

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

December 12, 2018

DNCR Conference Room

In Attendance

Members:

- Chris Gamache NH Trails Bureau (BOT)
- Debbie Briscoe New Hampshire Horse Council (NHHC)
- Josh Walter Bike-Walk Alliance of New Hampshire (BWANH)
- Tim Blagden Human-Powered Winter Sports
- Raynold Jackson Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF)
- Scot Heath NH Snowmobile Association (NHSA)
- Larry Kenniston NH DOT, Bike/Ped Program (DOT)
- Capt. Dave Walsh NH Fish & Game Department
- Judy Silva NH Municipal Association (NHMA)
- Tom DiMaggio NH Musers Association

Staff/Guest:

- Alexis Rudko Bureau of Trails, RTP Specialist (staff)
- Phil Bryce Director, Division of Parks & Recreation

Open Meeting

6:30 PM, meeting called to order

Introductions and Review Minutes

Members and guests introduced themselves and their affiliation. Minutes from the May 9, 2018 meeting reviewed. Minutes approved.

OHRV/Snowmobile Update

- Snowmobile season for most on NH will open up this Saturday, Dec 15th. This is the traditional date that is targeted to get some riding open. Date is used in many of the landowner agreements and also is after rifle hunting season, which many landowners want to not conflict with. Some riding did open in Twin Mtn area just after Thanksgiving due to good early snows. Early snow is helping to sell registrations for the season
- Most of the northern trail network is closed for the season. Highway connectors all closed Nov 1 and many trails were also closed to protect them from damage during the fall freeze/thaw weather. Registrations down from last year, likely due to the \$30 registration increase that went into effect this year. Club membership incentive working well so far; approx.. 51% of registrants had joined a NH club. Overall, we anticipate that registrations will be down about 4,000 vehicles from last year. Revenues to BoT and F&G are lower, but club GIA funds are up.
- Tom D reported to the group that due to limited areas in southern NH for sled dogs to train there are some areas with higher concentrations of sled dog activity. If anyone hears or has any issues please reach out to him and the mushing community will work to solve it.

Recreational Trail Program Update

2018 grant projects are beginning to wrap up. Most will be completed by Dec 31. 2019 Grant Round sub-grantees have been reviewed and selected. Working through NEPA review process and contracting. Grant recipients will be made public once the contracts have been approved by Governor & Council. 2020 Grant Round applications will include a requirement of applicants to attend a training class.

Buy America provisions having major impacts to the program nationally, specifically for equipment purchases and also bridge beams. U.S. steel for bridge beams can be found but they are more expensive than foreign steel beams (at this time).

A copy of a press release from the U.S. Senate, regarding the introduction of the RTP Full Funding Act was discussed. Today, the RTP national fund is set at \$84 million, but believed that off-road users contribute roughly \$270 million to the Highway Trust Fund. Unsure if the bill would make any other programmatic changes to how RTP is handled and if it would make it easier for trail groups to use; less like highway projects.

Heritage Trail Update

Scott M summarized his memo, distributed at the May 9 meeting, about his research into the history of this project and contact with some of the communities on the proposed route. Discussion ensued about communities not being interested in a new project and no funding to work on this trail. RTP funds could be used, but few communities ask for it to develop the "Heritage Trail". Focus should be to work with communities that are interested and not worry about those that are not. Nationally, NH does not rank well for trail destinations of long distance trails and that is where priority should be placed. Communities need to work on their trail networks, but also events that incorporate trails. Just having a section of Heritage Trail won't bring people to a community. Should work with towns on being part of longer distance trails and have some trail plans, stewardship plans and this would make seeking funding easier. Cannot charge people to use RTP funded trails. Pay to Play will be a bigger discussion in the future, but need to address liability issues, etc while discussing this.

Old Business

- eBike discussion from the spring meeting was continued. An LSR has been filed relating to eBikes and the discussion ensued about the intent of the bill, which would be to create definitions for eBikes, which would copy the FHWA classifications and define an ebike of 750 watts or less as a bicycle. Parks is ok with 'pedal-assist' concept and it would be good to get outside and also keep some other getting outside on trails. This is part of our agencies mission. Discussion continued about is motor a motor and why treat this level of electric motor differently than other motors; is it the motor or the speed that is the actual overall safety concern; is this new use going to displace existing users on trails; or is size and weight the primary concern. Scot H discussed overall concerns for these new uses and trail development for them and how the snowmobile community has kept these trails open for years for other users in the non-winter season and it seems like these newer users want the snowmobiles to get off the trails when they start using them.
- Franconia Notch hiking issues were discussed. Parks lost about \$25,000 this fall running a shuttle for hikers, to help with parking issues in the Notch. Shuttle was a pilot project and Parks has not committed to continue it at this time, but looking at a Forest-wide shuttle program possibly with WMNF. Parks will be charging fees at Falling Waters Trailhead this coming year, on days when the shuttle is running. Parks will not allow hiker parking in revenue venue lots in Franconia Notch SP. FNSP raises about ½ the revenue for park operations and cannot give up parking for paying venue visitors, for hikers that will not be visiting the venues. Discussions about the overall issue in FNSP and highway parking continued.

New Business

- Proposed legislation that would impact trails/users was discussed. A list of legislative service requests (LSR) was read to the group. This list is just proposed bill titles and little bill language has been released yet. OHRV changes, rail trail planning, ebikes and dogs on trails are several of the overall topics listed.

Guest Comments/Questions

General discussion about if STAC should be the entity to determine some of these ebike/is a motor a motor outcomes and develop a policy instead of legislature. Overall, legislation trumps policy and it is up to legislature to tell agencies and others what something is defined as. Phil would like STAC members to email concerns or thoughts to him and Chris over the next month. Parks will use this input in its testimony to the legislature.

Additional discussion about NH moving from every trail being multi-use to more specific trail uses on some trails. Not all trails can be shared by everybody and there is more of move to develop trails for primary trail users and discourage some other uses, and then develop other trails for other users. Not enough land for everyone to have their own trail systems, but not every trail is right for every user.

Cross NH Adventure Trail was inquired about. Organizer has been in touch with DOT and Trails Bureau. Ultimately, looking at some small signage to designate this trail on existing rail trails and other existing trails.

Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday March 13, 2019. Meeting will start at 6:30

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.

APPROVED