

New Hampshire Statewide Trails Advisory Committee (STAC)
Meeting Minutes from January 8, 2008

In Attendance

Members:

- Tom DiMaggio (Chair) NH Mushers Assoc
- Chris Gamache NH Trails Bureau
- Greg Placy NH DOT/Dist 1
- Ken Domey NH Off Highway Vehicle Assoc
- Tom Jameson NH DOT/Bike-Ped
- Debbie Briscoe NH Horse Council
- Jack Waldron SPNH
- Judy Silva NH Municipal Assoc
- Jack Chapman FOMBA
- Heather Clish AMC

Staff:

- Bill Gegas NH Trails Bureau

Guests:

- Leigh Levine Federal Highway Administration
- Paul Foundoukis Federal Highway Administration
- Lelia Mellen National Parks Service
- Craig Sanborn Cardigan Highlanders
- Armand Verville Resident of Allenstown, NH
- Bill Darcy AMC
- Bob Shannahan *not provided*

Open Meeting

7:05 PM, meeting called to order.

Introductions

Members and guests introduced themselves and their affiliations.

Review Minutes

Minutes from the April 10, 2007 meeting reviewed and accepted.

OHRV Update

Chris G recently participated in a meeting in the Androscoggin Valley attended by representatives from Maine and NH. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how trail users can help businesses and economic development in the upper Androscoggin Valley area of the North County. This included potential from OHRV use as well as other trail uses.

Recreational Trails Program

The Bureau is currently receiving application for the 2008 RTP grant year. It is expected that roughly \$800,000 will be awarded in trails grants. The Joint Legislative Fiscal Committee wants to keep business operating within the state fiscal year, therefore the 2008 grant contracts will be valid between July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009. It is understood that this may cause issues for grantees to be able to complete work within that time frame. Grantees may request a contract extension if necessary. Costs for project engineering cannot be applied for. Tom D reminded everyone to get applications in by the deadline because we don't want to have to reject any good project applications. Judy S asked if the selection committee is still comprised of 2 motorized reps, 2 non-motorized reps, and 2 Bureau reps and if so would this requirement be reconsidered. In order to remain consistent from year to year, this format will continue to be used.

Heritage Trail Update

No sections have been established in the past few months. Jenn C had met with some individuals from the Town of Hooksett. It is likely that Hooksett will seek RTP funds. A question arose if any money will be available to reprint/update the H-Trail map. It may be possible under educational funds. Tom J made mention that a bald eagle may often be seen from the H-Trail in Bedford. Greg P asked if the towns of Lincoln/Woodstock have inquired. Among other trail projects in this area, the H-Trail is being considered.

Old Business

HB 441 Non-Motorized grant program, meeting in October. Responses were wide and varied. Legislature has recommended to ITL the bill. The Bureau has agreed to begin a trail-adopter program. The Parks Division and Trails Bureau have met with the AMC to look at the AMC model for trail adoption. A Memorandum of Agreement will be established between the AMC and DRED in order for the AMC to assist and trail parks staff on an adopter program. It is likely that two park properties will be focused on in the beginning of the program. Heather C indicated that the AMC-NH Chapter recommends bringing in current adopters to help adapt and expand the program. Chris G reminded that with any new program there will be new responsibilities and that the Parks Division will be looking for a way to fund a coordinator. Tom D asked why NH is going with an adopter program. Discussion ensued. Chris G noted that the Bureau has purchased some hand tools to be stored in caches to be held by park managers. It is also being considered to expand the vehicle fleet in order to be able to buy some trailers. This would require G&C approval. The Bureau will also be pushing National and NH Trails Days. Judy S asked how parks will be picked. Chris G said that the larger parks with heavy use will be considered first such as Kearsarge, Pawtuckaway or Bear Brook. Jack C inquired about Monadnock. Chris G said maybe not because Monadnock already receives much attention. Hopefully early February these parks will be designated. Heather C said that where there are already adopters would be a good place to recruit regional leaders. Debbie B asked how the committee can keep updated. Chris G said that when an agreement is established it may be forwarded to the committee. 2008 will be a testing year to see how it works. STAC will be able to provide feedback. The use of iron rangers may still be implemented at trailhead. Generated funds will help pay for the coordinators position. STAC may present recommendations for fees to the Director. Volunteer days and project may be posted on the Bureau's website calendar. Because the Bureau does not have exclusive IT staff ample notification will be necessary. It was recommended that the adopter coordinator may take on some of those tasks. There will need to be some clarification of the responsibilities of the part-time coordinator and the park managers. Heather C informed the committee that the AMC has a trip-planner on their website. Promotion to drive people to web pages. Other methods that could be used would be to establish a "yahoo group" for email distribution or to designate a monthly day when volunteers should meet.

New Business

Presentation by Tom D/NH Mushers Association on mushing. Tom began by reiterating the fact that the STAC was established in order to connect different trail users with one another. As part of that each group shall educate the other groups about their use. Tom brought in and set up a sled, gang-line and leaders (no dogs). He pointed out that the musher does not use any reins for control as with horses. All steering is accomplished by voice command. Tom uses a 10 dog team, between 35-50 lbs each. Each dog can pull roughly 70 lbs which equals 700 lbs of pulling force. Tom and his sled only weigh 205 lbs combined. Gang-lines can be very long depending on the size of the team. This may equal little to no sight around corners. Tom's team averages between 15-20 mph. Local races may have distance categories between sprint (16 miles) and mid-distance (30 miles). Mushers generally prefer wide trails with good visibility and no sharp turns. Mushers try to give other users the right of way. Turns are accomplished by leaning forward into turns. Sleds are designed to flex for this purpose. Racing sleds use a 1.5" wide runner. Transportation and recreational sleds use wider runners. Currently there are between 150-200 mushers throughout NH of varying degrees of skill and intent. Overall this presentation was well received by the rest of the committee.

Old Business (revisited)

Judy S asked about progress with trail etiquette. Tom D said he sent out the questionnaire form but received little response. Form should be sent out again.

Next meeting set for April 8, 2008 DRED conference room, 172 Pembroke Road, Concord.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM.