

Connecticut Lakes Headwaters Citizens Committee

ATV Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

June 20, 2016

Attendees:

Committee Members: Bing Judd (CLHCC), Chris Gamache (Trails Bureau), John Steward (Landowner), Paul Doscher (Conservation Community), Major John Wimsatt (F&G), Chief John Blanc (Pittsburg PD), Warren Chase (GNWR ATV Club)

Public: Harry Brown (CLHCC), Susan Brown, Sandy Young (Parks), Ray Domeo (CLHCC), Diana Matott (GNWR), Darren Jock (GNWR), Brynn Rugg (GNWR), Johanna Lyons (Parks), Anna Rulli (Trails), Corinne Roberts (business owner)

Bing called the meeting to order at 10am and turned the discussion over to Chris. Chris outlined the current ATV Subcommittee membership outlined in current 5-year Recreation Plan. 7 members (from CLHCC and outside of CLHCC) committee established by DRED Commissioner with consultation of CLHCC Chair. Chris gave a Recap of current 5-Year Rec Plan and ATV decisions in that plan: 2 primary routes approved for connection to abutting communities; 1 alternate route approved for use if needed (Magalloway Road area); May 23 – Sept 30 annually; ½ hr before sunrise to ½ hr after sunset operating hours. Generally, little issues on the CLH roads themselves. Roads are showing some erosion from OHRV use, but Deadwater Road has not been graded for 2 years and road condition is in line with what would be expected for an ungraded road.

Darrin Jock gave brief presentation about the GNWR ATV Club proposal that was submitted to the agency. Major points included setting a consistent time for riding, extending the riding season by 2 weeks (mid-October), another approved route using portion of Magalloway Road, use of some designated roads for connections to local businesses. Proposal includes keeping existing connections open for next 5 years. Question was asked about how Trails Bureau and road maintenance was funded today? Trails is funded solely by OHRV and snowmobile registrations. Road maintenance is paid by endowment and landowner contribution, with Trails providing funds from its budget.

Committee members were asked to give input on topics of concern for them. Bing does not want to see later hours in the fall. Leave the ½ hour after sunset for evening riding deadline. John S said status quo is good. Would like to see alternate route removed from maps, looks like an approved riding route. Paul said conservation groups agree with landowner and do not want to see any use of Magalloway Road. Road is very busy and would need major signage installed. Chief Blanc noted that a set time for riding would be helpful. Changing sunset time daily causes issues. Would like to see a set season in the area; same dates for use would be helpful from LE perspective. Major Wimsatt noted the first 2 weeks in October are prime season for bird hunters and guides in the area. Hunters want this time for their season and use of roads. Bigger issue of enforcement statewide. Not enough resources to handle any more expansion. The actual road use in Pittsburg is not a big issue, but the creep of hours and routes to businesses, etc. Accident rate is low for level of use. LE study committee in HB 1396 this summer to address off trail and road use issues.

Has anyone done speed studies on CLH roads? No. Speed is an issue for all vehicles on the gravel roads. Conditions change with weather.

Harry B noted that he is not a rider and does not care about recreational riding, but this is about economic development. Business support is a priority in the north country. What is the economic impact to the businesses that want to be connected? No businesses here to talk about the need to connect to them. There is trail maintenance funding available to clubs through GIA program. Major Wimsatt mentioned F&G just approved \$40k in LE grants to police departments around the state. Warren noted that PSLT does not support any night riding on their property (main part of the trail system). Is hour limits impacting businesses and town? To a degree. If riders want to visit restaurant have to plan well ahead, which is not an issue, but delays in service can make you arrive after dark. Fall riding is heavily impacted if trying to visit local restaurants.

Committee discussed recommendations to CLHCC to be addressed in next Recreation Plan:

Subcommittee supports (7-0) keeping existing routes open in next rec plan. No support for closing existing routes. No major issues from the routes that are open today.

Subcommittee supports (7-0) consideration of different operating hours (set time instead of sunset) in the Rec Plan if part of a larger LE discussion in Coos County. If a county-wide change requested by LE community CLH property should follow suit. Continue status quo for now. Put in plan to allow for adjustment within the 5-year rec plan if needed. This is topic of discussion at Coos Chiefs of Police meeting recently.

Subcommittee voted 4-3 to support extending season to October 15th. PSLT would consider later date if CLH and Town approved staying open later in season. Concerns were that first 3 weeks of October is the main bird hunting season. Also bear and fishing season so limited CO time available. Clarksville opposed to extended season and may not approve Cedar Stream Road use.

Subcommittee split on designation of additional route on CLH roads (Coon Brook to Magalloway). Would increase designated mileage by 24 miles in next 5 years.

Subcommittee supports (7-0) connection to local businesses in area where ATV use is already occurring (1st Conn Lake connections). Club request was to get to multiple businesses in southwest area of 1st Conn Lake.

Minutes and recommendations will be sent to full CLHCC for their discussion and consideration in 5 Year Recreation Plan.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00