not allowed. Technology is changing rapidly; I think it needs to be reflected in the law.
- **Tim Blagden** (Human-Powered Winter Sports) – Recently I've been to a couple of meetings with Jada Lindblom and Mike Polizzotti who are working through the UNH Extension and talking with groups about economic development within trails activities. I can send the group their information after the meeting if there is any interest in getting in touch with them.

Bureau of Trails Update – Craig Rennie, Chief

- **Recreation Trails Program (RTP) Updates:**
 - **FY23 RTP projects** are nearing completion. Current FY23 RTP projects need to have work completed and all of their expenses paid before the Dec.31st contract deadline.
 - The **FY24 RTP projects** have recently been reviewed by the Division of Historic Resources, and project administrators will be receiving emails with any questions or recommendations regarding their projects and possible impacts to historic features. Next step is the NEPA environmental review process. Similar to the historic review, project administrators will receive emails directly from Jay regarding and questions or concerns.
 - On August 16th, 2023, the **US Department of Transportation** found that it was in the public interest to issue a waiver of BABA's domestic preferences for iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials. In the context of RTP this means that we can continue to use these funds to purchase lumber, plastic culverts, etc. for projects approved after the August date. While the BABA waiver is great news, the original Buy America regulations on steel and iron are still in place so it is important to continue to utilize compliant materials and provide the required documentation.
- **Grant in Aid (GIA) Updates:**

- With the latest **snowmobile registration fee increase** that started in May of this year, BOT carefully reviewed the potential revenue increase to the GIA program and have adjusted the hourly grooming reimbursement rates accordingly. Overall, we are increasing the rates in each groomer class by 15% for this coming winter.
 - On Oct. 30th, we hosted our **Winter GIA Advisory Committee** meeting at HQ where it was recommended to approve over \$2.6 million for winter grooming. The G&C request was approved today and club contracts are going out now.
 - BOT has been meeting with leadership at NHTSA and NHTDVA over the last year to draft rule improvements and clarifications to the **Res 8400 Grant in Aid (GIA) Administrative Rules** that will hopefully improve and simplify the grant process for clubs and for BOT administration. Draft rules have been submitted to our legal coordinator for additional review prior to submitting them to the NH Joint Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules (JLCAR).
 - BOT has been working on a "**GIA guidelines**" document to be used as an optional supplemental that will help to address common questions from clubs that are not directly answered in the application. It is modeled after the RTP guidelines that has helped applicants successfully navigate that grant program over the years. These guidelines will be updated as needed as we work through improvements to the GIA program and Administrative Rules.
 - The **BOT website** has undergone significant changes with a more organized layout which will help clubs find and access key documents/links they need for the grant programs. You will also find most of GIA forms have been updated to be a bit more streamlined and user friendly for the clubs. A few of the remaining older forms will hopefully be updated before the spring grant round.
 - Our **GIA Coordinator position** is currently still vacant but fortunately for all of us, Alexis Rudko is doing an outstanding job covering and improving the GIA program in the interim. BOT has been working directly with the NH Division of Personnel to modify and update the position with the hope of getting it posted in the next several months.
- **Legislative items:**
 - HB 1188 5-year Study Committee regarding OHRV's: The last committee meeting was held on November 16, 2023, at NHFG HQ and there was review and discussion of RSA 215-A:41 relative to the Intent which states, "The general court declares it to be in the public interest to balance the demand for ATV and trail bike trails on state lands". Based on this discussion, a subcommittee was formed made up of 1188 committee members and NGOs to more closely look at RSA 215-A:41 through A:43. The next committee meeting is planned for January 5, 2024 at DNCR HQ.
 - There are several new LSR's proposed that are relative to OHRVs and Personal Electric Vehicles (PEV) that we will be monitoring during upcoming legislative sessions.

Heritage Trail Update – Jason Soukup not in attendance.

Old Business

- No Old Business Discussed

New Business

- Motion to add Committee contact emails to Roster on website for better communication between members and public. Motion seconded and passed with no objections.
- **Craig** – Director Wilson couldn't make it tonight; he wasn't feeling well, and I just wanted to say that he will get all of the night's notes. I was supposed to mention this at the beginning of the meeting, but again I just wanted to make sure you all know he sends his apologies.
- **Craig** – NH Rail Trail Coalition members have been joining snowmobile clubs and working together with them to increase collaboration on trails related issues along several Rail Trail corridors, like the Ammonoosuc and Presidential, with multiple user groups. This is something that is great to see and can prevent a lot of user group conflicts.

Guest Comments/Questions

- **Avis Rosenfield** (DTR Trails) – Many of you may know that there was an incident recently that caused a stir and those responsible have made a substantial donation to NH Fish & Game in an effort to make the situation whole. The hosts were grossly disobeyed, and as a result the individuals have been dismissed from our organization. Groups were satisfied with the road work that was done as a result of the issues that were raised in some of the Parks. In response to concerns holes were filled and the road was graded.

Next meeting tentatively set for April 3, 2023 6:30 PM at DNCR HQ in Concord.

Motion to adjourn, seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM.

DRAFT