

Statewide Trails Advisory Committee (RSA 216-F:5)
 June 28, 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 (VACANT)	NH Gov. Commission on Disability	N/A
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)	No
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	N/A
9	Debbie Briscoe	NH Horse Council (NHHC)	Yes
10	Tom DiMaggio	NH Mushers Association (Chairman)	Yes
11	Tom Thomson	Landowner Representative	No
12	Gerry Bedard	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)	No
16	Stanley Carte	White Mountain National Forest	No

Guests:

Name	Organization
Paula Bedard	NH Bike-Walk Alliance
Avis Rosenfield	Non-Motorized, NH Horse Council
Shelley Winters	NHDOT – Commissioner's Office

DNCR Staff:

Name	Organization	Attend?
Brian Wilson	Director, Division of Parks & Recreation	YES
Sara Stewart	DNCR Commissioner	YES
Jay Scarborough	Bureau of Trails, RTP Coordinator	YES
Alexis Rudko	Bureau of Trails, Deputy Chief	YES
Andrew Pacuk	Bureau of Trails, Non-Motorized Coordinator	YES

Open Meeting

6:32PM, meeting called to order.

Introductions and Review Minutes

Introduction of members and guests made. Minutes from the 3/22/2023 meeting reviewed. Minutes approved.

Poll of members:

- **Debbie Briscoe (NHHC)**: Equestrian users are sensitive to trail etiquette; we want to feel safe. The feeling of being in danger results in displacement of equestrians from the use of certain trails. I hate bringing up negatives, but I am trying to be proactive. What is the purpose of this exercise, what is the value? It would make me feel better to produce a campaign regarding trail etiquette as a committee. Horse people would like access to motorized trail systems, miles of trail, loops, etc. The main concern is approaching horses with too much speed, and not letting riders know they are there. This is why I think its important we work on something regarding etiquette. I recently saw a webinar about etiquette from American Trails, which ties into the Slow & Say Hello campaign. They really stress that the leaders of this campaign should be the State Park Systems or national level park leadership. On example is the “Show me, Help me, Make me” program, which focuses on reaching users in the topic areas of “show me” and “help me” to understand. Working to identify problem areas and establishing an “outpost” for advocates to speak with trail users has shown to work well in reducing problematic behaviors.
- **Gerry Bedard (NH DOT Bike/Ped)**: NH DOT maintains maps of rail trail sites, as well as the Bureau of Trails, but not all trails are on our site, as well as BOT. We are working to update our maps as we can, we are working with Andrew at the Bureau of Trails and other stakeholders, etc. I did have a question, is the Cotton Valley Trail not recommended for bike use? There is some misleading information on the web.
- **Craig Rennie (Bureau of Trails)** – the Cotton Valley Rail Trail is well used with bicycles, we have had complaints of falls related to wheels getting caught on the rails, etc. But I’m not sure why anything saying the rail trail is not good for bikes.
- **Gerry**: I mentioned last meeting that the ped/bike plan would be completed but it will likely be a bit later. The NH Seacoast Greenway is under construction now, with a late 2024 completion of the northern portion, and the most southern 4.7 mi in the state is in 10-year transport plan. One issue came up initially as guard rail project, but it was noticed that a utility pole had a guy wire that came close to the trail. Are there standards for guards on the wires adjacent to trails?
- **Craig**: We know of hazards, and we try to keep them away from trail, but the utility companies would know better.
- **Tim Blagden (Human Powered Winter Sports)** – I’ll ask Tom Sexton, at the Rails to Trails Conservancy and pull from that national resource.
- **Larry Gomes (NHOHVA)**: I’m with NHOHVA and the Trail Administrator for the Milan Trail Huggers in Coos County. A lot of trail projects are running into 6 figures, with clubs having difficulty paying for them. NHOVA has instituted a summer loan program which is helping a lot while clubs wait for Grant program reimbursements. I have been involved with Zoom classes aimed to educate on how to fill out paperwork and manage grants. We trained 13 people on how to do RTP paperwork and encourage anyone doing RTP or GIA to contact me about this training, I’ll send you a link. It is 6 hours of training, focusing on more than just filling out paperwork, we stress managing projects, spread sheets etc. We worked with lawmakers to create SB256, establishing a safety program for OHRV riders. The bill made it through the House and Senate and is now going to Governor’s desk. Whether it gets his signature or not is still a question. The bill has a lot of support, hopefully we get through. If you have been up to Coos, you may have noticed brown and white signs at trail crossings, not normal BoT signs, additional signs to identify crossings more effectively. If a rider was to call 911 and say Corridor A, this is useless, if you call and identify the crossing they will know where you are. We are trying to spread this further south, putting these same signs along the trails, with Sheriffs putting them on the gravel trails heading in. This project has been a year in the planning, we have raised \$12,000 and hope to finish by fall. I have been working on improving trail surfaces, by using clay and gravel mixes, and have been very successful. The old commonly used mixes are blown off the trails as dust or thrown off by use and are not durable. Once the clay gravel mix is packed down, after about a year it basically turns to concrete. It becomes possible to go 5, 8, maybe 10 years without replacing and this saves money

long-term. Reach out to me for advice and to hear what we have learned over the past few years.

- **Craig:** We have used this at Jericho, and it really works well. The mix does set like concrete.
- **Paula Bedard (NHBWA):** Have you had any conversations with Marianne Borowski? She works very hard on finding materials that work for all users not just OHRV. It's great to hear about these advances.
- **Larry:** Avoiding mud season is important, this mix will still rut up but is very easily repairable.
- **Tim:** It would be very great to get the information about this out, and we can provide this formula to local pits to produce for some of our trails that are notorious for issues.
- **Tom DiMaggio (NH Musers Association):** We have worked with the Army Corps on the trail that runs from Franklin to Bristol, but due to illegal snowmobile use they have closed all of the side trails. We have heard that this closure is done, and that we will be able to groom some turnaround trails. But, if it sees abuse from snowmobiles, the Army Corps will shut it down. I'm throwing this to the snowmobilers, there will be signs saying "Slow – Musers", please pass the word not to use the side trails through that area. To Debbie's earlier point, it took is two years to get a trail etiquette program together and people still had problems with it. Please slow down on the trails, if you hit a dog it may never run again. We as a group have the same issues as Debbie when it comes to safety and etiquette.
- **Paula:** I polled our users as requested. The most common concern was with the Exit 4A rail trail. This modification will have a 5% incline, which will be difficult with mobility issues. Please encourage moving forward with the original straight-forward plan. Most feedback I received was requesting that plan is reverted to the straight-forward trail plan. Some users said it would be better to keep motorized users off trails, we all realized this makes no sense for most trails. We as a group are working on a rail trail calendar, we had photo contest and next meeting Abby should have one to show the group. We will be selling it as fundraiser. To Gerry's point, I think its really a wording issue where trails are called state rail trails. If a sentence could be added to clarify state-owned trails vs other trails there might be some resolution. The list on the State Parks site is a great list, but not all the rail trails in the state are included. I agree CVRT shouldn't be on the list of trails not good for biking, and I have crashed on the rails Craig mentioned, but it's still a good trail for riding. Just a head up in the fall if we can get the wording right, there is an effort to close the loophole on really powerful ebikes being sold at shops and being told they can ride them on the rail trail. Basically, these are electric motorcycles. This is a problem we are trying to solve with legislation, adding verbiage to clarify what is and is not allowed. Classes 1 & 2 are considered safe for use with pedestrian and other users. Class 3 is higher powered more appropriate for roads. Goffstown clarified rules locally, and added stickers – Class 1 2 allowed, Class 3 not allowed.
- **Brian Wilson (DNCR):** If you are seeking a legislative tweak, I suggest keeping us in the loop and we can help.
- **Peter DeSantis (NEMBA):** I was under the impression that Class 1 & 2 were okay for State Parks, like Bear Brook. The change surprised me, this is only good for improved trails.
- **Paula:** States really need to accept Class 1 & 2 for natural surface trails, this is the way the rest of the Country is going.
- **Matt Scaccia (SPNHF):** My organization didn't have anything new to bring up, but I do have some general updates. The Forest Society owns and manages 400+ miles of trail, this year we had a record number of work dates, totaling 15-20 days. With a robust network of volunteers, we had no difficulty this year getting volunteers to come out. We are working on a really large project this year, moving 1900 feet of the Mt Major trail to a more sustainable trail route. This is the largest project we have worked on in more than a decade at least, and we were fortunate to get RTP funding to use on it. Monadnock trails week is coming up, and we usually get 40-50 people to come out and help with that. Working on the Monadnock Trails Plan with the Bureau of Trails and Andrew to help the

trails there for a long time to come. The Forest Society has been using a trails app, "Outer Spatial," where you can download the app and follow themselves on our trails. You can create outings, and anyone can use it to help develop more interpretive experiences. There seems to be a disconnect between trail users and who owns the lands they are using, a theme a lot of us can relate to. How do we highlight who is the landowner, it's always worth it to be intentional in how we word that.

- **Tim:** I have been in touch with Alexis and Andrew at the Bureau of Trails about creating a map for all non-motorized winter users, and it turns out it's a very large project. I will poll users to look at what state managed properties are being used to help this work. It's hard to reach the folks that XC and snowshoe, they go everywhere, if there is a contact somewhere out there that we could try and get involved it would be appreciated.
- **Sara Stewart (DNCR):** I'm glad I was able to be here to hear all of your input. I am very excited to be in a place that we are able to hire a non-motorized staff member, we know this is important. Now that the Legislative session has ended we are entering a phase where we will be able to get out of the office more, this is why I wanted this job, and work on outreach in our communities. We have travel and tourism asking everyone in the country to come to New Hampshire, and we want it to be safe and for us to succeed as a state. Thank you very much for letting me be here.
- **Tom:** I just wanted to stress that you have got to pass down what you hear here to your users, it is very important.
- **Brian:** Last week we had a State Park advisory committee similar to this one. I put in an emphasis on the Rail Trail program, hopefully to create some increased awareness among our Legislators and Executive Council and to create some opportunities for the program as a whole.

Bureau of Trails Update – Craig Rennie, Chief

- The Bureau of Trails is celebrating its 50th year of managing NH's trail system since the program's inception in 1973, which began as the Bureau of Off Highway Vehicles and then later changed to the Bureau of Trails in 1992 to better reflect all users, including non-motorized.
- BOT recently hired two equipment operators for vacant positions within District 1 in North Country: Jeff Parker and Hunter Roy. Both are avid outdoorsmen and are excited to work on the trails that they frequently recreate on, beginning on June 16th.
- In April, Deputy Chief Alexis Rudko, RTP Coordinator Jay Scarborough and Non-motorized Coordinator Andrew Pacuk attended the International Trails Summit in Reno, Nevada hosted by American Trails and the Professional Trail Builders Association. This conference focuses on RTP programs across the country and reviews federal grant management requirements.
- In early June, District 1 Supervisor Clint Savage and District 2 Supervisor Mike Weeks attended the International Snowmobile Congress in Moline, Illinois. Staff engaged in fruitful discussions with various National Park Service staff regarding snowmobile bridge standards throughout the country.

OHRV registrations and report:

- As of March 2, 2023, 40,822 OHRVs were registered in NH for the 2022 season, of which 24,497 are resident registrations, and 16,325 were non-resident registrations.
- The OHRV season opened on May 23, 2023, and we are expecting a busy season ahead.

Snowmobile registrations and report:

- As of March 20, 2023, 37,572 snowmobiles were registered in NH, of which 23,142 are resident registrations, and 14,430 were non-resident registrations. This is a 17% decrease from the 2022 riding season mostly because of poor snow conditions for much of the winter.

Grant in Aid (GIA) Updates:

- This spring the GIA program, with recommendations from the GIA Advisory Committees, awarded the snowmobile clubs \$1,799,876.43 and the OHRV clubs \$1,153,685.84 for summer trail construction/improvement projects throughout the state.
- All GIA reimbursements for the 2022-2023 winter grooming & 2022 summer construction season have been processed.
- This summer, BOT will be updating and improving the GIA forms and applications to assist clubs in making the grant process more simplified.

Recreational Trail Program Update – Jay Scarborough, RTP Coordinator

- The FY23 Community RTP Grants were approved by Governor and Council June 14th, and the official Notice to Proceed was sent to all grantees allowing project work to begin. We worked very hard with our grantees to make this happen and allow for as much time as possible to complete project work before the end of the Grant year.
- The FY24 Grant application period closed on June 16th, and despite some challenges we are facing due to new Federal regulations on construction materials, we received a solid number of applications and very high interest in the program. I am in the process of reviewing applications, but a total of 27 applications were received representing approximately \$1.2 million in proposed trail projects across the three user groups. It is worth noting that this total would have been significantly higher but close to 10 organizations dropped their applications due to the new Federal regulations on materials such as lumber and plastics.
- As Craig mentioned Alexis, Andrew, and I were able to attend the International Trails Summit in Nevada back in April. Alexis and I spent a significant amount of time in the State Trails Administrators Meetings discussing the new Federal regulations imposed by the Build America Buy American Act with our contacts at the Federal Highway Administration. Unfortunately, the guidance we were seeking is not yet available and we will continue to work to get it and update our grantees as soon as possible.

Heritage Trail Update

- none

Old Business

- none

New Business

- **NHSA Trail Sign Enhancement Program; Terry Callum (NHSA):** - NHSA is sponsoring a legislative breakfast and will put snowmobile out on the lawn. This is just a great day to appreciate trails. We are working hard on a program to enhance intersection signage in New Hampshire. We initiated a pilot project this winter and received 10 applications. At this point we can only help 2 projects but chose 4 in case someone backed out. Trail sign durability is an issue, many clubs are producing signs in many ways. There is a little bit of everything, but they are not very visible at night which is important for snowmobile use. Working on ideas, we can deliver our signs on non-state properties to show what we are working on. Blue – services, green – directions, brown - points of interest. Will use universal symbols similar to the highway systems. An average intersection would likely require 8 signs, at about 35 bucks a sign. The association is putting up about \$10,000 with clubs matching a similar amount, so this is a \$20,000 project.
- **Peter:** sign colors can represent difficulty coming from skiing and biking, this could be confusing.
- **Alexis Rudko (Bureau of Trails):** signs can't point to individual businesses, per Shelley Winters in talks regarding signing standards. How will they be anchored?
- **Terry:** to 4x4 posts, U channel, and some may have to be removed seasonally so not anchored. This is also dependent on landowners' preferences.

- **Larry**: This can be confusing where there is overlap between OHRV and Snowmobiles, you should make it very easy to take them up and down so they can be removed and replaced seasonally.
- **Slow & Say Hello; Alexis Rudko**: This is a program we learned about in Nevada at the International Trails Conference, and is designed primarily for equestrian users but is applicable for many different users. Initially the group came out to locations with horses to educate people on how to appropriately pass equestrians. The concept was that horses and dogs understand speaking comes from a person, not a bobcat, coyote, etc. The big takeaway was the idea of slowing down and verbally greeting someone, rather than blowing by other users out of lack of knowledge. I really thought this would be a good program to look at, and possibly as a state agency consider adding to our website.
- **Brian**: This is a great example of something we can use for our marketing person, Greg, to leverage and utilize on social media, our website, etc.
- **Paula**: This is one of the most common complaints Bike/Ped gets, it would be a great campaign to help our users as well.
- **Avis Rosenfield (NHC)**: I think it would be helpful to do an in-person learning session, I question how effective online resources are. In the past there has been great interest in doing something in person at a park like Bear Brook.

Next meeting tentatively set for November 29, 2023

Motion to adjourn, seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 8:24 PM

APPROVED