

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

January 15, 2014

DRED Conference Room

### In Attendance

#### Members:

- Chris Gamache NH Trails Bureau (BOT)
- Marianne Leberman White Mountain National Forest (WMNF)
- Debbie Briscoe NH Horse Council
- Peter DeSantis New England Mtn Bike Association (NEMBA)
- Larry Keniston NH DOT Bike/Ped
- Harry Brown NH Off Highway Vehicle Association (NHOHVA)
- Al Cooper NH Snowmobile Association
- Raynold Jackson Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF)
- Phil Bryce Director, Division of Parks & Recreation

#### Guests:

- Gerry Gold SRK Greenway Coalition
- Brian Harjula Merrimack Valley Trail Riders
- Charlie Kurtz NH Off Highway Vehicle Association
- Jack Wheeler NH Off Highway Vehicle Association
- Kathy Turnbull Bear Brook Stables, Equestrian
- Matt Caron New England Mountain Bike Association
- Chris Wells Society for the Protection of NH Forests
- Trixie Lefebure Equestrian, Rockingham Trail Committee
- Tim Blagden Bike-Walk Alliance of NH
- Avis Rosenfeld NH Horse Council

### Open Meeting

7:05 PM, meeting called to order.

### Introductions

Members and guests introduced themselves and their affiliations.

### Review Minutes

Approved Minutes from the September 25, 2013 meeting. Moved: Harry B. Second Debbie B.

### Member Updates

Chris Wells provided a presentation about the history of the Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF) to the committee and then discussed further the Quabbin to Cartigan (Q2C) initiative in western NH. Goal to raise awareness and conservation of area from central Massachusetts to the WMNF in Warren, NH. The SPNHF also received a large private donation to develop and maintain hiking trails with this project area. First round of grants was awarded in 2013 for just under \$50,000. They have another round ready to start in February and hope for a second round of grants later in 2014. Program has similar goals to the RTP grants and the hope is for groups to apply for both grants and use them to further projects by combining funds. Hiking trails are the priority of the private funds. One goal is to have a long-distance through trail from Mass to WMNF. Day hiking is the priority for most communities and trail maintenance organizations and the hope is to connect a lot of the day hiking areas so that a long distance trail could be done if someone wanted to hike it. Ultimate goal is to get people into the woods, help develop an appreciation of them and want to help conserve them for future generations.

### Park Rules Explanation and Discussion

Chris G requested that this item be moved up from the Old Business portion of the meeting due to Director Bryce being present and desire to have the discussion before he needs to leave. Chris gave a general summary of how the Rules were proposed, the discussion at the Sept 25, 2014 STAC meeting and the public hearings. The changes made to the proposed Rules were discussed with specifics about trail impacts noted. Director Bryce mentioned that the agency is 80% of where it needs to be on all rules at this time and it may take a year to two to finish or make corrections. He asked if there were any questions; none were brought forward. He mentioned the Guides Association is still opposed to some of the Rules, specifically those requiring special use permits for commercial guiding.

The next step for Trails will be to meet and start designation of what trails are available for what uses in specific parks. This process will include STAC presentation and recommendations; as well as State Park Advisory Committee, other agencies and the public. Question about whether Parks has done any consideration for horse access camping? Yes, the Division will start looking at expanded opportunities. Have not identified where but it would be a lost opportunity to not look at it. Further questions about leasing facilities, such as Bear Hill Camp, out for commercial use within a park; leasing can be problematic at time. If you lease a facility you take it out of public access and availability. Parks will be rolling out a State Park app for phones this year.

### **OHRV/Snowmobile Update**

-Snowmobile season started very well in December with early season snow in southern NH. Riding was good through the New Year Holiday week. January thaw has impacted a fair number of trails statewide but it is still early winter and planning for good riding in February and March. 3 State Reciprocal Riding Weekend Jan 31-Feb 2. NH has been meeting with ME and VT snowmobile entities on possibility of a 3 state snowmobile endorsement.

-OHRV season ended well. Ride the Wilds and the Coos loop has some growing pains in season one but overall things went well. Rooms & Meals in Coos County up 13% the first quarter of this State Fiscal Year. OHRV did account for some of that. Agencies have been meeting to refine processes and plans for 2014 riding season. The primary issue in communities in Coos County was that local police officers have little experience with OHRV matters and there is little training at the police academy related to this topic.

### **Recreational Trails Program**

-Grant deadline was moved from mid-January to March 7<sup>th</sup> for this grant round. When DRED was notified of the appropriation for FY 14 it was at the time the Federal Government was in shutdown. Though FHWA was not closed (different funding source) the timing was bad to announce federal funds being available. Announcement was made about 6 weeks later than traditionally done so deadline was moved back 6-7 weeks. Questions about timing of grant to make the funds available earlier than July 1. Yes, it could be done but there are some difficulties on Biennium years because the State only approves funds for a 2-year period. Trails cannot contract for funds that have not been approved in the legislative budget process. Will look at the timing to better address spring trail maintenance needs in the future, if program continues beyond FY 14.

### **Heritage Trail Update**

-No new updates.

### **Old Business**

-DRED Administrative Rules moved to earlier in agenda

-Trail Plan updates from Sept meeting discussion. Ray asked where the proposed Statewide Trail Plan update was. In Sept there was discussion that all of the member groups would be asked to sign on as partners for a Federal grant. Chris explained that timing did not work for that grant and we would not be seeking formal agreements from groups at this time. Division staff has met with some other organizations and everyone agrees updates are a good idea and that doing from a Statewide perspective would be best. The Division will continue to meet with organizations and try to refine the goal and seek funding for assistance.

### **New Business**

-Trail Maintenance Guidelines. Are they needed? Discussion about working on creating and adopting trail maintenance standards on public lands. Minnesota Trail Guideline Manual was displayed and discussed. Chris G noted that there are no funds or resources to create a document similar to Minnesota's in NH. If a trail has multiple users permitted on it the trail would need to meet a set of guidelines, from a maintenance and development perspective, to accommodate all of those users and not just one specific trail user. Discussion ensued about who would do this project? Director Bryce noted that the agency needs people to volunteer to help us if it is to get done. There was further discussion about signs at trails explaining the trail to users and if signs could be made to rate trails similar to ski areas (green circle, blue square, black diamond, etc). There are concerns with doing that. Goal would be to have some information available about a trail but trails may have elements of all different ratings on the same trail. Chris G will work on some thoughts and outline before next meeting.

-Legislative updates were discussed briefly. Copies of HB 256-FN (voluntary hiker card), HB 1248 (assumption of risk) and SB 248 (abandoned rail corridor study committee) were distributed. Also mentioned to the committee was HB 1104 (defining a railroad Motorcar), SB 240 (reduced OHRV registration if member of a club), SB 311 (snowmobile regional registration authorization) and HB 1485 (vulnerable users of the road). Each bill was briefly discussed.

### **Guest Comments/Questions**

### **Next meeting**

Next meeting is set for Wednesday May 14, 2014 at 7 pm at DRED HQ.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.