

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

May 27, 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)
- Rob Kennedy New Hampshire Snowmobile Association (NHSA)
- 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)
- Phil Bryce Director, Division of Parks & Recreation

Guests:

- Gerry Gold Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway (SRKG)
- Kathy Turnbull New Hampshire Equine Trails Coalition
- Avis Rosenfeld New Hampshire Horse Council (NHHC)

Open Meeting

7:03 PM, meeting called to order.

Introductions

Members and guests introduced themselves and their affiliations.

Review Minutes

Minutes from the January 14, 2015 meeting reviewed, 1 edit requested on last paragraph by Debbie B. .
Moved approve with edit: Debbie B, Second: Harry B.

OHRV/Snowmobile Update

Snowmobile Season Update: Good overall snowmobile season. Very cold winter with a lot of southern and central snow in the State. All clubs performed grooming operations this winter and northern part of state had heavy late season snows to carry season to the end of April. Registrations are up about 2000 over last winter.

OHRV season Update: Trails opened this past weekend (May 23) with great success. No reported accidents or incidents on the trail system and there were a lot of riders out for the holiday weekend. Most lodging and eating establishments in Coos County were full all weekend. Waiting to review a few sections of State highway needed for trail connectors for this summer but overall it was a good start for the season and people are looking forward to 2015 riding season. Scott M asked what the process is for riding on the trails and registering an OHRV was? Explanation given by Chris G.

Recreational Trail Program Update

FY 2015 Funding Update: Chris G explained the Federal Highway Bill was extended to July 31st (2 month extension). NH does have enough funding to have a 2016 grant round. Paperwork requirements have increased dramatically over the past year and groups looking for funds need to be prepared for the amount of work needed to be in compliance with FHWA regulations. 2015 grantees are under review and should have final environmental clearance shortly. Governor &

Executive Council approved the 2015 contracts this morning. A list of grantees will be forwarded to STAC shortly. Groups should talk to the Congressional Delegation about the importance of this program to them. Thank them for their support in the past, and thank them when a project is done, not just when reauthorization is needed. Funds come from federal gas tax on motorized off highway vehicles. They are split 30% motorized, 30% non-motorized and 40% diversified (which in NH means a non-motorized and motorized benefit). Important for all understand where the funds come from. If all funds go into the 'general fund' they can always be taken away. With RTP at least a little bit of motorized funding comes back to benefit the whole trail community. It is positive to have groups have some separation on trails and not have every use on every trail. Important to educate people on how trails are funded. The group is seeing a shift in cooperation amongst the groups. More talking to each other and joint projects being done.

Heritage Trail Update

Bureau has had some activity on sections for the Heritage Trails. Lancaster ordered new signs to post on the trail and try to increase use in Town. Towns of Bedford and Hooksett have submitted RTP projects that will become sections of the Heritage Trail when completed.

Old Business

Bear Brook update: Horse, bike and DRED representatives all met earlier in the spring and it was a productive meeting. Discussion of joint projects and more communication between the groups was a major point and it was positive that people listened to each other and want to work together. . Good to get updates on future plans and goals from each group. Sentinel Pine trail updates and plans were briefly discussed. Property users have a lot of knowledge about the property and users of the property and that knowledge can do a lot of good when combined with the input of staff on projects. May be good to encourage some uses over other uses on certain trails. Working on Hayes Field improvement project this summer. Agency needs to finish walking re-routes for review and approval. Question about whether or not trail adopters are meeting needs of the park? Little different in Bear Brook than other places. Always issues to work through. No known plans to change snowmobile trails in the park and club has not approached the Division with any projects. Division will put an overall trail plan out for public comments when ready. Signage is on hold for now while Division works on getting legal signage about Admin Rules out in high use areas completed first. Horse community will put out the trail descriptions to their members to get input on the language and content and follow up with Parks to incorporate some version of it on the property. Trail descriptions still needs more in-house review and comment. Priority is to get trail work done and then worry about describing the trail.

Memorandums of Agreement (MOA) status: Patrick H was not in attendance but a lot of discussion about the agreement with volunteer trail organizations ensued. Staff is meeting with Dept of Justice tomorrow about some language requirements for MOAs. Need to discuss more about the current need for partner organizations requirement to defend and indemnify the State. Agency has challenged, to a degree, the risk management staff about the agency's need to work with volunteer groups to get work done vs the liability issues of non-employees doing work. Groups will likely need to do more for paperwork and agree to do only approved activities and not whatever they want to do on State lands. No new MOA's will be issued until the issues are worked out. Discussion about how some insurance agencies not cover trail work in their policy. MOAs will outline what can, and cannot, be done by volunteers (chainsaw training will be required). Volunteers should not be showing up and cutting trees without documented training with saws. Volunteers help over the years has been invaluable but agency has to look at worst case scenarios as well as best case. Many trail groups cannot get insurance so they would not be able to enter agreements that require them. Would not be worth being a volunteer if there is too much red tape. WMNF does not allow work on the Forest without an agreement and training. MOAs are more intense than standard volunteer agreements; because they allow for unsupervised levels of action. DOJ and Risk Management want indemnification and insurance, but Parks says not appropriate. Need to figure out what is right way to do it. STAC can be the group to help Director on this. Needs to stay involved to help him with roadblocks.

Legislation: HB 290, Outdoor Recreation Assumption of Risk bill, is set for vote in full Senate tomorrow. Judiciary Committee voted 3-2 to pass the bill. Lot of STAC groups got involved with the bill this year and it has made a difference. Tom D would like to see one last effort to make contact with Senators tonight to get this passed tomorrow. Bill failed in Senate last session but seems to have more support this year.

New Hampshire Fish & Game Hiker Card: update as to sales to date are 826 Family Cards, 752 Individual cards. Resident/Non breakdown is Family/Res 533 and Family/NonRes 219. Individual/Res 524 and Individual/NonRes 302. Funds from Hiker Card are deposited in the F&G Search & Rescue account. Currently F&G is selling them only on-line. They have recently reached out to Parks & Tourism to help with marketing. WMNF has been asked to assist also. Harry B moved to ask Director Bryce to encourage Fish & Game to extend the Hike Safe card sales program beyond on-line to include point of sale options such as at AMC, WMNF and rest area sites. Peter D second. Motion passed.

New Business

Bicycle Work Stations: Tim B asked for this to be on the agenda and gave a brief description of this park amenity that Minnesota Parks recently installed in a several of its parks. These are platforms used to repair bikes in a park and would be good in day use parks with a lot of bike use. Parks would view them as an amenity similar to a pit-toilet in a park and restroom facilities would take a much higher priority at this time. Would likely not get a lot of use in NH parks at this time. Most higher skill riders have their own tools with them and this might not be cost effective. About \$1500 each.

Other Topics Updated to group: 1) Trails Bureau is working with Dept of Environmental Services to update the Best Management Practices manual. Will be working on it over the summer. 2) NH Fish & Game is updating their Wildlife Action Plan and has sent out survey emails to many this spring. STAC members should fill out the survey. 3) NH Division of Historic Resources Plan is being updated and they have asked that trail groups complete their on-line survey. Survey was emailed to members several week ago. 4) NH had several American Trails Award recipients this year. NH had a Trail Worker and Trail Advocate awardee. Bruce Stuart, Cotton Valley Rail Trail Club, was awarded the Trail Advocate award for his passion and work to get railroad motorcars recognized as recreational trail vehicles in NH. Emil & Rite Croteau were awarded Trail Worker award for their daily dedication and work on the OHRV trail in northern NH. The two are retired and spend every day working on trails in the Millsfield area. NH STAC was nominated for an award Successful Use of RTP Funds by a State Trails Advisory Committee. Unfortunately, NH STAC did not get the final vote to win the award but it was a nice recognition of the groups work to be nominated.

Harry B asked if it was possible to list STAC members absent on the minutes also? Agency will consider adding absent member on the minutes.

Guest Comments/Questions

Avis R noted that the Southern NH Snow Slickers (snowmo club in Bear Brook SP) has been kept in the loop on discussion about the park but they will need their own rep at meetings. How does NEMBA flag possible re-routes? Flagging typically not visible from other trails. NEMBA puts out different routes for options and then walk them with DRED staff to get input. If NH Horse Council wanted to propose a mounting ramp at BBSP would the proposal need to come to STAC? No. It would go directly to Parks Division via the park.

Gerry G was not aware of HB 290 prior to meeting. May be good to expand distribution of information beyond STAC for things this important. Great to have AMC back at the table after so many years without a representative at meetings. Would be good for AMC to be the conduit for the entire hiking community for the future. Mt Sunapee Ski Area master plan could impact Summit Trail at the park. Having good talks with DRED to ensure trail is not lost, and wanted STAC to be aware. Summit Trail was built in 1997 for the SRK Greenway to get hikers off the new ski trails lease area. Bob Spoerl, then of NH Trails Bureau, laid out the trail and work was

done by Trailwrights, Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway Trail Club, and SRK Greenway Coalition. The MS Greenway terminates (or starts) at the summit, so MSG hikers now use the Summit Trail (maintained by SRKG) to reach the summit. Trail was laid out by DRED staff. Trails seem to be an issue for Forests & Lands staff generally because of concerns for future management goals. Hikers should be sympathetic to land management activities and not oppose landowners who are trying to responsibly manage their lands.

Next meeting

Next meeting is set for Wednesday September 9, 2015 at 7 pm at DRED HQ.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Approved