

New Hampshire Statewide Trails Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes, September 14, 2010

In Attendance

Members:

- Tom DiMaggio (Chair) NH Musers Association
- Chris Gamache NH Trails Bureau
- Ken Domey NH Off Highway Vehicle Association
- Debbie Briscoe NH Horse Council
- Judy Silva NH Municipal Association
- Kim Fortune NH Farm Bureau Federation
- Scott Hatch Northeast Association of 4WD Clubs
- Dennis Laliberte Educators
- Bill Darcy Appalachian Mountain Club
- Jack Waldron Society for the Protection of NH Forests
- Roger Lohr Human Powered Winter Sports
- Larry Kenniston NH Department Of Transportation/Bike-Ped

Staff:

- Jennifer Codispoti NH Trails Bureau

Guests:

- Greg Bakos NH Rail Trail Coalition/NH Bike Walk Alliance
- Hal Graham Trailwrights
- Raynold Jackson Trailwrights
- Gerry Gold Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Coalition
- Peter DeSantis New England Mountain Bike Association

Open Meeting

7:00 PM, meeting called to order.

Introductions

Members and guests introduced themselves and their affiliations.

Review Minutes

Minutes from the May 11, 2010 meeting reviewed, approved.

Member Updates

Chairman DiMaggio asked the committee members to give an overview of what is going on in the different user groups. Chairman DiMaggio wants to get the committee back to its original intent to help solve problems the users are having. Several members were not prepared to do so as this was not an original agenda item.

NH Farm Bureau: The biggest concern from farmers is crop damage and users that do not respect the land, specifically horses and ATV's. Maple sugaring is also affected. Some people will cut the sap lines to gain access to a property.

NH Horse Council: The biggest issues equestrians are facing are getting other users that encounter equestrians to travel slow and steady near horses. They also need more riding and parking opportunities throughout the state.

NH Municipal Association: There are increasing demands on municipal services such as emergency services in parks, which is costing the municipalities more than anticipated. Parking on public roads for trail access is a safety concern for many municipalities and there is a policy in place to discuss the potential impacts to towns when there is new trail development.

Education: The biggest issues in education are trail etiquette, the idea of Leave No Trace when recreating and class 6 roads being gated by towns.

NEA4WDC: The Association recently purchased a safety and education trailer with RTP funds and will be using that to educate users on responsible use. A big issue is the reclassification of class 6 roads (to Class A trails or otherwise) since class 6 roads is the only public areas 4x4's are allowed in NH. There needs to be an education effort on the laws of class 6 roads as well as posted land.

NHOHVA: The biggest issue is the snowmobiles and OHRV's pay into the system and non motorized users do not.

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Society for the Protection of NH Forests: Illegal use of Forest Society properties, whether on or off trail is the biggest issue.

AMC/Hikers: Deterioration of trails either by over use or improper use as well as trying to keep up with the demands of maintenance.

XC Ski: There is a competition between public trails and commercial operations. Also there are user conflicts between snowmobiles and XC skiers.

NH Mushers Association: Mushers have an issue with sight distances and not seeing people quickly on trail.

NHDOT: Cars and road crossings is an issues for walkers and bicyclists.

Bureau of Trails: User conflicts, landowner issues, fragmentation of land and funding.

Guest organization comments

Trailwrights/Hiking Trails: Deterioration of hiking trails also an issue. Want to see a trail user/sticker program for non motorized trails.

NEMBA/Mountain Biking: They would like to see improved trail systems that make it more of a destination for riders. Issues with parks closing at dusk.

Roger Lohr stated that more committee members needed to be at the table on a regular basis and need to find a better way to do that, particularly through scheduling. Judy Silva stated it might be helpful to have a better definition of what the committee is tasked to do. Chris G stated when the STAC was formed it was because it was needed for RTP requirements. Tom D stated the committee is needed to resolve user conflicts and wants to take the committee back to that direction.

Roger L asked what the status of HB441 (non motorized funding program) and Chris G explained the bill did not pass and what came out of it was the Memorandum between AMC and Bureau of Trails for pilot adopt a trail program. Program met with limited success. Tom J wanted to say for the record most mushers register ATV's and Snowmobile's for training.

OHRV Update

Chris G stated there was more trail development at Jericho Mountain SP this summer. Construction of the Visitors Center at the park began last week, which is funded in part by LWCF. The Jericho ATV Festival in July was a success. The festival attracted 2000 people, 700 of which were walk ins. There will be another festival next year. Chris G said there has been a lot of attention on trails in the North Country lately regarding recreation as an economic driver. There is a big focus in Coos County specifically to protect trails. Fish and Game had a hearing recently to discuss reciprocity with VT. Current law states NH can have reciprocity with another if the benefits are the same. There is a trial date set for January 21-23 to allow VT residents to ride in NH with a VT sticker and NH residents to ride in VT with a NH sticker. Discussions have begun with Maine to bring reciprocity back.

Recreational Trails Program

Program reauthorization: The SAFETEA-LU is still operating under a continuing resolution through 12/31/10. Because no new legislation is on the table, another continuing resolution past 1/1/11 is likely. Long term program future is still in limbo. There is still the possibility that if and when it is reauthorized it could be merged with other "small" FHWA programs such as Transportation Enhancements, Safe Routes to School and Scenic Byways. If that happens trails would only be an eligible category, not a designated category. The buzzword is surrounding the small programs is "livability." Exactly how trails will legislatively fit into that remains to be seen. It's unknown how Pres Obama's recent proposals for increased highway funding will affect trails.

Program modifications: FHWA, DOT and BOT are currently working on an agreement to further eliminate DOT's role/responsibilities in regards to program apportionment management. Despite an uncertain program future, FHWA-NH Division is paying greater attention to RTP. This is translating into stricter adherence to Federal program rules for all grant recipients. BOT may look to codify administrative rules relative to RTP management, increase allowable minimum and maximum grant levels, and make modifications to the grant schedule. BOT is currently modifying the application for the 2011 grant round. Apps to be released in October.

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2nd Support letter to Congressional Delegates: Letter was sent 7/14/10. This letter from Chairman DiMaggio expresses the importance of RTP for NH. Copies available.

Coalition for Recreational Trails: A letter to Congressional leadership was shown and NH organizations signed on as supporters were noted.

Heritage Trail Update

Jenn C met with the Lancaster, Whitefield and Bethlehem Heritage Trail groups last month to see their progress and open a new section of trail in Bethlehem. The groups are very active up there and use the trail for education as well as recreation. They are trying to tie in the White Mountain School to use the trail for education and recreation.

New Business

Volunteer paperwork with Parks Division: The Division of Parks has a new Supervisor of Volunteer Activities and she has created volunteer forms for individuals and groups. It is likely groups will see them in the coming months as the Division needs to have an idea of who is doing work within state parks. The volunteer coordinator will do all the paperwork, but everything trail related will still be routed through the Bureau of Trails. This all came about from the new legislation creating an adopt a park program (House Bill 1378). Judy S asked how this will get people to adopt a park or trail? Chris G said first the State Park System Advisory Council is working with parks to find out how many friends groups are out there now and figure out what they are doing as well as come up with a definition of a friends group. Ray J stated there needs to be clear definition of what the division of Forests and Lands and the division of Parks do and their roles with the friends groups. Chris G stated that is being worked out internally and should alleviate some issues in and out of house.

Special Use Permits for Park Properties: Chris G explained what a special use is per our administrative rules as well as the permit process. There will no longer be waiving of the \$100 administrative fee or trail work done in lieu of the fee per the Director of Parks. Additionally, permit requests need to be to the agency at least 30 days in advance for review or there may be additional charges for a permit. Admin rules may be changed, but ultimately it is not needed. Additionally, effective September 1, 2010, Fish and Game requires 30 days for their permits for motorized events. If it is within 30 days, the permit will be denied.

Colebrook Rail Corridor Project: The division of parks had a public informational meeting this summer to discuss potential ideas for trail development in Colebrook and Stewartstown. The trail currently has rails in place and there were two proposals. 1) Remove rails along the 9 miles or 2) Remove only 4 miles of rail and leave the rest for use by the rail car club (also known as putt putts). The Commissioner decided after public input to go with option 2, and keep 4 miles of rail and remove the rest. The rail cars must register as OHRV's, but there has been some resistance by some to do so. An unforeseen issue with the rail car club's being so active is it brought to light they are technically using the trail illegally. An OHRV in NH may not exceed 50" or 1000 lbs. The rail cars are approximately 60" wide. The rail car clubs have been advised they will need legislation to include them.

Partnerships: To follow up on the Bureau of Trails member update, partnerships between recreational organizations and land conservation groups is becoming more and more important to preserve recreational corridors. The Forest Society in conjunction with local snowmobile clubs are working together to preserve access on land projects. Assignment to the committee: Go back to your organizations and find out where in NH there are large sections of unprotected trails and come back with 2-3 priority areas. There will potentially be stakeholder groups formed next year to discuss areas at risk, important linkages and potential partnerships. Gerry G gave an example of the greenway alerting the Forest Society of land for sale. They purchased an easement and protected a portion of the greenway.

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Old Business

Volunteer Liability Insurance: No new updates. Chris G met with the state attorney general's office and a decision has not been made. The division of parks understands the importance of this to volunteer groups.

Trail Etiquette: Current trail etiquette document was reviewed and changes made (see document).

Motion by Ken Domey to accept etiquette document as is was not accepted. Vote to make changes and send out to group by 9/25/10. Final comments will be sent to the Bureau of Trails via email or phone.

Guest Comments/Questions

Ray Jackson from Trailwrights: Suggests that the division come up with 3-4 pilot projects in state parks throughout the state to be done next year. Similar to an experience he had recently at Baxter State Park, camping was provided. The idea is to get the word out far in advance and sign up volunteers for the project over a weekend or week long time.

Peter DeSantis from NEMBA: Asked to see more mountain bike representation. Offered to take on the STAC mountain bike representative role if the current representative is not interested. Chris G told him the process that was needed to get a new representative. Peter will talk with the current mountain bike representative.

Next meeting

Set for January 11, 2011, 7 PM, DRED conference room, 172 Pembroke Road, Concord.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.