

**Bear Brook State Park Management Plan
Steering Committee Meeting – 11/19/20**

Meeting was called to order at 5:10pm by Tom DiMaggio

Steering Committee Members Present

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Representing</u> |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| Avis Rosenfield | Non-Motorized Recreation |
| Armand Verville | Cultural and Historic Resources |
| Tom St. Martin | Town of Candia |
| Eric Orff | Game and Sportsmen |
| Dan Dwyer | Non-Motorized Recreation |
| Wendy Weisiger | Forest Management |
| Tom DiMaggio | Recreation at Large (Chair) |
| Matthew Lavoie | Town of Hooksett |
| Sandra McKenney | Town of Allenstown |
| Armand Verville | Cultural Resources |

Steering Committee Members Absent

Jeff Lougee, Forest Ecology
Steve Hampl, Motorized Recreation
Carol Foss, Non Game Wildlife
Suzanne Smith, State Park System Advisory Council
Jeff Eames, Forest Products Industry
Brian Adams, Town of Deerfield

Division Staff

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| Johanna Lyon | Christina Pacuk | Jim Oehler |
| Will Guinn | Tara Blaney | John Magee |
| Scott Rolfe | Pete Bowman | |

Steve Roberge UNH Cooperative Extension facilitated the meeting for the committee. Chairperson Tom DiMaggio started the meeting off with a reading of the emergency order and an explanation of how the meeting was to be held via zoom and how the public had access to the meeting. Introductions of all committee members and last meetings minutes are accepted. The Recreation chapter is brought to attention with the hopes that all committee members have read the chapter. Will Guinn reviewed the last chapter and all updates to that chapter. All comments or edits to the management plan need to be sent in, preferably by December.

Infrastructure Revisions:

Johanna reviewed the infrastructure chapter and its significant revisions. Maps have now been added into the chapter for each management area. Many recommendations that were made in the infrastructure chapter have now been moved to the recreation chapter because they had to do with recreation. Operation improvements have been taken out and will be put in their own separate operating plan. New recommendations were added to this chapter, such as redesigning the Podunk Road entrance and improving the current infrastructure of the Violette Pavilion.

Steering Committee Comments on Infrastructure updates:

Tom St. Martin: I noticed that the Smith Pond Shelter is called out but not the Lost Shelter. I was wondering if that should be included as part of the infrastructure?

Johanna: That is a good point. There are so many buildings in the park. I was mostly concentrating on the building that actually have public use for management. The lost shelter is there but we do not rent it. It is on our property building list, it's a building we management and maintain but it is not something we really advertise.

Tom: These plans sound near term. Will the plans be consistent with the ten year scope?

Johanna: What may seem immediate is actually long term. To do the stuff we are talking about will take time, funding, and plans. This is ten years' worth of work.

Chapter 11. Recreation: Presentation

Presenter: Johanna Lyons of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

Park Operations

The recreation chapter goes in real depth of Bear Brook's recreation management, including park uses and resources. Reviews of the types of uses in the park and information regarding park operations were reviewed. Recommendations for improvement of visitor services were listed before the question and comments section.

Questions on this section:

Tom St. Martin: Are there any thoughts on fee collection on the south part of the park?

Johanna: That is a good point. I can put in something about iron rangers as a fee collection opportunity

Camping Operations

Camping management explains the different areas developed in the park and their occupancies at times of the year. Recommendations for camping areas consisted of campsite improvements, the continuation of building camping areas, and rehabilitation of sites.

Questions on this section:

Dan Dwyer: How many cabins will the Maples Unit bring Bear Hill up to?

Johanna: It is identical to the Oaks Unit. There is a wash house, a lodge, two four person cabins, and six, six person cabins.

Wendy Weisiger: The Occupancy number for 2019 seem low. Is that normal to be at 50% and lower?

Johanna: That's actually really good. People work during the week. Anything over 50% is 3.5 days they stay. So that's the weekend plus a little extra.

Wendy: How does Bear Brook camping compare to other parks like Pawtuckaway and Monadnock where you might have a lot of visitors?

Johanna: Pawtuckaway is a little higher and Monadnock is a little lower. Most of our campgrounds are in the 50% range.

Tara Blaney: This season Bear Brook was filling their campsites midweek to 60- 70% occupancy which is normally unheard of.

Phil Bryce: We also restricted visitation numbers through reservations as well

Bear Brook's retail operations brings in about 12 percent of the revenue and it is recommended that the operations expand with new facilities and more rental units. Day use operations account for 16 percent of the park's revenue and the pavilion rentals bring in 10 percent.

Trail Section

Trail recommendations are to balance trail usage with resource management goals and to complete the trail lists with official names while also closing out unofficial trails. Trail operation recommendations consist of creating seasonal trail maps, uniform trail markers, and adding additional kiosks. Johanna shared details on NH Fish and Game Departments roles in the park, including their programming that takes place, their management areas and their responsibilities.

Questions and Comments:

Wendy Weisiger: Have you developed a maintenance schedule for the trails?

Johanna: Yes we have started that work but we do not feel that it needs to be put into this plan.

Tom St. Martin: With the trail recommendations and primary use listed, I would suggest making it a little clearer that the use listed is the primary use and not the only use on the trail.

Tom St. Martin: Having an adopt a trail program at the park would provide more intense seasonal trail maintenance and should be something to look into.

Tom St. Martin: Recommendation #9, I think that the removal of trails from the map will only confuse trail users when they are out in the park.

Dan Dwyer: Will Trail maintenance guidelines and how to propose a new trail be a part of this plan?

Johanna: Yes, it might be in earlier chapter or in the state lands management team information

Dan Dwyer: Regarding the new equestrian campground, what is the demand for trails in that area?

Johanna: Public day use for equestrians will still be in Hayes Field, with horse campers crossing the road and taking horse camp trail into the existing trail network.

Avis Rosenfield: Parking is becoming an issue at Hayes Field with the increase of usage at the park. Parking signs and delineators will be needed to avoid the trails and vehicles getting blocked in.

Wendy Weisiger: Will the park map be available via geo reference?

Johanna: That we will to look into the software

Will Guinn: This is something that is in the works. Links are featured on the Forests and Lands webpage.

Public Comment via chat function:

Maria Noel Groves: Lots of exciting things! What about better maps and rail signage for visitors??

Debbie BRISCOE: I agree to encourage individuals to volunteer for trail maintenance with each other or alone. Current liability laws protect the individual better so may be easier to grow your maintainers

Debbie BRISCOE: I like Johanna's description and to improve what "recommended" means it is to point people in a direction for a good experience and then add it is not to prohibit.

Debbie BRISCOE: How will the trail crew be funded? How do you encourage donations to the park for trail maintenance? Is the SCA part of the trail crew?

Debbie BRISCOE: As the park use increases I agree that horse trailer parking needs to be preserved.

Will Guinn: <https://www.nh.gov/nhdf/natural-heritage/state-forests-parks-interactive-map.htm>

Maria Noel Groves: I'd be interested in being on the map subcommittee if non-committee members are allowed.

Dan Dwyer: I didn't see anything in the master plan regarding e-bikes? Will the plan go over the policies about them?

Debbie BRISCOE: I believe the admin rules will have to change regarding e bikes

Tom St. Martin: That was an informal policy year's back

All comments are needed in two weeks and the final public review draft will come out in January.

Meeting Ends: 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted, Christina Pacuk, Park Manager