

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

2/19/2025

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

Attendance: STAC Committee Members: 9 minimum to meet quorum (because some positions are vacant)

	Name	Organization	Attended?
1	Craig Rennie	Chief of NH Trails Bureau (BOT)	Yes
2	Captain Mike Eastman	NH Fish & Game Department	No
3	Director Heather Shank	NH Office of Planning & Development (DBEA)	Yes
4	VACANT	NH Department of Transportation	N/A
5	Bill Finn	NH Gov. Commission on Disability	Yes
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)	No
9	Rod Cameron	NH Municipal Association	Yes
10	Matt Scaccia	Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF)	Yes
11	VACANT	NH Heritage Trail	N/A
12	Director Robert Johnson (VACANT)	NH Farm Bureau Federation	N/A
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	Yes
19	Abby Evankow	NH Bike-Walk Alliance (NHBWA)	Yes
20	Stanley Carte	White Mountain National Forest	No

Guests:

Name	Organization
Avis Rosenfield	NH Horse Council

DNCR Staff:

Andrew Pacuk	Bureau of Trails, Non-Motorized Coordinator
Brianna Leone	Bureau of Trails, RTP Coordinator
Alexis Rudko	Bureau of Trails, Deputy Chief
Brian Wilson	Division of Parks & Recreation, Director

Open Meeting:

Time: 5:59PM, Meeting called to order by Chair Tom Dimaggio

Introductions and Review Minutes:

- Minutes from the 8/28/2024 meeting reviewed. Motioned and seconded for approval. Minor edits: page 2: “ DOT” to “BOT”, add “Former President Trump” to page 5.
- Introduction of members, DNCR staff and guests made.
 - o Bill Finn from the [Governor’s Commission on Disability](#) attended. Bill said he is now appointed to represent the NH Gov. Commission on Disability. *Commissioner’s approval is being sought.*
 - o Director Heather Shank from the Division of Planning and Community Development attended to determine who should be attending from the [Office of Planning and Development](#). Which is under the Department of Business and Economic Affairs (DBEA).

Poll of Members:

- **Rod Cameron (NH Municipal Association):** Rod has been tasked with creating a questionnaire to ask local communities about their wants and needs regarding trails. Nothing new to report at this time.
- **Tim Blagden (Non-motorized Winter Sports):** Finding snowshoeing groups to comment on state-owned trails has been difficult.
- **Jerry Livesly (NHOHVA):** ATV updates: Northern NH has experienced significant storm damage this past year, while Southern NH had storms but was not hit as hard. The BOT has been helpful with trail repairs. Clubs have generally been happy with trail access. Upcoming events: NOVA is setting up an informational booth at the Sportsman Biggee (Thursday, 27th – Saturday, 1st) for public ATV questions and discussion. NHOVA will also be attending and helping out with Fish and Game’s Discover WILD NH Day Event.
 - o Question: Will clubs eventually be able to offer crossings on state highways for some NH ATV trails?
 - o Craig Rennie: BOT has already started working on this process within the current House Bill for on-highway use. Highway crossings and connectors will have an application that comes to BOT through the District Supervisor before DOT for additional guidance.
 - o Alexis: The crossing you were seeking was perpendicular. Please resubmit to the District Supervisor for any edits to your proposal.
- **Peter Desantis (NEMBA):** There are concerns about using ATVs in winter at Bear Brook State Park, as they cause rutting in grooming trails.
- **Bill Finn (Governor’s Commission on Disability):** Here at the request of Chuck Saia to sit in for more information. Chuck is a long-time user of non-motorized trails and retired a few years ago after 50 years of state administration services. He has a background in orientation mobility instruction for those interested in outdoor recreation and independent living.

- **Abby Evankow** (NH Bike Walk Association): Inquired about the Trail Sign Guidelines. Craig mentioned that the guidelines are moving through our internal department review team. Abby noted that railroads are not keeping recreational groups informed about changes in rail use and developments. Many railroads recreational users have been using these rails for years and would like a mechanism to stay informed.
- **Tom Dimaggio** (NH Mushing Association): The Sled Dog community held a fundraiser in Auburn, NH, to raise funds for Liberty House. The New England Sled Dog Club celebrated its 100th anniversary and still welcomes new faces. Mushers haven't been able to use Hill Village trails due to storm damage and ice but have been using trails at Bear Brook State Park. Mushers use ATVs until snowmobiling grooming begins. NHMA still has an agreement with the Army Corps to open up a turnaround for sled dogs only, no snowmobiles. The [Laconia world championship sled dog race](#) is this weekend (February 21-23, 2025). This year, 25 teams are signed up to race, with a \$35K purse.
- **Gerry Biddard** (NHDOT): Gerry is the active transportation engineer. The [Bureau of Rail & Transit](#) has a new administrator, Nichole Bryant, after 6 months of the position being vacant. The Conway Branch Planning Group met last year, and the 21-mile rail corridor is set to be transferred from DOT to DNCR (anticipated March 2025). From Highway Design: Planning a study of rail trail crossings on state roads to be completed by the end of 2025. Legislation [HB715-FN](#): (Personal Electric Vehicles - PEV): DOT suspects it won't move forward except for a study committee. Groups can let Gerry, or the NH Rail Trail Coalition know if they see any issues with PEV. This does not apply to e-bikes.
- **Matt Scaccia** (SPNHF): SPNHF is excited about their RTP project at the Concord Conservation Center, which aims to make ADA improvements for the floodplain, including 1,000 feet of treadway enhancements. The Mount Major Volunteer Trail Head Program in Alton, NH, has been successful in posting volunteers at trailhead peaks to interact with visitors. This includes on-site interaction with thousands of guests, offering insight into peak weather, safety, and trail conditions to ensure hikers are making informed decisions about their preparedness. Monadnock Trails Week had about 50 volunteers in 2024, marking the 19th year of coordination with NH State Parks for the event. Over 1,000 hours of trail labor were put in between volunteers and staff during the event. SPNHF is also working on enhancing their online trail descriptions.
 - o Alexis: What are the Mount Major volunteers asking visitors? Volunteers share which paths may be more suitable for what the group is prepared for. For example, sandals on a difficult trail may not be ideal. Volunteers are not stopping anyone; they're only providing advice and alternatives. There has been a lot of positive public feedback regarding these efforts.
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- **Terry Collum** (NHSA): This winter has been much better than the past few years for winter recreational activity. Trails are open and operating, resulting in increased registration and membership numbers.

- **Debbie Briscoe** (NH Horse Council): Riders would like to see more maps of suggested routes at Bear Brook State Park. NH Horse Council has also inquired about the use of the Cotton Valley Rail Trail. They have used it in the past, but there is no current equestrian use due to rail ties in place. If the CVRT becomes recreationally accessible, Debbie requests that equestrian use be considered. There is growing interest in the Conway Branch (which still has rails and ties). A comment on Facebook expressed concern about town property paving trails, which would prevent horses from using the trail since horses don't like to walk on pavement. The paving deeply concerns the horse community. There are other comments on Facebook supporting horse camping. An equestrian from Westmoreland requested better parking access (equestrian use is accessible for some recreational users). The Ashuelot Trail in Swanzey is washed out, and NHHC is asking about the repair schedule.
 - o Jerry (to Debbie): New bridges were built within Pisgah State Park. Do you have any recommendations for making bridges less slippery for horses?
 - o Debbie: There is an experimental bridge in Pisgah with one method (placing stone dust on top of fabric). Another method involves placing a second layer of wood on top, usually using rough-cut hemlock. The oil in pressure-treated wood can get slippery for horses. Curbing is helpful.
 - o Craig: In the past, rough-cut strips on bridges to make them safer for horses.
 - o Avis (in Pawtuckaway): Sand grains on bridges to prevent vegetation buildup on them over time.
 - o Craig (for the Ashuelot question): There is a draft plan for these washouts. The repairs will be made through the Town of Swanzey's TAP grant through DOT's Office of Planning and Community Assistance.

Introduction to the Safe Passing Campaign: A special thanks to anyone who has added their logo to the campaign. Physical copies of the signs were passed out, but there is an electronic copy available. The sign represents the basic trail etiquette for passing others on the trail (slow down, stop, yield, talk for instruction, smile, and enjoy). Reach out to Debbie with further inquiries.

- **Heather Shank** (Office of Planning & Development): Heather is attending to determine which staff member to appoint for STAC. The "[Wildly Responsible](#)" campaign is being promoted through travel and tourism. SPNHF should be invited to help promote it. Her office has staff with a GIS trail meeting that takes place every few months to ensure NH trail mapping accuracy. She also mentioned that Janell from the Office of Outdoor Recreation would probably like to attend these STAC meetings.

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

- Following legislation from last year under HB1468, DOT was charged with forming a **Conway Branch Study Committee** to look at recreational use options for the 21 miles of abandoned rail line in the Ossipee and Madison area. The Bureau of Trails participated in several committee meetings in the fall and early winter and the final report was issued to the legislature in early January 2025 which recommended the transfer of the 21 miles rail line from DOT to DNCR to assist with creating a future rail trail. The transfer is slated to occur at an upcoming G&C meeting in March.
 - o Craig: There will be public meetings for this new segments and management. There are a lot of different groups vying for different uses on this trail. No dates set.
 - o Brian: DNCR is trying to put together what the stakeholder group will look like.
- The Public Hearing has been scheduled for updates and changes to the Grant in Aid Administrative Rules Res 8400. The hearing will be on *March 26, 2025, starting at 8:30am at the DNCR HQ in Concord*. This is the formal public hearing required as part of the rule submission to the JLCAR.
- BOT will be hosting our annual Executive Councilor Snowmobile Ride this Friday on Feb. 21st. This year, Councilor Kenney has chosen to ride in the Lakes Region from New Durham to the Brookfield/Wakefield area. This annual tradition started many years ago by Councilor Ray Burton to showcase our statewide snowmobile trail network.
- ARPA trail repairs from '23 Storm Damage: Most trail repair projects were completed in 2024 with these federal funds, but reimbursements are still ongoing with snowmobile and OHRV clubs.

Grant in Aid (GIA) Updates:

- **Snowmobile Grooming contracts:** All contracts have been encumbered and payments have been going out to clubs.
- **Summer projects:** The 2024 summer projects are done, but not all billing has been submitted for reimbursement. GIA Coordinator Taya Ferris is processing reimbursements so any unused funds can be liquidated and applied to the spring 2025 grant round.
- The **Trail Sign order** has come in and has been sorted by club. BOT District Supervisors are working directly with the clubs to arrange for pickup. Sign sharing is recommended.
- **Summer GIA workshops:** Dates and times for Summer 2025 GIA workshops will be sent out soon for any new TAs or anyone who would like a refresher. The revised rules will not be approved in time for the summer 2025 GIA, which means no changes will be made from last season.

Recreational Trail Program (RTP) Update – (Brianna Leone)

- **Federal Fiscal Year 2024** (Project B) RTP
 - o Most FY24 projects are completed, except for a few Grant Extensions. If you haven't done so yet kindly submit all hard copies related to closed projects to the RTP coordinator no later than February 28th.
- **Federal Fiscal Year 2025** (Project C) RTP
 - o BOT is still working through the Federal Environmental Review Process (NEPA) in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and DOT's Bureau of Environment.
- **Federal Fiscal year 2026** (Project D) RTP
 - o Applications for 2026 RTP projects will be available to download in April 2025.
 - o Workshop dates will be taking place in April, final dates are TBD. Reminder: If you plan to apply for RTP you must attend at least one workshop.
 - Workshop dates are to be posted on the Trails Bureau website & Facebook page. If you plan to attend, inform the RTP Coordinator (Brianna Leone) via email prior to the workshop. Space will be limited to 30 people per session.
 - o The application due date is still pending but will be earlier than previous years to accommodate procedural changes with Fish & Game's non-game program.
- **Buy America Update:** no new info at this time.

Legislative Update:

- **HB113** regarding OHRV operation on certain highways within the town of Windsor. The bill was "Retained in Committee" on Jan 31st.
- **HB127-FN** concerning extending the OHRV season on the Connecticut Lakes Headwaters property from September 30th to Columbus Day. The bill passed the House on Feb. 13th and now goes to the Senate. In addition, Governor Ayotte is proposing similar language to extend the OHRV season in **HB2**.
 - o HB 127-FN: There is a citizen advisor committee for this property.
- **HB174** regarding increasing the maximum weight of a utility terrain vehicle from 2,000 lbs. to 3,500 lbs. unladen dry weight. The House voted on Feb. 13th that it was Inexpedient to Legislate (ITL).
- **HB300** directing the DOT to issue a request for proposals regarding the Conway Branch rail line and establishing a study committee to investigate the future of railroads. The bill was ITL'd at the House RR&D Committee on Feb. 11th, since a similar house bill was approved last year (HB 1468).
- **HB375** allowing municipalities to designate sections of state and local highways for all terrain vehicles. The bill was ITL'd at the House RR&D Committee on Feb. 11th.

- **HB513** regarding allowing DOT to execute a ROW agreement for snowmobile operation along I-89 in Sutton from Rte. 114 south for one mile. The House voted to pass the bill on Feb. 13th with amendments as recommended by DOT.
 - o HB513: DOT wants to have an agreement with DNCR to allow this. Seems more feasible to FHWA for this rather than an agreement directly with a club.
- **HB683-FN** relative to off-highway recreational vehicles and removing the requirement for a petitioner to bear the expense of verified mail notification to abutters of property for which OHRV use is sought and expands the list of counties where OHRV operations on designated highways are authorized to include Carroll, Cheshire, Hillsborough, Merrimack, and Sullivan counties. The House RR&D Committee held a hearing and executive session on Feb. 12th, and the bill was ITL'd.
- **SB274-FN** establishing a 4-year pilot program with potential for statewide expansion to improve rail trails in New Hampshire through federal, state, and private funding and making a bonded appropriation therefor. A Senate Transportation Committee hearing was held on Feb. 11th.
 - o **SB274-FN:** Brian Wilson: bill is well-written but any additional advocacy is a pretty big deal to open the door to an unfunded component of the parks system. Parks gets money and Motorized uses get funds, but rail trails are somewhat overlooked. DNCR should be able to provide what a true rail trail should be. In the Rail Trail plan, it talks about pulling resources from all sorts of sources but also from the state. Huge value of volunteer aspect to these rail trails. Not necessarily see a way to get fees from bikers walkers or donations. In Rail Trail plan there was an economic analysis. In Conway there is a corridor not being used, DNCR can really make that trail as a pilot to show the economic impact of trails as it is developed. When our DNCR staff go to testify and needs to be neutral. Your groups is what can be for or against.
 - o Heather: do you have the return on investments? DBEA have been impacted by the massive budget cuts. Brian: That was not discussed but the ROI is real and presented in the Rail Trail Plan.

Old Business: None.

New Business:

- **Brian Wilson:** NH State Parks is celebrating its 90th anniversary as a division. There will be statewide programmatic activities for recreational users to engage in, including scavenger hunts. The division is hoping to get involved in events hosted on state park lands with a stand for public engagement. The division is open to invitations for events, including those using SUPs (Special Use Permits). As a side note, the NH State Parks Calendar is available with historical park photos.
 - o Avis Rosenfield: Avis has a special use permit on state lands and would like state parks to attend.

- **Brian (to Bill):** Hampton Beach State Park Accessibility Feasibility Study: A year-long study completed by a dedicated stakeholder group. The focus was on access and breaking down barriers, including wayfinding to address other forms of impairment in both parking and additional access. Our division will use this study as a template for as many DNCR locations as possible and share it with other trail networks (like SPNHF properties). If someone is doing something that is a good idea, please share it, as parks are open to implementing new ideas. Additional accessible wheelchairs are being introduced to increase beachfront access for those with mobility issues.
 - o Bill: There are individuals from the commission about the Hampton Beach project who have a lot of enthusiasm.
- **Peter:** Bear Brook has an adaptive track chair. A citizen had a mountain biking accident that left him paralyzed. He has an adaptive bike, but there is no bathroom at Bear Brook that accommodates his bike. Will there be any updates to make the current buildings more ADA-compliant?
 - o Brian: Our infrastructure is old, especially in Bear Brook. It's a constant challenge to try and make as many updates as parks can with the high volume of updates needed for existing infrastructure.
- **Peter:** The last meeting was rescheduled because the chair could not attend. Is there a committee rule for canceling a meeting if the chairman cannot attend?
 - o Alexis: There are no bylaws. The previous RTP coordinator start writing rules as he had a strong background in policy. BOT is now looking for a new STAC bylaw draft and edits to introduce, which the commissioner may abide by.
 - Avis Rosenfield offered to draft bylaws.
 - o Peter: If there is not a committee chair able to attend STAC, can the meeting still be held?
 - o Tom: Yes, someone can step in as chairman if they are not available, the quorum is still required to be met.
 - o Brian: If there is no quorum, then the meeting does not cover official business but can be held as an informational session.
- **Debbie:** Is there a secondary definition for OHRVs for PEVs (personal electric vehicles)?
 - o Craig: Regarding the PEV bill, there has been discussion with the DMV about PEVs, but no one has a solid handle on it yet. Fish and Game has noted that high horsepower electric motorcycles may receive tickets without proper registration.
- **Tim:** Central NH NEMBA had an event on Friday at Franklin Falls (Army Corps property). It was suggested that the event would be more effective with proper mapping and additional GIS resources.
 - o Alexis suggested using the public GRANIT trails layer if needed.

Guest Comment:

- Avis Rosenfield (Derry Trail Riders): Update on Horse Camping at Bear Brook: Positive communication with Tom Mansfield (DD&M) and Tara Blakey (Parks Regional Supervisor). Avis will be working with an independent contractor for the 8 sites to provide Tom with the information. Tom will be the lead for design once the information is received.

Next Meeting Date: May 21st, 2025 at 6:00 PM at DNCR HQ.

Tom Dimaggio, Motion to adjourn.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:26PM.

DRAFT