

**Statewide Trails Advisory Committee (RSA 216-F:5)**

8/28/2024

DNCR Conference Room (172 Pembroke Rd, Concord, NH 03301)

**Attendance:**

STAC Committee Members: 9 minimum to meet quorum,

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Attended?</b>
1	Craig Rennie	Chief of NH Trails Bureau (BOT)	Yes
2	Captain Mike Eastman	NH Fish & Game Department	No
3	VACANT	NH Office of Planning and Development	N/A
4	VACANT	NH Department of Transportation	N/A
5	Director Charles Saia (VACANT)	NH Gov. Commission on Disability	Stand-In
6	Terry Callum	NH Snowmobile Association (NHSA)	Yes
7	Jerry Livesey	NH Off Highway Vehicle Association (NHOHVA)	Yes
8	Matt Moore	Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC)	Yes
9	Rod Cameron	NH Municipal Association	Yes
10	Matt Scaccia	Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF)	No
11	Don Waldron	NH Heritage Trail	No
12	Director Robert Johnson (VACANT)	NH Farm Bureau Federation	No
13	Debbie Briscoe	NH Horse Council (NHHC)	Yes
14	Tom DiMaggio	NH Mushers Association (Chairman)	Yes
15	Tom Thomson	Landowner Representative	No
16	Gerry Bedard	NH Department of Transportation-Bike/Ped	Yes
17	Tim Blagden	Human-Powered Winter Sports	Yes
18	Peter DeSantis	New England Mountain Bike Association	No
19	Abby Evankow	NH Bike-Walk Alliance (NHBWA)	Yes
20	Stanley Carte	White Mountain National Forest	Yes

**Guests:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Avis Rosenfield	NH Horse Council
Leonora Thomas	NH Governor Commission on Disability

**DNCR Staff:**

Andrew Pacuk	Bureau of Trails, Non-Motorized Coordinator
Brianna Leone	Bureau of Trails, RTP Coordinator
Alexis Rudko	Bureau of Trails, Deputy Chief

**Open Meeting**

Time: 6:33PM, meeting called to order.

## Introductions and Review Minutes:

Minutes from the 04/10/2024 meeting reviewed. Motioned and seconded. All in favor as accepting the minutes as written, approved. Introduction of members, DNCR staff and guests made.

## Poll of Members:

- **Debbie Briscoe (NH Horse Council):** Inquiring about the parking in Pisgah State Park for Horseshoe Rd, as it is difficult to read on the current park map. Equestrians have requested a clearer map with more information regarding horse parking with trailers. Equestrian groups are interested in using 'left over' funds to put work into a few bridges and Horseshoe Rd, within Pisgah to make them more desirable. Would also like to see the Reservoir trail turned into a loop. Contacted by equestrians regarding signage on the Northern Rail Trail. Requesting trail etiquette and "slow down and say hello' signs throughout the Northern RT. Says there is access from the Boat Parking lot from Chance Pond Road. (NOTE: BOT is working on trail sign guidance, this was brought up as a discussion topic.) The UNH, NH Outdoor Industry report now has data on economic factors for outdoor recreation.
- **Terry Collum (NHSA)** – Moved website domain from NHSA.com to [www.slednh.com](http://www.slednh.com). Another organization requested the NHSA domain. Snow clubs are gearing up for winter as fall arrives. Signing pilot project with Lake Sunapee Snow Mobile Club. Informed trails bureau on erosion damage and repairs on NHSA trails.
- **Leonora Thomas** (Governor Commission on Disability): They are ready to assist as a resource for members. Alexis Rudko suggested having nomination letter sent to the commissioner of DNCR for Leonora to become an official member of the committee.
- **Stanley Carte** (WMNF): WMNF hiking numbers are down following the covid spike in outdoor recreation (2020.) Working with two mountain bike clubs to create uniform signage for trails going from town to WMNF property.
- **Tom Dimaggio** (NH Mushers): In the off season, there is not much going on. Reached out to the US Army Corps for assistance grooming a few trails from Hill Village to Profile Falls. NH Mushers may be running a trail clean-up day this fall. Clean-up will focus on wash-out damage. Rig Race occurring the first weekend of the upcoming November with all proceeds going towards a group who cares for retired dogs. In contact with manager at Pisgah about moving a boulder near a gate that blocks trail access during the off season.
- **Matt Moore** (AMC): Matt has been working for AMC for over 10 years. Recently took over as trails operation manager for AMC. Manages camp Dodge in Pinkman Notch with over 80 seasonal employees and 5 professional trail crews (5 per crew.) Currently working on Franconia Notch Ridge restoration, Ammonoosuc Ravine rebuild and other work in Rumney. Some AmeriCorps are putting in 450 hours throughout the summer and have

been working on over 400 miles of trails throughout the years, including 13 back country sites in the White Mountain National Forest. AMC has an Adopt-a-Trail coordinator to assist in trail management. Earlier this year, Matt hosted the skills collage for trail work and education.

- **Gerry Bedard** (NHDOT): NH Bureau of Rails and Transit update; Current railroad engineer is retiring on Friday (8/30/2024.) Highway Design update; conducting a study of all rail trail crossings and roadways for “on road” signage. The Rockingham Recreation trail (Candia-Newfields) needs more signage on the road. There will be a ribbon cutting for a new 8-mile non-motorized stretch on the East Coast Greenway in Portsmouth (date TBD.) Section was built by DOT contractor and consultants.
  - o Discussion: Why is DOT maintaining that trail and not others. B/c the funding was provided by the [CMAQ](#) for transportation corridor use rather than recreation.
  - o Does this run through Hampton? Yes
  - o Why is there concrete in the middle of the cross section in Hampton? Concrete is used to defer motorized vehicles from entering the cross section. Emergency vehicles do not want anything taller than the triangle concrete pad currently in use. They plan to place permanent reflectors to make the crossing more known.
  - o Are horses allowed on Greenway? Yes
- **Abby Evankow** (NH Bike Walk Alliance): The Rail trail Coalition is crafting legislation for personal electronic vehicles. (ex: e-bikes, e-motorcycles, e-unicycles). The Committee Chair would like to see some sort of licensing for the personal e-vehicles. One sub committee is working on bike-pedestrian trails with DOT & BOT. Another sub committee is working on combining the Twin State Rail Trail that goes between VT & NH. The VT trail system is currently leasing out the corridor and would like to store box cars and use it for trash moving. This is a great opportunity to connect the Twin State trails however, the trash on the VT side would go over existing snowmobile trails. [DOT is being sued over the 4A exit by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy](#). We are still working on a rail trail sign update; BOT has been pre-occupied with restoring trail system storm damage over the last two summers.
- **Rod Cameron** (NH Municipal Association): A recently added member who works for the town of Belmont as a land use technician. Also involved in the lake’s region planning commission. In 2023, the NH Municipal Association advertised someone to get involved in STAC and he raised his hand. Recently released planning document of bike-ped in Belmont. The development of the bike path had an idea to cross Rt 3, but they were stopped, and they haven’t completed it, due to being unable to cross Route 3 without another stoplight. The [WOW trail](#) is trying to be extended through Wiers Beach and to Meredith, but they need several private property permissions to cross.

- **Matt Scaccia (SPNHF)** – (not present but sent the following comments since he could not attend) *BOT Chief, Craig Rennie read the following:*
  - o [Mt. Major Trail Sustainability Improvements](#): Pleased to share the trail improvement project was officially completed this month! The parking lot has been reopened and hikers are able to use the new section of trail. This was a multi-year endeavor, and is a big milestone for us to have completed. This project and was selected for RTP support.
  - o [Monadnock](#): An AMC crew will be working on trail improvements on the Dublin Trail during the later part of September through mid-October. This project was selected for RTP support.
  - o [Monadnock Trails Week](#): The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests and New Hampshire State Parks will be hosting the 18th Annual Monadnock Trails Week, September 5-9, 2024. Trail improvement projects are planned on several trails on the mountain in this weeklong event. Last year more than 50 volunteers, Forest Society staff, and NH State Parks personnel logged 735 hours over the course of the week. This is the first year we are holding this event in September, hoping it will be easier to work in generally cooler weather this time of year.
  - o [5-Hikes Challenge](#): This annual hiking challenge begins on August 31<sup>st</sup> and runs through October 31<sup>st</sup>. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> year of this popular do-it-yourself hiking adventure, and we typically get several hundred participants. Participants can choose five of the 30+ hiking and walking destinations to visit from a selection of Forest Society properties, and they receive printed trail maps and directions, hiking tips, and interpretive information for their selected hikes in the mail. Participants are also invited to guided hikes led by Forest Society staff. The registration fee is \$45 for participants, or free for Forest Society members.

**Bureau of Trails Update for OHRV and Snowmobiles: Chief Craig Rennie**

- BOT is working to help clubs use ARPA money to repair trails from storm damages. We also manage 260 miles of roads on CT Lakes Head Waters as part of BOT management.

**Grant in Aid (GIA) Updates:**

- o BOT has been working on rule amendments to the Grant-in-Aid (GIA) Administrative Rules Res 8400, and have scheduled a public hearing for September 26, 2024, at 9:00am at DNCR headquarters located at 172 Pembroke Road, Concord, NH 03301. The goal of the rule amendments is to improve the GIA program and to provide further clarification to existing rules that are unclear or ambiguous. Current Rules expire in 2025. The draft new rules will be posted publicly for public comment.
- o BOT is providing Winter GIA grooming application optional workshops. Presentations will cover the winter application and reimbursement process only. Applications and presentation will be posted online Tuesday, September 3. Applications will be due Friday, October 4.

- At the November NHTSA Trail Master meeting, BOT will be providing a combined GIA/RTP Program overview during the breakout sessions to assist clubs with available grant options.
- Spring 2025 snowmobile project applications will also have optional workshops to accompany the application round. BOT provided these optional trainings last year (2023) and they were well received. The Bureau highly recommends attendance especially for new Trail Administrators.

### **Recreational Trail Program (RTP) Update**

- BOT recently hired Brianna Leone to replace Jay Scarborough as the new RTP coordinator. Brianna started on July 12<sup>th</sup> and was previously the Assistant Manager at Kingston State Park.
- Federal Fiscal year 2024 (Project B) RTP – Governor and Executive Council approved projects on August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Organizations with projects have been given their notice to proceed.
- Federal Fiscal year 2025 (Project C) RTP – Applications have been reviewed. Organizations that will receive grants will be notified directly. Next step is projects moving to historical review with the Division of Historic Resources.
- Federal Fiscal year 2026 (Project D) RTP – Applications will be available spring (April) 2025 for 2026 projects.
  - The RTP program received a national waiver for Buy America/Build America that will allow grantees to purchase equipment & construction materials (like steel I-beams) without providing mill certificates or certifications of compliance as long as the total project cost is under \$500,000. This is a major change for the program. The waiver is in place until August of 2026 which is when the 5-year federal bill expires.
  - This information will be presented at the Trail Master meeting (for snowmobile clubs) in November 2024.
  - Discussion: Are project sponsors doubling up with to get more than one club to apply for one project? No, an organization can apply for 2 projects from \$8K request up to \$80K. Minimum project cost for construction is \$10,000 (with a \$8,000 RTP request).

### **Buy America Update: Alexis Rudko**

- Clarifying information about waiver after the application was released for this year-applications for FY25 are still compliant.
- You no longer must have a Buy America piece of equipment (before denied, when former President Trump took away the waivers) when you buy equipment you have to keep it for the lifetime of the equipment. (Under \$500,000 equipment.)

### **Legislative Update:**

- **HB 1188 5-year Study Committee regarding OHRV's:** The last committee meeting was held on July 12, 2024, at the Lancaster Regional Office and several OHRV rental companies were invited to share their business models and challenges for the industry. The next committee meeting is planned for September 5, 2024, also at the Lancaster Regional Office.
  - o Discussion: Chair Ouellet mentioned possibly allowing wider ATVs on trial? Side by sides (UTVs) are getting bigger/heavier and there is some talk about modifying the legislation to accommodate. Will that require bigger/wider trails? The state wouldn't need wider gates, but there are new side by sides that are not in the definition of the law, so the committee is seeking to meet the industry changes. Do trails need to be wider to accommodate them (wider SxS)? No. On this issue is the market will always push the envelope (like electric bikes and skateboards), so a solution can be to steer industry back to what is currently allowed. NH is trying to play catch up with the market. NH should settle on 2000lbs or 65" and stay there. Even if the market makes bigger machines they won't be allowed here. What works in Utah (which has open sand dunes) won't work here in NH (which has rocks and designated trails). We should steer the industry back to what works here. Chair agrees. However, lots of other states are making changes to accommodate.

### **Heritage Trail Update:**

- No representative present to comment.

### **Old Business:**

- o Chair: Last year there was discussion about on adding the dog icon to the NHSA app, it worked very well. Can this be used universally?
  - It depends on where it fits on the app. Some places are busy, some are not. It worked in Bear Notch. It would need a one-on-one discussion on where it would make sense to put it in certain places. The WMNF added similar signs (and people stole them) but they seemed to work while up.
- o What is the app?
  - An NHSA developed product for the statewide snowmobile trail network. Its available on the web version for free, but the phone app costs \$4.99 to purchase. There are points of interest to build an object which looked like a husky face to warn people of possible mushers. WMNF placed these on the kiosks in the field to warn people on trails. It would make sense to add this icon and signs to the "Hill Village" area and Sugar River trail in Claremont as many people in VT coming in on that trail. We don't want to put the icon in too many places as it will lose effectiveness.

### **New Business:**

- None

### **Guest Comments:**

- **Avis Rosenfield** (Derry Trail Riders): In 2019 worked closely with previous DNCR director to bring back horse camping at Bear Brook State Park. After conducting research, it was determined that 8 campsites are ideal for this sort of camping. The ROI (return on investment) would no be great if we added more or less than 8 sites. Where is Parks&Rec on this? Pods were added in 2020 and are still maintained by park staff but Covid-19 put a halt on any other progress. A few picnic tables lay in place, we will need to determine how many water spigots to add. Should we do four or share one? Should we add showers? The ultimate question is; when can we open these sites up for reservations? There are many across the country that would like to come to NH to camp with horses. Derry Trail Riders would eventually like to see this in 3 key state parks: Pawtuckaway, Bear Brook and North Woods Meadow. Noted there were specific requests for horse camping in Laconia.
  - o Craig: Director Wilson is interested in picking this back up, but BOT is unaware on the timeframe.

**Next Meeting Date: *December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 6:00 PM*** (moved from original time of 6:30PM.)

- o Motion to adjourn and seconded. Meeting Adjourned at 7:38PM.

Approved