

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

4/10/2024

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	YES
3	Terry Callum	NH Snowmobile Association (NHSA)	YES
4	Jerry Livesey	NH Off Highway Vehicle Association (NHOHVA)	NO
5	Matt Moore	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	Don Waldron	NH Heritage Trail	YES
	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)	YES
16	Stanley Carte	White Mountain National Forest	YES

Guests:

Name	Organization
Avis Rosenfield	Derry Trail Riders
Leonora Thomas	NH Governor's Commission on Disability

DNCR Staff:

Name	Organization	Attend?
Brian Wilson	Director, Division of Parks & Recreation	YES
Jay Scarborough	Bureau of Trails, Recreational Trails Program Coordinator	YES
Taya Ferris	Bureau of Trails, Grant-In-Aid Coordinator	YES
Eric Feldbaum	Bureau of Community Recreation	YES

Open Meeting

6:30PM, meeting called to order.

Introductions and Review Minutes

Introduction of members and guests made. A moment of silence was held in the honor of past STAC member Larry Gomes. Minutes from the 11/29/2023 meeting reviewed and approved.

Presentation by Eric Feldbaum from DNCR Bureau of Community Recreation; Release of 2024-2028 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Management Plan (SCORP).

- Overview of LWCF Program and examples of properties. \$50 million given, reauthorized by great American outdoors act.
- The SCORP sets priorities and goals for outdoor recreation, these are very broad but provide guidelines for those involved in use and management. The 2024-2028 SCORP is available in full online through the NH State Parks website.

Poll of members:

- **Debbie Briscoe** – I wanted to point out the NH State Parks website does not include equestrians in its listed activities. I have been hearing that the Fremont section of the Rockingham Rec trail is a great trail for riders. Riders have been asking about service road access for riders, and more designated horse friendly trails in the North Country. As far as signage, I think it is good to have wording on signs such as: stop, say hello, etc. We have seen the use of QR codes in parks, is this for donations? **Brian Wilson** – We are starting to use some online payments, most people are familiar with the green iron rangers, but this is fairly new. All of the new QR codes are unique, they can help identify where donations come from, but at this point all donations go to a general pot. So far this is working well for us, and we see the potential for it to be great. **Craig Rennie** – We are looking into a designated Rail Trail donation button online and are internally discussing the logistics of how we can implement this.
- **Matt Scaccia** – The big update from the Forest Society is our Mt Major trail project, which will be beginning in May. This is the largest project in at least 15 to 20 years that we have taken on. Another upcoming project is the Mt. Monadnock upgrade on the Dublin trail. We will be moving the annual Trails Week event to September this year hopefully this will provide better weather conditions to work in than the past few years.
- **Terry Callum** – I spoke about a pilot signage program last meeting. We picked two clubs: Baker River & Umbagog which are very high-profile areas for riding and wanted feedback from community. These clubs had to provide some funding, and it took about 600 signs to take care of all the intersection areas. The total cost was over \$15,000 just to get signage, \$10,000 was paid by the association and the rest by the clubs. We ultimately chose New England Barricade as the vendor; they had the highest reflective signage but still able to be read. Very good product. Not certain about areas that we will be able to use these signs WMNF, state parks. Waiver to allow signage on DNCR properties? **Craig** – We have made progress on sign guidelines; I know we have been working on this a long time. Could be difficult for limited staff pulling signs up and down seasonally. **Stan** – 4x4 posts would have to be in and out seasonally in WMNF, what is being done? **Terry** – All the 4x4s are removed seasonally.
- **Charles Saia** – We recently received a comment related to the Manchester Cedar Swamp trails. They were all positive, and the comments came from user. The Manchester city bus makes a pass right through parking area. To see that a city bus goes through was a very good thing. We at the GCD are a state agency, we are located right in the Governor's office. Regarding this group and its purpose, it's all about access for individuals with a disability. Moving forward, if you have questions or resources, please reach out to our office to share. Also, we want to be a resource to you. Our new website is now up and is very accessible and there are a lot of useful resources on there.
 - o **Leonora Thomas** – at the GCD we really do emphasize accessibility. We are expanding our view to inclusion. I just really want to say we are going to avail ourselves as a resource to this group.

- **Tom Dimaggio** – One good thing from our last meeting, in conversation with NH Snowmobile Association, your phone app has worked out well and been very helpful. It really has worked well. One negative from our community – these winters are killing us. NH used to be the top of the world for mushing, and now most of the large snow dog teams have left. Smaller teams will be out now pulling bikes, or rigs where there is no snow cover. It is changing because of the snow conditions, I hate to say it, but it is. Unfortunately, we are now getting a lot of people that don't know a lot about mushing. They don't know all the rules and regulations.
- **Gerry Bedard** – NHDOT Rail & Transit staff continue to work with DNCR and municipalities on trail management issues, in corridors that DOT owns, to allow trail construction and improvements. We also continue to have bi-monthly NHDOT and DNCR senior leadership calls on which rail trails are a common theme. Regarding the safety of Rail Trail crossings of state roadways, NHDOT regularly taps into the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) for federal funds. The state is allocated a pool of funding and projects compete for these monies. Possible improvements that could utilize these funds are enhanced visibility or signs and management of vegetation growth. The selection committee has been very favorable towards this idea.
- **Stan Carte** – It was mentioned earlier in the presentation given, but we have also been working on the Franconia Loop project. WMNF is working with partners to work on the federal side to build trail structures. The Franconia loop saw over 270,000 hikers last year. One way to manage use is better structures. Another big thing we are looking at is visitor use management, the alpine zone can't sustain with that level of use continuing, even as hardened as it is. We have been looking at data as to how we can manage that visitor use. Mt. Hood National Forest, in Oregon, uses a permitting system. One of our WMNF former employees is out there now and we are talking with them about how they manage that permitting program and how it may be utilized here in WMNF.
- **Peter DeSantis** – Obviously it has been light winter, fat biking in snow was much less this year. People have been out riding regular bikes, on small tires. We didn't groom at all in Bear Brook. This last storm has really decimated the trails in Bear Brook and Merrimack South. We have a Snow-Dog to groom trails with, but it didn't even go out this year.
- **Tim Blagden** – I have been attending NHDIRT meetings, which are primarily intended for developing interconnections within our different communities. This is a University of NH initiative. It was a tough winter for Nordic skiing, hard to find snow.
- **Don Waldron** – As far as the Heritage Trail, no concerns from Manchester DPW or Parks & Recreation. I have asked about pursuing grants for project funding, but they are short staffed in Manchester. I am looking to expand my knowledge of the Heritage Trail needs, locations, etc. as I adapt to this role.
- **Abby Evankow** – NHRTC is partnering with the Granite State Wheelers and NH Bike Alliance to put on the Tour de New Hampshire, which is a way for people to explore the rail trails in New Hampshire. The proposed personal electric vehicles legislation was tabled, but there is a lot of community interest, so we are working to continue putting forward meaningful legislation. NHRTC is working on implementing the NHDOT 2022 bike ped plan.

Bureau of Trails Update: Chief Craig Rennie

- The Bureau has been scrambling to work on all the storm damage throughout the state including damage from the latest storm, which we are still finding out about. We are also

working on finding funding to pay for all the damages, some of which is coming from Federal sources.

- It was a tough year for snowmobiling in the State, we had a low snow year, but more difficult were the 4 fatalities. These were attributed to inexperience and/or speed, but these incidents involved 3 rental sleds which had been rented to out-of-state visitors. We are continuing to work through these issues, and as always safety is the priority. There was legislation put forward to require some level of training, but it failed.

Grant in Aid (GIA) Updates:

- In February, BOT hired Taya Ferris to fill our vacant **GIA Coordinator position**. Taya formerly worked for the DNCR Office of Administration and brings a friendly and professional demeanor to the program. Taya has taken on the role wholeheartedly in assisting clubs with their reimbursements and upcoming grant applications.
- **Summer 2024 GIA applications** are open and have been posted on the BOT website and emailed directly to the clubs on April 1st, 2024. They will be due to DNCR by Friday May 3rd, 2024, at 4pm.
- The bureau recently held several optional **snowmobile and OHRV GIA training workshops** to assist clubs with application questions. These were successful and well attended. We plan to offer this again next spring to assist clubs with applications. The training presentation has been posted on the GIA website.
- The Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery (GOFERR) has allocated **1 million dollars of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)**, State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF) for the purpose of repairing damage to the statewide trail system caused by historic rain and flooding events that occurred in 2023 across New Hampshire. These funds will be distributed through the GIA program as part of the Spring 2024 grant round to ensure they are put to use quickly to repair urgent trail repairs.
- The **winter GIA snowmobile club application** will also have a specific optional training workshop in the fall.

Legislative items:

- **SB397** relative to appropriating \$2 million to repair trail damage caused by the July 2023 storm events. We understand the bill has been tabled now that \$1 million of ARPA dollars have been allocated to the GIA program.
- **HB1494** relative to OHRV's sponsored by Representative Eamon Kelley was originally proposed to modify some of the GIA laws to include abutters as "OHRV clubs" and to include funding 50% of engineering costs for projects. BOT, NHSA and NHOHVA testified our concerns over these changes at a House hearing on February 21, 2024. These changes have since been removed through an amendment and are no longer being considered. Other parts of the bill are seeking to tighten up the Agricultural/Industrial UTV use registrations, and funding for NHFG event permits, which was approved as ought to pass on March 13, 2024.
- **HB 1188 5-year Study Committee regarding OHRV's**: The last committee meeting was held on January 5, 2024, at DNCR HQ, and there was a discussion and overview of OHRV use of Class V/VI roads, and a new chair was elected to lead the committee after the passing of Chair Suzanne Smith. Representative Mike Ouellet of Colebrook was elected as the new chair and is planning summer meetings with abutters to hear concerns. The next committee meeting is planned for May 10, 2024, at DNCR HQ.

Recreational Trails Program Update: RTP Coordinator Jay Scarborough

- Project Z FFY-2022 has completed its final audit and has been closed out entirely by NHDOT. Project A FFY-2023 community projects are complete, with the exception of one

- which was granted an extension. Department of Natural & Cultural Resources projects are upcoming/underway dependent on weather and the duration of mud season.
- Project B FFY-2024 projects are going through federal NEPA review. Anticipated opening is Early June.
 - Project C FFY-2025 applications are now open through June 14, 2024, with three informational workshops scheduled. Attendance to at least one workshop is required to apply, and we are requiring registration ahead of time this year due to increased levels of interest. Workshops will be limited to 30 attendees per session.
 - o May 8, 2024, 1PM DNCR HQ 172 Pembroke Road, Concord, NH 03301
 - o May 8, 2024, 6PM DNCR HQ 172 Pembroke Road, Concord, NH 03301
 - o May 15, 2024, 6PM DNCR 629 B Main St., Lancaster, NH 03584

Old Business

- None

New Business

- **ABBY** – Is there any chance of possibly holding hybrid meetings? **BRIAN** – It's not impossible, we will consider it, but there are a lot of things to consider as far as compliance within the State.

Guest Comments/Questions

- None

Next meeting tentatively set for August 21st 6:30 PM

Motion to adjourn, seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.