

New Hampshire Statewide Trails Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes, September 22, 2009

In Attendance

Members:

- Tom Dimaggio (Chair) NH Musers Assoc
- Larry Keniston NH DOT/Bike-Ped
- Scott Hatch NEA4WDC
- Jack Chapman FOMBA
- Dennis Ford NHSA
- Ken Domey NHOHVA
- Judy Silva NH Municipal Assoc
- Jack Waldron SPNHF
- Debbie Briscoe NH Horse Council
- Chris Gamache NH Trails Bureau
- Dennis Laliberte Summit School
- Diane Hanley NHRTA
- Bill Darcy AMC

Staff:

- Bill Gegas NH Trails Bureau

Guests:

- Gerry Gold SRKGC
- Raynold Jackson TrailWrights
- Peter Poanessa NEMBA
- Bob Shalit NEMBA
- Lelia Mellen National Parks Service RTCA
- Tom St.Martin self
- Bruce Bohanon Town of Swanzey

Open Meeting

7:05 PM, meeting called to order.

Introductions

Members and guests introduced themselves and their affiliations. The Chairman stated that guest questions and comments would be allowed during the meeting provided that they are relevant to the meeting topics.

Review Minutes

Minutes from the April 14, 2009 meeting reviewed and accepted.

OHRV Update

- The Trails Bureau is continuing work at Jericho Mountain State Park. The 1st Jericho ATV Festival will be held at JMSP on July 10-11, 2010. This event is being coordinated between the Division of Economic Development, Division of Parks and Recreation/Trails Bureau and the Glen Group. Festival will highlight OHRV and other recreational uses in the Berlin area/Coos County and the economic development benefits associated with it.
 - The NH legislature is still looking at instituting a temporary OHRV registration in NH. Current proposed legislation would allow the purchase of a one month registration valid within a calendar month.
 - The NH Fish & Game Dept will be holding a public hearing on October 19, 2009 for administrative rule changes regarding OHRV reciprocity between VT and NH.

Recreational Trails Program

- RTP Reauthorization: Currently no updates from FHWA
- 2009 Funding Rescission: A rescission of funds was recently mandated for all Federal Highway Administration programs including RTP. NH was required to de-obligate \$387,593.00 of authorized funds. The majority of this amount was taken from unspent money from previous grant years. This rescission was completed without any affect to current grantees.

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- **RTP Review:** The FHWA is currently conducting a review of the NH RTP. FHWA is generally satisfied with the management of the program, however is stressing that the Trails Bureau ensure that programmatic compliance as provided in the program guidance and applicable laws and rules are enforced. The FHWA will continue to work with the Trails Bureau to clarify what laws and rules apply to the different types of grantees. Specific requirements that will need to be clarified are sub-grantees procedures for procurement of equipment, services and materials, proper bidding procedures. Guidelines and requirements for retention/disposal of RTP funded equipment will also be clarified. The outcome of this review will likely lead to a more stringent application process where applicants should have the majority of requirements (including historical and environmental reviews, certain procurement procedures) completed by application deadline. Those applying government agencies will have to follow their own procedures. Other organizations that do not have procedures will have to follow DRED's. It will also likely lead to increased individual project audits. Currently the minimum and maximum grants available for any one organization are \$1000 to \$25,000. An initial thought is to raise the minimum and maximum allowable grant levels. The idea is to distribute fewer grants for increased efficiency in tracking and compliance. The committee was asked to provide their thoughts on raising the min and max. Several committee members felt that it was important to keep a low minimum so that important small projects may continue to be funded. A few member questioned why restructure the program now when it is not know whether or not the program will authorized in the upcoming federal surface transportation bill. Regardless of the unknown pending status of RTP, programmatic compliance needs to be assured. It was asked if DRED would assist those applicants who do not have significant or any experience in procurements or grant writing. The answer is likely not. Applicants are able to attend programmatic workshops. It will also be examined whether or not pre and/or post award workshops will be required for funding. Discussion ensued.

Heritage Trail Update

- No updates

New Business

- **Pisgah State Park Master Plan:** Pisgah, the largest SP in NH. Pisgah is essentially a state park in name only as it does not contain any beach, playground, day use or campground facilities. Pisgah was named as a state park by the legislature at the time of acquisition. The Division of Parks and Recreation only manages the developed recreational areas within a state park such as beaches, playgrounds, campgrounds, etc. The remaining areas of the properties are managed by the Division of Forests and Lands for forest and land management. Management of the trails is coordinated through the Bureau of Trails. Trails and forest land are the only resources in Pisgah. The current draft master plan is predominantly focused on timber management. Pisgah sees heavy trail use, however there are no trail user groups who have official agreements with the state to assist in trail maintenance. The Bureau ultimately oversees the management of the trails and presents recommendation on trails within the park. Right now there are two planning groups involved in the development of the master plan 1) a steering committee and 2) a technical team, both of which the Trails Bureau sits on. At this time it is important for all user groups to provide input as to what each group would like to see regarding trail management, which can be submitted to the Trails Bureau. Discussion ensued. It was noted that master plans will likely become more common among state parks. It will continue to be important for groups to provide their input on what they would like to see. Groups are reminded that they can explore any trails they want in order to make educated user comments on what uses should be allowed on specific trails, however they are only permitted to go out on trails subject to the current designated uses.

Old Business

- **Trail Bandit and Landowner/Posted Land Issues:** Since the last STAC meeting up to 15,000 acres have been closed to public trail use in the Ossipee Mountains area primarily due to the actions of an individual know as the Trail Bandit. The alleged actions included map creation and sales, trail blazing, clearing and use of herbicides, all without landowner consent. Other unauthorized uses of the properties also contributed the closure, however the Trail Bandit issues were the central point. The Trails Bureau is working with the landowners to try to get the land open again. There is a potential that new legislation will be pushed. Landowners may seek to have laws made that will make it illegal to produce recreational

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maps without written landowner permission. This would pose a big problem for most trail user organizations that produce maps due to the unpredictable and constantly changing dynamic of land ownership. The best plan right now will be to establish a public educational campaign to teach the public about landowner rights which may be lead by the Trails Bureau. The Trails Bureau will be meeting with the landowners and the Trail Bandit to help address the immediate issue of land closure in the Ossipees. It was asked what steps would be needed to "un-post" the land. Some of the landowners are willing to re-open the land if a responsible adoptive trail group can be formed to perform maintenance of designated routes. Other landowners may want to seek prosecution of the Trail Bandit. The Trails Bureau will help to coordinate initial clean up/work parties. Monitoring trespassing is extremely difficult as law enforcement resources are very limited to patrol the area (only 1 conservation officer, 1 forest ranger, and no local officers).

- NH State Parks Strategic Plan: DRED has withdrawn the previous plan and gone back to the drawing board. The previous plan explored the disposal and surplus of various properties. This plan was determined to be inappropriately conveyed and misinterpreted, however still led to much negative feedback from the public and media. Relative to trails within parks, trail users are an intrinsic part of the overall parks use. As part of the Division of Parks and Recreation, the main objectives for the Trails Bureau will focus on non-motorized management and funding. Motorized management and funding is already well established. Public comments can be submitted by email via www.nhstateparks.org. Comments should be sent as early as possible. January 4, 2009 is the final deadline for the plan to be released. It was asked if cooperation between Parks, Forests and Lands and the Trails Bureau will be included in the plan. It won't be in the plan, but is an ongoing practice within DRED.

- Share the Trail/Trail Etiquette: Over the last few years the STAC has been trying to develop guidelines for trail etiquette for all trail users in NH. The intent would be for the guidelines to be endorsed by STAC and distributed to the public via web or print. The guidelines are currently in draft form. After the last meeting a similar guide was released through the collaboration of various national level trail user groups. These guidelines were brought to the STAC for member input. After reading them the STAC felt that although some aspects were good, the national version doesn't go far enough and, is lacking in some areas. It was suggested to look at the NH draft and possibly combine the two versions.

- NH Trail Adopter Program: The Trails Bureau conducted it's first training with the cooperation of the AMC in May. Nine sections have been adopted in Bear Brook SP alone. The Trails Bureau will look to expand the program to other DRED properties.

Other

- Next meeting set for January 12, 2010 DRED conference room, 172 Pembroke Road, Concord.
- Meeting adjourned at 9:02 PM.