

Call to Order at **10:02 am**.

In attendance:

Appointer	Member	In Attendance (Y/N)
Tamworth (2)	Jeremy Phillips/TBA (will be joining)	N/#
Madison (2)	Rick Judkins/Tia Gagnon	N/Y (teams)
Ossipee (2)	Kyle Copeland/Chris Elliot	N/Y
Albany (2)	TBA/TBA	#/#
Recreational/Tourism	Bob Boose	N
NH Horse Council	Debbie Briscoe	Y
NH Snowmobile Assn (NHSA)	Sean Pinard	Y
NH Off-Highway Vehicle Association (NHOHVA)	Steve Wilkie	Y (teams)
NH Rail Trail Coalition (NHRTC)	Marianne Borowski	Y
Friends of Ossipee Rail Trail (FORT)	Philip Villari	Y
Cotton Valley Rail Trail Coalition (CVRTC)	Bruce Stewart	Y
DPR Planning	Johanna Lyons	Y
DPR Trails Bureau Chief	Alexis Rudko representing Craig Rennie	Y
DPR Trails Bureau District Supervisor	Mike Weeks	Y

## Agenda

- Welcome & introductions.
  - o Several audience members. Not all names were recorded.
  - o Some attendees on teams (not all recorded).
- Outstanding Appointments:
  - o Invitations sent to towns of Conway/Albany but have yet to hear back on acceptance.
- Acceptance of Minutes
  - o Some minor corrections
  - o Motion to accept & seconded for the minutes from meeting on 6/10/25 with some corrections.
- RFQ review
  - o Suggestion: on page 1 in section one there is a reference to a segment being 7.4 miles but it's more like 9.4 or 9.5 miles.
    - DNCR is not sure if milage change will make a difference to consultant, but it can be edited to match.
  - o Suggestion: can phase 1 be to break out and accelerate the assessment of route 28 to 16? Can we re-word this to have the consultant, to benefit the town, have that portion of the report completed before the rest of the trail?
    - DNCR explains that this RFQ is to select a consultant, when we get to the scope of work we can ask for this.
    - Will this change the timetable on the next page?
    - DNCR explained the timetable would come out in the scope of work (what is in the RFQ is a suggested timetable) and, once selected, DNCR can ask the consultant to prioritize a section and what their pattern of work can be.
  - o Is there a state law/rule to hire someone from NH? Or can it be from anywhere in the world?
    - Anyone in the world can submit their qualifications because it's an RFQ. We're looking for the best person to do the job.
  - o Does the state have a known list of people?



- DNCR explained that some parts of the property were purchased with funds that restrict motorized use and some parts did not. E-bikes are considered non-motorized under state law.
  - CVRTC noted in TAP application that it would provide easy access to RT 16. Is there any latitude to allow engineering for that crossing with this grant since snowmobiles can cross fast but pedestrians cannot?
    - DNCR explained that part of the RFQ for a consultant can evaluate for crossings which can recommend how that TAP grant can get spent (if awarded). There may be an opportunity to apply for a grant later to address this crossing.
  - The town explained they had no intention for excluding snowmobile use when the grant was applied for “non-motorized” use.
- [Recreational Trails Program](#) (RTP) Grant
  - CVRTC applied for RTP in summer 2024 for Summer 2025 funds. Grant scope is 9+ miles of brush cutting the vegetation from Rt 28 to Rt 16. CVRTC completed a similar RTP grant on the Cotton Valley Rail Trail. The brush cutting is done with an excavator and a brontosaurus head attachment on rail gear. This will open the 36’ high canopy for additional snow coverage to fall and a 40’ wide path clear of vegetation. Maintenance has to be mechanized to cut back the vegetation as it grows too fast. This project will start on November 1<sup>st</sup> (to April 15, 2026) because of the endangered bats. Cannot cut in the summer using federal funds.
    - Will the club be cleaning the slash?
      - Yes, there is a second volunteer organization on the Cotton Valley RT and they will put together volunteers needed to clean every mile after the excavator brush cuts using the club’s owned equipment.
    - It will be essential to keep the public clear while this maintenance is occurring. Volunteers are about a mile behind the machine as it cuts because it can throw debris. The machine doesn’t leave big limbs.
    - The regular, yearly maintenance (of vegetation control) gets much more manageable once it’s cut back by a bronto head.
      - How often do you do this type of maintenance?
        - About every 20-25 years.
    - What about where this a fall off? (the side of the trail drops)
      - When there are narrow spots we would traverse from off the trail to in between the gages in between.
    - Can this grant go further beyond the original scope?
      - No, FHWA approved that grant scope and cannot expand it.
    - Another benefit of this type of maintenance is it lessens the need for bug control (like ticks and such).
- Bureau of Trails RTP Grant
  - DNCR explained RTP is available to be applied for but will need a defined scope of work. RTP is a 80/20 grant with match. The project sponsor will need to assign a project admin and have an organization member attend workshop attendance (prefer the project admin attend). Organizations apply a year in advance of receiving funds.
    - The Cotton Valley Rail Trail was built mostly through RTP funds over many years/decades.
- [Grant in Aid](#) (GIA)
  - GIA is a grant available to municipalities and organized, non-profit off highway recreational vehicle (OHRV) and snowmobile (SMC) clubs for projects that will benefit the ridership of OHRVs

and snowmobiles. This grant can supply the 20% match to the RTP grant, but the RTP would need to be applied to first then the GIA the following spring to match spending timelines.

- [Land & Water Conservation Funds](#): LWCF is a 50/50 grant and available to schools/municipalities – it encumbers properties in *perpetuity* for *recreational* use and limits commercial use. Current apps are snowmaking at Cannon Mountain & toilet buildings at campgrounds. LWCF can be used to acquire properties as well. If the land manager decides to change the current use of the encumbered property there is a swap required to encumber property elsewhere for recreational purposes. RTP can also be used to match LWCF (and vice-versa) but it is much harder to match spending timelines.
- August Meeting Date/Location: August 7th, 11:30am-1:00pm. Ossipee freight house.
  - Proposed field visit: start at 11:30 to incorporate lunch hour. Meet here at freight house. Look at just this section of trail by walking 15 min one direction then 15 min the other direction. Can also visit rt. 16 by Bucket of Balls to see the crossing area to get a section one overview of this trail. There are ~ 10-12 road crossings on whole corridor. Future meetings can be site visits to other sections. Stakeholders and community members are welcome to join.
  - CVRTC offered us rail cars to see more of corridor for rt 16-28.
  - Town of Ossipee rep has walked a lot of this section and can offer up some host spots for future field trips.
- Questions from Committee members:
  - Town of Ossipee rep wants to print a hiking brochure. Can pedestrians traverse the trail at this time?
    - DNCR explained this question was posed to leadership at DNCR and the agency is not ready to open this corridor up to pedestrian use at this time.
    - There are sections which are very difficult to walk, for example in Madison there is flooded area. In winter things freeze so you can snowmobile over it. Makes it more walkable in winter.
    - The brush at rt 16 is also extremely thick.
  - Town of Ossipee rep would like to establish some committee protocol.
    - The Conway Sun (local newspaper) is present. An article recently appeared in the Conway Sun from the CVRTC committee member discussing this committee.
      - While the article was supportive of the trail as a whole and no prior procedure was established for committee members. The CVRTC believed their user group was being excluded from consideration to recreate on the corridor because of the TAP grant. The club no longer feels pushed out based upon today's discussion.
    - Town of Ossipee would like members of the committee to check with the committee before speaking to any media.
    - NOTE: this was generally agreed upon by committee without a vote.
- Public Comment
  - Can this trail be renamed to the Ossipee-Conway line?
    - DNCR explained that the state doesn't change names very often. The consultant can work that in with a recommendation (under the scope of services, not RFQ). The Governor & Executive council names things when transferred. Promotionally (like on websites or brochures) some descriptions can be added.
  - Daymond Steer from the Conway Daily Sun asked if different restrictions are on different areas from Ossipee to Conway?
    - DNCR explained that yes, some locations restrict OHRV use, some do not.
    - Comment from Committee members:
      - The tracks and ties are in place and it can be awkward to walk on.

- There is a narrow path to the right of the ties that DOT allowed walking on in winter during snowmobile season.
  - If DOT gave permission to walk in the winter and now its DNCR owned can you continue to walk in the winter?
    - DNCR explained that will be up to the commissioner to determine.
- Why is RTP money awarded to the CVRTC to do maintenance for their recreation? But pedestrians cannot walk on that part?
  - DNCR explained that this is low-level maintenance and will be good for all users and since these funds are already approved by FHWA, DNCR does not want to lose the opportunity to use these funds. Having limited maintenance performed while we have funds is just the start of continual maintenance that will be done on this line. Permission from DOT was in place when this grant was applied for and awarded but this line is in a transition period for permissions and users.
- It took 25 years to build the Cotton Valley Rail Trail using RTP and volunteer time/funds.
- Ossipee resident says safety has been brought up as a matter of concern. The surface, uneven vegetation and waiting for snowpack. There seems to be an inherit conflict from the ties & rails being in place from making this trail a multi-use rail option. From personal experience, he says the dangerous situations are where the rails exist and trail is multi-use and people bike over the transitions. He asks who is responsible for maintaining safety data and tracking if people are getting hurt on the trail when rails or ties are in place or there is a lack of maintenance?
  - DNCR explained that on the CVRT, there are signs in place that say for users to get off their bike when crossing over rails. NH is a recreate at your own risk state.
  - DNCR explained there will be a public process which anyone can attend and provide comments on the trail plan.
    - What is the timeline for this plan and comment period?
      - DNCR's goal is to have a plan by next October 2026 (for the whole 21 miles). Check out the website for this project, anyone can be a part of the stakeholder email list if they ask.
- Comment from Citizen: as an older adult, want to be sure this rec trail is accessible to everyone and feel the ability to use the rail bikes and cars is one way to do that. The equipment that Cotton Valley Rail Trail Club has sounds like it would be a great addition to this trail maintenance overall and save money.
- MT Washington Trails Association comments that they built a multi-use recreation path in North Conway and they are hoping to expand north. Where does this project terminate in Conway as we are looking to connect to our existing rec trail and future projects.
  - DNCR has yet to receive the VAL map showing the actual end point, but we believe is is where the Conway Scenic and this state portion meet.
- Comment from teams: does the state rail trail plan list approved uses for this corridor?
  - DNCR explained that it does, but under DOT management. These uses may change under DNCR management.
  - Comment from teams: ~13 miles was partially funded by Transportation Enhancement (now TAP) funds which prohibits motorized uses except snowmobiles. The portion in Madison (~8 miles) was funded with only state funds so no restriction.
- Scenic RailRiders of Concord: as the 1<sup>st</sup> rail bike company in NH that started in 2019 and someone who submitted a RFI in 2018 for part of the Conway line, question for the committee: if a business wants to open a railbike operation on a part of this line, would they get a dedicated use of that section of rail? Ie. What if they are running a tour with a dozen railbikes and are met by someone coming from the other direction, who has the right of way? At 300-400 lbs. per bike, it's not feasible to lift these off the track to let someone pass. Has thought been given to this and how does the choice happen as to which company could use the tracks?
  - (Response answered via email after meeting adjourned): The committee wouldn't be making that decision, they would be making recommendations to the DNCR Commissioner about management of the trail which may or may not include commercial use. If commercial use is

recommended, the agency would put out a request for proposals to chose a commercial operator for the use. There are many models of rail trail development and our consultant will hopefully find many successful and innovative options for us to consider.

- Motion to adjourn, seconded. All in favor. At **12:02** pm.

Meeting minutes taken by:

Name: Alexis Rudko

Signature:

Title: Deputy Chief of NH Bureau of Trails

APPROVED