

Statewide Trails Advisory Committee (RSA 216-F:5)
 August 24, 2021 @ 6:30pm
 DNCR Conference Room (172 Pembroke Rd, Concord, NH 03301)

Attendance

STAC Committee Members:

Name	Organization	Attended?
Craig Rennie	Chief of NH Trails Bureau (BOT)	Yes
Captain Mike Eastman	NH Fish & Game Department	No
VACANT	NH Office of Strategic Initiatives	N/A
Shelley Winters (interim)	NH Department of Transportation	Yes
Barry Conway	NH Gov. Commission on Disability	No
Terry Callum	NH Snowmobile Association (NHSA);	Yes
Tom Levesque	NH Off Highway Vehicle Association (NHOHVA)	Yes
Amanda Peterson	Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC)	Yes
Dennis Pavlicek	NH Municipal Association	Yes
Raynold Jackson	Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF)	Yes
VACANT	NH Heritage Trail	N/A
Director Robert Johnson	NH Farm Bureau Federation	No
Debbie Briscoe	NH Horse Council (NHHC)	Yes
Tom DiMaggio	NH Mushers Association (Chairman)	Yes
Tom Thomson	Landowner Representative	No
Nicholas Sanders	NH Department of Transportation-Bike/Ped	Yes
Tim Blagden	Human-Powered Winter Sports	Yes
Peter DeSantis	New England Mountain Bike Association	No
Abby Evankow	NH Bike-Walk Alliance (NHBWA)	Yes
Stanley Carte	White Mountain National Forest	No

Guests:

Name	Organization
Avis Rosenfield	NH Horse Council

DNCR Staff:

Name	Position
Alexis Rudko	RTP Specialist, Bureau of Trails
Director Phil Bryce	Director, Division of Parks & Recreation

Open Meeting

6:36 pm, meeting called to order.

Introductions and Review Minutes

Introduction of members and guests made. Introducing Craig Rennie as new Chief for Trails Bureau.

Minutes from the February 17, 2021 meeting reviewed. Minutes approved with corrections. Motion to approve minutes & seconded. DOT reps & BOT chief abstain as they were not present for last meeting.

OHRV/Snowmobile Update

Trails Bureau removed 2 miles of trail on Ammonoosuc Trail in Littleton in fall 2020. Two more miles to be removed in fall 2021. RTP funds used to pull and match will come from a donation from the cross NH adventure trail. This past July 2021, we received a donation from the cross NH adventure trail for \$6,400 to do excavator work on the Presidential Rail Trail. The Rockingham Recreational Rail Trail (Freemont Branch) will see significant maintenance this next

few summers with a combination of a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant and Recreational Trails Program grant. The Sugar River Rail Trail will have a major washout repaired using a Recreational Trails Program grant.

There was limited snow this winter for snowmobile season. Despite the lack of snow, registration numbers were good with 47,993 as of spring 2021.

OHRV season started well. The OHRV registration numbers increased from previous years. The registrations for 2020-2021 were 45,424 as of May 2021.

The Grant in Aid Program (GIA) snowmobile grooming agreements ended in May 2021. Summer 2021 construction contracts are ongoing.

A question was posed: can non-motorized clubs receive GIA funds? The answer is no, because the funds come from snowmobile and OHRV registrations.

Recreational Trail Program Update

Project W FFY-2019 is closed. Project X FFY-2020 has 3 community projects left that were delayed from COVID and permitting. Department projects are finishing up this fall. Project Y FFY-2021 were approved by G&C in June and these are going on now. Project Z FFY-2022 applications closed in June and we are currently going through reviews.

Project A FFY-2023 will have solicitations for projects from April to June of 2022 with 3 workshops with TDB dates/time/locations. Attendance to at least one is required to apply. Workshops will be in person again.

To update on federal status: the RTP full funding act had the gas fuel study completed in September of 2020 but it wasn't released to public until July 2021. It does say RTP should receive the 280 million vs the 84 million it currently receives. For the current infrastructure bill – the TAP funds are slated to be increased to 9% but RTP was left out because of how late the fuel study came out. We may not be able to increase RTP to its full potential until next 5 year bill comes around in 2026.

The annual state apportionment is ~1.2 million. The RTP selection committee is made of various state employees.

Heritage Trail Update

Alexis R reported that Jason Soukup from Manchester emailed asking about being the representative for the Heritage Trail. Alexis informed him it would have to be for the whole state and it is the DNCR Commissioner's decision for that position.

Committee discussed what he would like to do and could present it to the STAC as a letter and he would have to cover all the trail corridor through multiple towns.

Phil B confirmed the DNCR Commissioner appoints the position. The committee, in its advisory capacity, can make a recommendation to give to the commissioner. It would be helpful but not necessary. The committee can provide thoughts on the expectations of the position.

Committee discussed current state of the heritage trail and that most towns do not have one and some may not even know it exists.

Tim B reported that a previous STAC meeting had a presentation about the heritage trail current status. Essentially the take away was the trail as a whole was pretty stagnant with pockets of towns having "heritage trails".

Committee discussed setting reasonable goals for this appointed person, like start in Manchester which has activity and move to the surrounding towns. There is the "Granite State Rail Trail" in Manchester, Hooksett and Allenstown. A suggestion is for the appointed person to review RSA pertaining to heritage trail and see if the objectives in RSA are even achievable.

Old Business

NH State Rail Trail Plan

- Shelley Winters, the admin for the Bureau of Rail & Transit gave an overview of the current status for the new State Rail Trail plan, which is an update to the 2005 state rail trail plan. There were 4 public meetings hosted by DOT to inform the public of the current status of the plan. The state of NH owns ~500 miles of rail road corridors (active & in active) and there is a recognized desire to continue to use these for recreational use. The plan is to maximize state investment and ownership of these corridors. The project

website is: www.NHrailtrailsplan.com. There is a stakeholder advisory committee with diverse members to represent different trail users. The UNH Cooperative Extension conducted surveys to gather information from the public about the economic impact of rail trails. Currently DOT is sifting through all the public input. Collected ~220 surveys so far on trails. Looking to continue collecting on trails until end of fall 2021. Dr. Rodgers (UNH) will put the data together for economic impact study. Only presented at meetings preliminary #s, should be able to slice it into more specific dollar amounts per user type. Trying to help trail groups obtain insurance for volunteers. Not looking to quantify health benefits. Not looking to quantify abutter property values.

- Tom L asked about the minimal locations to gather info from OHRV users and Shelley responded there are plans to gather info on the Presidential rail trail and more locations for OHRV user data.
- Phil B reported that DNCR provides insurance to volunteer organizations for work on state lands. DNCR pays for smaller organizations to be covered. There was legislation this past year regarding the dust and hazards of rail trails, will this study cover those issues? Shelley responded with no, the study will not cover the dust either way as impacts to abutters. Covering maintenance as making trail safe.
- Debby asked about safe trail designs and Shelley responded with yes, the study is looking to developing standards with trail designs. Ex: rails w/ trails, height requirements for equestrians, etc. Debby wants to make sure DOT understands pavement is not good for horses and Tom D agrees the same goes for sled dogs. Terry also states pavement is not good for snowmobiles.
- Ray J asks for maintenance considerations and try to engage local people to assist with maintenance as much as possible. Because they would have pride when maintaining the trail and Shelley responded that DOT would love to see that.
- Tim B asked about the department acquiring cell phone data to track users. Huge problem for not knowing where the non-motorized users are. Technology companies can track and separate the users types. They can tell you who is on a trail walking versus biking.
 - o Phil/Shelley stated this was used that at Franconia Notch. DOT bought a dataset for Franconia Park to see where people were going to see peak and flow for hiker shuttle.
- Tom L asked (to Phil) if the insurances bought by DNCR for volunteers cover OHRV and SM club volunteers on state property? Phil replied no, only for smaller non-motorized clubs. Terry reported that NHTSA has policy to cover SM clubs. Craig reported we have a separate policy for private landowners.

HB 311

- Abby reported they are waiting for speaker of the house to approve committee members.
- Debby asked if there are plans to change RSA for user liability statues? And Abby replied that she doesn't know if that is part of HB 311. The committee is looking at dust and toxins in rail beds.
- STAC Committee discussed BMPs for controlling dust and toxins and it was suggested to add to the existing Bureau of Trails BMP manual as an appendix or revision.

NH Rail Trail Challenge

- Abby reported it continues to be very popular. Many followers on Facebook and lots of activity from users.

E bikes

- Phil reported that e-bikes are out there on the trails and DNCR is working on making some rule changes, but no real updates at this time. There will be a public comment time and were hoping for next summer of 2022.
- STAC committee discussed different trails allowing ebikes and some not. And how enforcement of rules is difficult. Discussed possibility of a bike plate to help with maintenance for increased use. Phil brought up the "pay to play" idea, which is used in

state parks at tollbooth fees, but this bike plate would not be legislatively possible. The private sector is stepping up to support maintenance of trails. Everyone makes money on experience except the entity that is providing it. Best avenue would be to go to shops/manufacturers to see if they will support maintenance to rail trails. Shelley stated the rail trail plan has been pitching ideas similar to a "Trail Pass" (voluntary fee which they do in Wisconsin). Debby stated the Society for the Protection of NH Forests has a mobile app to donate with QR code to donate as people are on the trail.

Granite Outdoor Alliance.

- No one here to speak to this. Does not need to be on next agenda.

of meeting per year:

- RSA says 2 are required – how many does STAC want?
- STAC committee discussed have more or less and how much additional meetings would benefit STAC purpose of advising Director of Parks. Committee settled on 3 meetings per year.
- STAC discussed pros and cons of online option. Good to help with travel for members farther away but takes away from open forum discussion. Suggestion was to host one meeting farther north at Cannon.

New Business

Reiterate STAC purpose/refer to the RSA and any RTP rules.

- Tom D read the STAC RSA. STAC now has 4 extra entities to go above and beyond purpose of RSA. Want to make NH have world-class trails and mission of STAC help to do that.
- Debby asked about the trail plan and development part of the RSA and what that means. How does STAC provide input from user to a new project if they are not aware.
 - o STAC committee asked about RTP scoring guidelines and how funds are broken down. Alexis reported that 7% of net RTP funds are used for administration of RTP. 5% can be used for education.
 - o STAC asked if RTP funds can be used for trail etiquette like Chris's old commercial and yield signs. RTP can be used for this but needs someone to be in charge of that project and create it.
- Shelley asked if DOT can have only one person be the STAC representative instead of 2 DOT members because the bike-ped position doesn't really exist anymore. Phil says we would have to ask our AG rep.

Rail Trails survey

- Covered with Shelley's overview of Rail Trail plan. Spread the word to your user groups. Survey from public meetings will only be through tonight. On trail locations will be published on the rail trail plan website. Meant to be a snapshot of on ground daily use.

Additional discussion on STAC role for planning and development.

- Question asked about STAC's role in trail planning and development. Looking for future plans and legislation to be provided to STAC members.
 - o It was discussed that the committee serves to advise DNCR, and focus should be what does DNCR wants from STAC for trail planning and development to advise director and commissioner. There are multiple advisory boards to get feedback from users. STAC can bring thoughts and ideas to the agency. DNCR has in-house processes to review development before going to public comment. DNCR may have a specific instance where we want input from committee from trail user side.
 - Example is pavement: everyone in the room giving feedback from their trail user groups. Helps DNCR to find out what users want as a high level comment.
 - Suggestion to have roles within STAC members to monitor legislation.

SUPs/MOAs for trail groups performing trail maintenance – skipped for time.

Unapproved cutting of trails on state property:

- Ray J reported about unapproved cutting of trails at Artist Bluff. It is a lot of work to repair/remove unapproved trails. Spoke to park manager to inform the staff of situation and they will take it from there. Signs are placed around Artist Bluff to show public who helps maintain the trails as a deterrent for anyone wanting to “help” without approval.

Guest Comments/Questions

- Guest comments – none

Next meeting tentatively set for Tuesday **January 11th, 2022.**

Motion to adjourn, seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:58 PM.

APPROVED