

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

October 7, 2015

DRED Conference Room

### In Attendance

Members:

- Chris Gamache NH Trails Bureau (BOT)
- Tom DiMaggio New Hampshire Musers Association
- Peter DeSantis New England Mtn Bike Association (NEMBA)
- Debbie Briscoe New Hampshire Horse Council (NHHC)
- Tim Blagden Bike-Walk Alliance of New Hampshire (BWANH)
- Marianne Leberman White Mountain National Forest (WMNF)
- Raynold Jackson Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF)
- Harry Brown New Hampshire OHV Association (NHOHVA)
- Larry Keniston New Hampshire DOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Program
- Scott Monroe Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC)

Staff:

- Patrick Hummel Division of Parks & Recreation, Volunteer Coordinator

### Open Meeting

7:05 PM, meeting called to order. .

### Review Minutes

Minutes from the May 27, 2015 meeting reviewed, Question about request to add members that are not present to the minutes asked. Generally, minutes for most committees use this format for listing who is in attendance, not who isn't. This committee does not have by-laws or anything that outlines a minimum number of meetings a member must make or be replaced. Decision to continue as we always have is what agency will be doing. Minutes approved as presented.

### Introductions

Members and guests introduced themselves and their affiliations

### OHRV/Snowmobile Update

Chris G: OHRV season is starting to wind down. Good season overall with law enforcement activity similar to last season. Registrations are tracking to be consistent with last year, perhaps few machines higher. Having high traffic on Coos trails on weekends. A lot of riders are making multiple trips north to ride. Good overall economic impact in the communities but is stressing clubs and Bureau staff with maintenance levels. Jericho ATVFest went well and had few issues. About 4,000 attendees to this years event. Pittsburg trails shut down Sept 30<sup>th</sup>, Colebrook and areas north of Rte 26 will close down Oct 20<sup>th</sup> and Coos highways sections close for the season on Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>. Would be good to have a consistent date for closures. Discussion about requirements of land ownership and its impact on closure dates. Rentals machines and their higher percentage of accidents was discussed. NHOHVA and Fish & Game talking about possibility of a rental training program in the future.

Chris G: Snowmobile Season is gearing up. Bureau staff have started the shift to snowmobile trail projects. Clubs are working on reroutes and other projects to get ready for the season. Farmer's Almanac is predicting snows similar to last winter, perhaps a little more, but temperatures not as cold as last winter. Question about how OHRV and snowmobile clubs coordinate work was asked. Northern clubs tend to work together better as they use a lot of the same trail corridors. Many of them are gravel roads. Central and Southern NH there are fewer OHRV trails so opportunity to work together of projects. The Bureau mows rail trails on a 3-4 year cycle, if funding is available. Most other trails are up to volunteer efforts.

### **Recreational Trail Program Update**

Chris updated the committee on the 2015 grant projects and why they are still on hold. Bureau is waiting on new FHWA financial accounting computer system upgrades to be completed before FHWA can input the 2015 grant round into its computer system and authorize projects to begin. Issues with timing on federal spending, how the process is done with NHDOT and timing of "obligations" in the federal systems. Chris gave the committee a summary of how the program and federal obligations occurred in the past and how the process has changed and impacts that has had on the program. 2015 grantees will basically become 2016 projects. All grantees will receive contract extensions to give them until October 2016 to complete projects. The next grant round will be advertised in late spring 2016 and the goal will be to have contracts and approvals in place for work to begin in October and contracts valid for a Federal Fiscal Year (October through September). Bureau will only be able to have 2 "active projects" at a time in the Federal system. This will mean that contract extensions will be approved less often and organizations will have to complete projects within the time originally approved. Current Federal Highway Bill expires at the end of this month. US Senate has passed a long term highway bill, but with Speaker of the House stepping down in Washington is it unlikely new bill will pass the House this fall. Likely to get another continuing resolution.

### **Heritage Trail Update**

No updates or activity since last meeting

### **Old Business**

Bear Brook update: no action on this since last meeting. Agency staff did have a meeting with a signage vendor and discuss updating all signage at Bear Brook State Park; including trails, campground, day use, etc. Division may be going out with an RFP for companies to help with the sign layout and design. Would likely be a 2016 activity. Good comments from equine and bike riders on the trail signs installed this spring.

Memorandums of Agreement (MOA) status: PH gave an update on where the Division is with MOA's with volunteer groups, no progress on getting any signed yet but is making good progress in meetings with Attorney General's Office. RSA 216-A:3 (h) covers and protects individuals that volunteer on DRED lands, but not groups. Organizations must still defend and indemnify the State in our agreements. Individual volunteer agreements are being formatted and should go out shortly. Discussion about volunteer organization insurance needs and what organizations have insurance today. Directors and Officers (D&O) is important for organizations but many do not have it. Having D&O insurance has helped BWANH get Board members. NHOHVA now has a carrier for insurance and it is open for other trails groups, other than OHRV, if they become affiliate members of NHOHVA. NHOHVA will bring a proposal for insurance to other groups to the January STAC meeting. DRED is moving forward with a bill to give the Division of Parks the authority to purchase commercial insurance policy for organization. Groups that want to get coverage would pay the Division for their coverage.

New Hampshire Fish & Game Hiker Card: CG explained that Executive Director Normandeau replied to Director Bryce's inquiry about expanding where the cards are sold, as voted on by STAC at May meeting. "We chose to limit hike safe to online only for ease of administration. It also avoids collection of an agent fee that would be due the agent. Assuming the card retains its current popularity moving forward w may revisit that decision but as usual with government it is not as simple as just 'doing it'." Several members noted disappointment with the response and discussion ensued about how important the program is to get additional funding to F&G for search and rescue. Does F&G want the program to be successful. HB moved that STAC further encourage Fish & Game to expand the sale of the hiker card. Second by PD. Motion: "The Statewide Trails Advisory Committee recognizes and supports the Hike Safe Card and its intent, and fully supports the efforts of the NH Fish & Game Department. To help enhance revenues STAC supports the sale of the Hike Safe Card be extended beyond the current on-line program to include sale at other facilities, such as AMC, WMNF, State welcome centers and other

appropriate locations” Discussion on costs, impacts and purpose of program ensued. Motion passed 9 yes, TB abstain.

House Bill 290 passage and impacts: bill discussed at May meeting was passed and signed into law by Governor. Effective date is January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016. Created an Assumption of Risk for all outdoor recreation participants within the Duty of Care (RSA 212:34) statute.

### **New Business**

2016 Legislation: bills just being filed at this time. Not much to report on. There is a bill to allow OHRV use of highways in Grafton County proposed (same language as exists for Coos County today) and also bill to keep the authority for a 4x4/Jeep trail at Jericho Mountain State Park. SM asked group about HB 500 impacts to trails: bill would all hunting with sound suppressors on guns. Concern from hiking community about not hearing hunters shooting. Discussion about the bill and possible impacts. Committee decided to hold any action until January meeting when we know if the bill will be moving forward for action in 2016 session.

WMNF plan update timeline; What is timing for the next WMNF plan? Current plan signed in 2005, intended as 10-15 year document so planning will likely start in 2018/2019. There are some new planning guidelines that would need to be looked at. The plan is done at the local level. Can something prohibited in the plan when signed be asked to be implemented today? Things do change if it is a good idea and well supported the Forest could do a site specific plan amendment. None have been done so far. WMNF was 1 of only 2 plans in country that were not appealed. Do a thorough job and involve a lot of organizations; including STAC members. May be 8-10 years from now before a new plan would actually be signed.

### **Guest Comments/Questions**

No guests present

### **Next meeting**

Next meeting is set for Wednesday January 13, 2016 at 7 pm at DRED HQ.

Meeting adjourned at 8:41 PM.