

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

September 10, 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 Program
- Harry Brown NH Off Highway Vehicle Association (NHOHVA)
- Al Cooper NH Snowmobile Association (NHSA)
- Raynold Jackson Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF)
- Tom DiMaggio NH Mushers Association
- Roger Lohr Winter Recreational Users
- Judy Silva NH Municipal Association

Guests:

- Matt Caron NEMBA
- Paul David NEMBA
- Renee Wormell Granite State Carriage Association
- Avis Rosenfeld NH Horse Council
- Therese Smith Granite State Carriage Association
- Charles Martin NH Rail Trail Coalition, Friends Northern Rail Trail
- Lelia Mellen National Park Service, Rivers & Trails Program

Staff:

- Eric Feldbaum Community Recreation Office
- Patrick Hummel Community Recreation Office

Open Meeting

7:02 PM, meeting called to order.

Introductions

Members and guests introduced themselves and their affiliations.

Review Minutes

Approved Minutes from the May 14, 2014 meeting. Moved: Harry B. Second Peter D.

OHRV/Snowmobile Update

-Starting to transition to get ready for snowmobile trail season. Hoping for a cold and snowy winter. Many people don't like lots of snow but snowmobiling is a major economic driver for NH. -It has been a very busy summer on OHRV trails. Expansion in Coos County has kept staff and clubs busy. Some issues but they seem to be within expectation of the volume increase of riders. Registrations up about 9% from 2012 to 2013. Businesses seeing an economic increase from riders. Trying to promote family friendly riding. A lot of cooperation between agencies such as Transportation, Safety, DRED, Fish & Game. Some off trail riding but most is in areas not near the trail systems, most issues with local residents riding where not permitted.

Presentation

Charles Martin, NH Rail Trail Coalition, made a short presentation about the concept of the Granite State Rail Trail. The GSRT would include the Northern Rail Trail, Windham Rail Trail, Derry Rail Trail and Londonderry Rail Trail and also section yet identified in the Manchester and

Concord areas. 58 miles of the Northern Rail Trail is now complete. The total distance of the GSRT would be about 120 miles with 67 of it being built so far. Question of how to get formal recognition for this trail, similar to the NH Heritage Trail? Do they seek legislation to name the trail and make it a legal entity? Chris G gave a short history of the Heritage Trail and how it came to be and what its impact has been over the years and today. Lelia M asked about support from STAC instead of legislation? It would help with landowner discussions and communities.

Motion made by Chris G that:

“STAC would support and encourage the concept and development of the Granite State Rail Trail and supports the continued work of the organizations involved for its completion.” Unanimous vote in favor.

Recreational Trails Program

Trails Bureau will have a 2015 grant round. Federal Government passed a funding measure to keep funds in the Highway System through May 2015. Bureau is moving up the timeline for grants and funding. The following changes are being made to the program:

-Applications will be available tomorrow (Sept 11) and a press release is going out for the funds. Application deadline is November 14th, 2014. Maximum funds allowed is increasing from \$30,000 per grantee to \$50,000. Federal Highway Administration was asking for higher limits to try to get larger contracts for projects. Same amount of administrative work for \$50k project as a \$1k project through RTP. Discouraging small projects in the program. Reviews will take place over the winter and contracts would be in effect from April (anticipated) through October 30th. This is closely lined up with the Federal Fiscal Year and Trails Bureau will be able to get projects closed out faster and more efficiently. Buy America provision applies to equipment purchases and the waiver process takes approximately 6 months and has to be redone each year for each piece of equipment. FHWA is discouraging land purchases through the program at this time until they can determine what level of documentation is needed. The Bureau will offer 1-2 grant workshops but the dates have not been set yet.

Heritage Trail Update

-No new updates. This is a legislatively required topic on the STAC agenda. Subcommittee in statute was repealed several years ago because it had not met for over 6 years.

Old Business

Bear Brook trail signage update: Subcommittee was not convened since last meeting but Division of Parks & Recreation did move forward with making and installing trail blazers on currently designated trails in the park. Patrick H noted that this is an attempt to better identify the current trails and their names for trail users. May not be the final process and look that is ultimately decided on for all properties but wanted to get something started. The subcommittee will be asked to look at the work done and will get together this fall for further discussions about the next steps.

Special Use Permit process: no new updates from the Division. No questions raised.

2014 legislation: 3 bills held over from last session were discussed. Assumption of Risk (HB 1478) has not had any action on it over the summer. The Senate retained it for interim study, which basically kills a bill. There were rumors that the term “structures” were of concern to the committee but no one is certain of it. Chairman Dimaggio noted he had talked with the Chair of the Committee and they are willing to work with STAC on getting amended language but it would need to be a new bill next session. Tom will try to meet with Committee Chair over next few months to find out what the issue was and a reasonable solution to it. Language should be as close to correct as possible when filed.

Volunteer Hike Card at Fish & Game had an Administrative Rules Hearing on Monday night. Eric F. attended for Parks Division and noted few in attendance but no concerns rose. Generally there is support for the concept but it is voluntary card to buy and gives the carrier no formal benefits other than some financial support for Fish & Game’s search and rescue program. Funds would be directed to the search & rescue account.

Study Committee on recreational uses of railroad corridors (SB248) met last week and will meet weekly through September. Committee is looking at challenges of managing railroad corridors as trails when there is no railroad operating on them. Discussions about how to make it easier for town and volunteer groups to get agreements for trail development and funding issues. Chris G will be attending all of the meeting with DOT and some user groups.

New Business

Pisgah SP Management Plan: The Department is holding a meeting in Keene to review the Pisgah Management Plan on September 24th. The plan was approved 3 years ago and the idea is to go back and review how things are going. May be some changes proposed to certain sections but only if brought up at the meeting. Some trail groups had asked about more trails but would need to be done through an amendment at this meeting. Meeting is at Fish & Game office in Keene from 1-4pm.

Nash Stream Management Plan: The Department is amending is Nash Stream Forest Management Plan. Was last done in 2002 and it was planned to be updated after 10 years. This next plan is hoped to last for 15 or more years. Harry B had requested the item on the agenda and added that the next plan includes a desire to have a pilot OHRV trail on the northern end formalized, a connection on existing gravel road to services open and the ability to have an east to west connector trail on the property. Chris G gave a quick history of the current OHRV trails and why the east to west connector was needed in the future (link Conn River valley to Jericho Mtn SP and the east). Nash Stream Citizens Advisory Committee is meeting next Wed (17th) at 6pm in Lancaster. Plan is hoped to be completed this winter. Harry B requested STAC support for the OHRV requests, similar to what was done with the Granite State Rail Trail earlier. Harry moved that "STAC would support the concept and development of an east to west connector trail, and formalizing the Kelsey Notch connector and Stark Connector trails in Nash Stream Forest if endorsed by the Nash Stream Citizens Advisory Committee." Question about what it means? Would mean that if the formal Advisory Committee supports it in the plan amendment that STAC would also be support of it. 7 yes, 0 no, 3 abstain votes (Marianne, Judy, Debbie).

Guest Comments/Questions

Is the Granite State Rail Trail the formal name of the entire trail if developed and would it replace the current trail names, such as the Northern Rail Trail? No. The GSRT would be made up of the existing trails so each one can still identify itself as it does today.

Comment from committee members that some of the abstain votes about Nash Stream trail proposal were because not enough information was presented to the group for the motion and concept. Future requests for votes should include maps and more information presented to STAC. Abstain votes may have been supportive they had been provided more information.

Next meeting

Next meeting is set for Wednesday January 14, 2015 at 7 pm at DRED HQ.

Meeting adjourned at 8:54 PM.