

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

February 12, 2020

DNCR Conference Room

Attendance

Members:

Chris Gamache, NH Trails Bureau (BOT); Debbie Briscoe; NH Horse Council (NHHC); Terry Callum, NH Snowmobile Association (NHTSA); Raynold Jackson, Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF); Larry Keniston, NH DOT, Bike/Ped Program (DOT); Tom DiMaggio, NH Mushers Association (Chairman); Scott Munroe, Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) Stanley Carte, White Mountain National Forest (WMNF); Tim Blagden, Human-Powered Winter Sports; Paula Bedard, NH Bike-Walk Alliance (NHBWA); Tom Levesque, NH Off Highway Vehicle Association (NHOHVA)

Staff/Guest:

Alexis Rudko, Bureau of Trails, RTP Specialist (staff); Phil Bryce, Director, Division of Parks & Recreation; Avis Rosenfeld (NH Horse Council); Matt Scaccia (SPNHF)

Introductions and Review Minutes

Meeting began at 6:30 PM. Introductions of members and guests made. Minutes from the October 23, 2019 meeting reviewed. Motion to approve by TB, 2nd CG. Minutes approved.

OHRV/Snowmobile Update

Season is underway. Overall, trails are in decent shape in most of NH and the storm tomorrow will help add some more snow before the 2 school vacation weeks. NHTSA worked with Trails Bureau to develop an updated trail map and Trail Map App for phones this winter. Rolled out in December. Great project and trail location information significantly more accurate. Need to download with data (wifi or other data service) and then app will work off phone GPS (no cell service needed). Cost is \$4.99. All goes to App vendors and program developer. About 3800 apps sold to date. Website access is free. Can make hourly updates if needed to website and App is generally updated weekly. Discussion about the data layers, future ability of the program and how cost was determined. App was pulled up on a phone and passed around the group. <https://nhsa.com/nh-snowmobile-trail-map/> is website for the map and link to App. App is called NH Snowmobile Trail Map and can be used on iOS or Android devices. When season is over will likely lock out the trail layer on the map so other summer user groups will not be able to access the winter trail data (to help keep unauthorized summer uses off of the trails and properties).

OHRV projects still on-going during winter. Bureau participated in public hearing in Gorham on Monday night, to get input and support for opening portion of Rte 16 for OHRV use, to try to alleviate some other issues in town. Full house at the hearing and no opposition to the proposal.

Recreational Trail Program Update

Alexis R reported that 2020 grant applications were done with in-house environmental review process and have been submitted to NHDOT for NEPA review and approvals. FY 2019 projects are closing out. Sub-grantees are done and agency is starting to wrap up agency projects. 2018 projects are done and trying to finish up paperwork to close out the 2018 grant year. 2019 grant application cycle will start in April and deadline for applications will be in June. Bureau will offer 3 grant trainings in May. Required that entity must attend a training to submit an application. Grant limits for 2021 are the same as in previous years; \$8k minimum, \$80K maximum (Fed share). 2020 grants will be shared with STAC once approved by Governor & Council. A list of grant awards is located on the Trails Bureau website; <https://www.nhstateparks.org/about-us/trails-bureau/grants/recreational-trails-program> Tim B asked if BoT has to follow LPA process? Yes, we are considered an LPA of NHDOT for RTP funds. DOT is reviewing and asking LPA for input on ways to amend the process.

Heritage Trail Update

Nothing new.

Old Business

-Franconia Notch Working Group update. Phil B gave the group a quick update on where the group working on the heavy use of hiking trails and the parking issues in FNNSP is. NHDOT hired Cambridge Analytics to gather data on users and come up with 2 options for future shuttle management; 1 public management and 1 private. Phil B ok with State keeping management of shuttle service and have private entity involved on the State lands. Agency will be charging for parking at Bridle Path lot this summer and running shuttles again this year. NHDOT plans to put up cones and ropes again this summer to stop highway parking. Goal to not have to have the ropes up in future.

-Tom D asked Avis R to give an update on the status of the Bear Brook State Park Management Plan process and timelines. Recently had a wildlife presentation that was very interesting. Wildlife topic has generated a lot of off-line recreation discussions. Mountain biking letter written to the advisory committee will be a major topic at future meetings. Kingdom Trails in VT has closed to Mtn bikes due to level of use and impacts. Biggest impact to wildlife from trail users is from hikers. Recreation chapter will draw a lot of attention. Likely to be presented to advisory committee in spring.

-EBike management of DNCR properties discussed at length, including future Agency draft Administrative Rules that would be needed to address their use. A discussion draft of Rules was shared with committee and input sought on the language and asked what else needs to be thought of and addressed? Goal would be to have something in place for summer season, if possible but may be fall. Ebike Rules would be part of a larger Rules package to legislature that would also include park Rules, such as campgrounds, etc and an updated fee package for Parks. Rules that are less restrictive would be the goal. No need for a Rule if it is not enforced. Need to address actual issue today, not 'what-ifs". Stan C was asked to give quick summary of Dept of Agriculture (National Forest) and Department of Interior (National Parks) ebike management and differences. Last year DOI put out a memo saying eBikes are allowed on all trails, however they are backing off of that a bit now. The Department of Agriculture oversees National Forests and they define eBikes as motorized vehicles; as such eBikes are not permitted in the White Mountain National Forest; except they can be used on motorized routes (roads open to other vehicles), but not on trails. Lengthy discussion ensued about ebike definitions, capabilities, speed, private property management of ebike trails, not restricting Park facility access via ebikes, are they permitted on OHRV trails, Agency intent is to support Class 1 use as way to help people to continue to get outside and allow some degree of assistance to do so. Throttle assist is a different issue and not one the agency is looking to deal with at this time. Rider capable of pedaling bike at 20mph for length of time is in decent shape and can handle and control a bike. Putting someone on a bike with a throttle to go a sustained 20 mph does not guarantee they can control the bike. Phil B said he and Chris G would discuss if updated Rules would come back to STAC before going out to wider public for input.

New Business

Paula B inquired if "permitted use" signs for rail trails have been updated yet? Working on it but not highest priority today. Asked if accessible devices symbol could be added? BoT will review.

Guest Comments/Questions

Matt Scaccia introduced himself as the new Recreational Manager for Forest Society. New position organization created to help coordinate recreation on their forest reservations.

Next meeting tentatively set for July 12, 2020.

Meeting adjourned at 8:28 PM.