

Monadnock Advisory Commission

Meeting Minutes

Date: November 12, 2015

Time: 4:00 pm

Location: Jaffrey Civic Center

ATTENDEES	AGENDA
✓ Ann Royce (Town of Jaffrey)	1. Welcome & Introductions
✓ Beth Kintz (Monadnock State Park)	2. Review of minutes from previous meeting
✓ Carrie Deegan (SPNHF)	3. MAC Financial Report
<input type="checkbox"/> Dave Adams (Town of Troy)	4. Division of Parks & Recreation update
✓ Don Upton (Town of Troy)	5. Monadnock SP Manager's update
✓ Ed Germain (Town of Dublin)	6. Monadnock SP Volunteer Program update
✓ Hiel Lundquist (Town of Fitzwilliam)	7. SPNHF update
<input type="checkbox"/> Jane Difley (SPNHF)	8. MERE update
✓ John Smith (Town of Jaffrey)	9. The Pipeline/Rhododendron SP & Fitzwilliam Prime Wetlands study
✓ Ken Desmarais (Forests & Lands)	10. New Master Plan needs?
<input type="checkbox"/> Peter Palmiotto (Antioch, MERE)	11. Open Floor
✓ Phil Bryce (Parks & Recreation)	12. Set date for next meeting
<input type="checkbox"/> Polly Pattison (Town of Marlborough)	13. Adjourn
<input type="checkbox"/> Robin Haynes (Chair, Town of Fitzwilliam)	Guests:
✓ Sterling Abram (Town of Dublin)	Dan Rogalski – Potential Marlborough Rep
✓ Tara Blaney (Parks & Recreation)	Kyle Rodd – fill in for Peter Palmiotto
<input type="checkbox"/> Will Abbott (SPNHF)	Lee Willette – Monadnock SP/vol. coordinator
✓ George Frame (SPNHF)	Monadnock Ledger
✓ Wendy Weisiger (SPNHF)	

1. Welcome & Introductions

Robin was unable to attend the so Beth ran the meeting. Phil Bryce will be attending but will arrive late.

2. Review of minutes from previous meeting

No revisions needed. Motion to approve, seconded, and approved.

3. MAC Financial Report

No expenditures since the last meeting. Balance total of \$3,595.33

4. Division of Parks & Recreation update

The new composting bathhouse at park headquarters is still in the planning and design phase. The project will be presented at the next Governor and Counsel meeting for approval. After it is approved, the project will go out to bid. Once a contractor is selected Johanna Lyons and Tom Mansfield will coordinate with the contractor to complete the project.

Capitol funds have been made available to restore the pavilion at the park headquarters. The contractor has started the project of removing the damaged roof structure and stabilizing the foundation.

What is an appropriate amount of parking to provide at Monadnock. The current method of parking people anywhere and everywhere is not ideal. This method requires substantial staff time is not sustainable in the long run. A balance needs to be found between revenue and conservation of the natural resource. The park has two designated parking lots. Only parking in these two area would mean that the park would hit capacity and go to turn away starting in mid-April and continue through November. With the visitation numbers collected during the 2015 season, if parking was only done in these lots, starting in mid-April the park would have seen turn-away on 45 Saturdays and Sundays (only one of which was an actual turn-away day.) On only 11 Saturdays and Sundays the visitation was accommodated in the two lots. Not only is this a lot of stress on the staff and facilities, parking at GPA isn't always feasible during the early and late seasons. Do the turned away visitors park at another trail head? Currently, there is no way to track this. The back trailhead visitation is only taken based on the amount of donations deposited in the iron rangers. Is "normal mid-season visitation" the right amount of parking to provide at Monadnock? What is the mountain's ecological carrying capacity? This may be a question/project students at Antioch and the MERE program to tackle. The more visitors we can keep at the park headquarters the better otherwise the heavy use and trail erosion that we see on the White Dot and the White Cross trails will spread to the other trails. Before the other trails can take a serious increase in activity they need to be rehabbed and hardened so they can withstand the traffic. How much deferred maintenance is there on the trail system? If there was a dollar value of trail work needed that number could be brought to the legislature to get funding out of the park's surplus for trail projects. However, it is not just about securing funds. Finding skilled and qualified professional technical crews to implement the work needed has proven to be difficult. Spreading out use also creates safety concerns for Mountain Patrol. They are not as easily able to monitor hikers. Most of the visitors coming to Monadnock are not looking for or prepared for a hike longer than the 4 hour round trip from the park headquarters. What type of visitor experience is being managed for at Monadnock? A visitor survey may need to be taken to find this out. We need to find a better inform the public on parking availability and trail conditions at Monadnock. Is this a place for social media? How would this be managed?

In addition to the parking, the first impression upon entering the park leaves much to be desired. What is that big, graveled, maintenance looking area in front of the office at the trail head? Ideas on these subjects will be brought to MAC for their review and input in the next year.

The Division (specifically Monadnock SP) has been working with the Cheshire Medical Center on obtaining a non-transport medical license. Up until not the park has been operation outside of the system. This license should be in place before the start of the next season. This license will allow Mountain Patrol to carry life sustaining medications for allergic reactions, asthma, and heart attaches.

The Division as a whole saw a great season with revenues increasing 12-13% over the previous season (20-30% increased revenue since Phil has been there.) This is due to great legislative support and the hard work of the staff. During the continued resolution the Division had strong governmental support.

5. Monadnock SP Manager's update

The park had a really strong season with increases in revenue and visitation.

Headquarters:

Day Use Revenue - \$390,670

Day Use visitation – 88,520

Camping Revenue - \$14,361 (fees collected onsite and not reservation fees through Reserve America)

Retail Revenue - \$78,598

Old Toll Road:

Day Use Revenue - \$85,603

Day Use visitation - 19,089

Gilson Pond Area:

Day Use Revenue - \$14,434

Day Use visitation – 4,119

Camping Revenue - \$16,913 (fees collected onsite and not reservation fees through Reserve America)

Retail Revenue - \$16,678 (80% firewood)

Iron Rangers:

Donations - \$5,270.14

Estimated Visitation – 1,054

Columbus Day Weekend was one of the busiest in the parks recent history. The park hired special duty Jaffrey Police Department officers to assist with traffic control from 10am to 2pm on the Saturday, Sunday, and Monday of the holiday weekend. An officer was placed on Dublin Road between the park headquarters and the Gilson Pond Area and a second officer on Route 124 by the Old Toll Road. The addition of the officer at the OTR was a well-placed and utilized expenditure. At the three staffed areas, the park collected \$34,668 and had 7,704 day use visitors over the course of the holiday weekend. Park headquarter's parking lot filled and went to turn away on Sunday and Monday. Mountain Patrol preformed only one carry-down rescue over the course of the weekend.

Mountain Patrol saw a decrease in the number of serious/involved Search & Rescue incidents this season over last season. Mountain Patrol responded to 15 serious/involved incidents (6 walk-outs, 3 lost hikers, 5 carry-downs, and 1 fatality/recovery.) Mountain Patrol does a really good job at preventing incidents before they become serious.

Projects completed over the course of the 2015 season:

- New toll booth at OTR installed with a cash register and credit card machine
- GPA campground is 100% reservable through Reserve America and were all booked almost every weekend (walk-in sites are available at the park headquarters on sites 1-7)
- Fire rings installed at all remote camping sites
- The main toilet building at park headquarters was remodeled with tile floors, commercial grade toilets and commercial stalls repurposed from Greenfield State Park were installed
- Park grounds at Annett and Rhododendron State Parks were cleaned up (removal of ice storm damaged trees and rotten picnic tables)
- New donation envelope boxes installed at all of the iron rangers
- DOT paved and widened Poole Road

Future Projects for the 2016 season:

- The old toilet building will be remodeled (remove interior wall, insulate walls, install new lighting and add a heat source) to be used as a workshop
- Clean and organize all park buildings to allow for a more productive and efficient operation

6. Monadnock SP Volunteer Program update

The volunteer program logged 1047 hours (reported to date). These hours include 56 hours on park operations, 200 hours on mountain patrol, 20 on summit stewarding, and other miscellaneous items. The program has a total of 41 volunteers (8 mountain patrollers, 32 trail adopters, and 1 summit host). Three big projects were completed this year. The log ladder on Cliff Walk was replaced (the old one was there for about 12 years). The old ladder was removed and replaced with the new one (constructed out of two tree trunks for the stringers, 4x6 timbers for the steps, and held together with 10" timber pins.) The project took 144 hours from start to finish. The start of the Fairy Spring trail was reopened with the addition of water bars and stone steps across the spring. The Trail Wrights held a stone staircase training seminar for the trail adopter volunteers. Over the course of the training (83 volunteer hours) they constructed a stone stair case on the Side Foot trail.

7. SPNHF update

This year saw the 10th Annual Monadnock Trails Week. There were 72 volunteers that logged 953 hours of trail work. SPNHF staff members along with two hired additional help worked with working with and led the volunteers. Projects worked on included a continuation of the stone staircase on Pumpelly, bog bridge replacement and install on the Pond Loop at GPA, and water bar/drainage cleaning, rehab and replacement on the White Dot and White Cross.

Since the completion of the trail assessment, we are in a better position to identify and prioritize trail projects. The goal of these projects is to armor the trails to the point where increasing the traffic won't have as much of a negative impact. A professional crew (Off the Beaten Path, out of Maine) was hired to construct a stone staircase on the White Dot. This project was very technical and took 21 days to complete. This project cost \$5,000/week.

In addition to the Monadnock fund (which is dependent on how well revenue steams at the OTR and iron rangers) it may be possible for parks to budget for trail work at Monadnock if we could get a multi-year contract with one of the professional crews. However, it may be a more streamlined process for SPNHF to hire crews. It comes down to crew availability.

SPNHF has been working with the Division/Tara on developing a sign that depicts the cooperative management partnership between the two groups.

An inventory of natural resources has been taking on SPNHF property around Monadnock (not in the eco-reserve area) to see what is available for timber management and potentially sale. The question is how to develop aesthetic access to the resource. The process is not far along enough to have specific cut prescriptions outlined. Sites and operation outlines will be brought to MAC for review once ready. SPNHF continues to add property to the Monadnock Reserve. Closing on the Stole property was been completed.

8. MERE update

- Thoreau's Bog research – Cores of the bog have been taken and are currently being analyzed. Preliminary data suggests that the samples taken could go back thousands of years.
- Plant Guide – Graduate student working of this project will be finishing the final stages over the winter.
- Adopt a Crevice Community project – MERE staff continues to work with science students from Keene High School and Dublin High School.
- Summit Stewards have made over 1,000 visitor contacts discussing the fragile alpine ecology, principles of Leave No Trace, and respecting the mountain resources.
- Meet the Mountain Day – A springtime event held at the park designed to raise awareness of the park's resources. The 2015 event had a reasonable turnout. The goal was to attract new visitors to the park specifically for the event and not just rely on visitors who were already at the park and looking to hike. The hope is to improve advertising for the 2016 event.
- Wilderness Ethics round table discussion – Held at Antioch University. Panel members included Antioch faculty, Laura Waterman of the Waterman Fund, University of Vermont staff member, an outdoor educator, and MERE staff. The group discussed wilderness ethical stewardship.

The Waterman Fund grant deadline is coming up and if there is interest in pursuing this grant contact should be made with Peter. However, since most of the trail projects are located below tree line the grant may not be applicable.

9. The Pipeline/Rhododendron SP & Fitzwilliam Prime Wetlands study

Fitzwilliam is conducting a prime wetlands study. There has been one community forum to discuss the process. The town has hired a special environmental resource person to conduct the study. All of the wetlands in the town will be evaluated based on developed criteria. There are some state guidelines; however, the majority of the criteria are developed by the local community. This study will identify what wetland resources are available

and what they are used for. This gives the community the opportunity to say what they value in the town. This study was spurred by the pipeline.

What is the state's involvement with the pipeline since it is scheduled to go through Rhododendron SP? A DRED representative will be on the deciding panel for this and other proposed projects in the state. Currently, there is no application submitted to the state for review. Has there been permission granted for preliminary survey work. Yes, permission has been granted to complete rough survey work. Are there federal restrictions on the property or other deed restrictions, such as LWCF? Was this brought up at a scoping meeting? What mitigation is in place? This is decided during the site evaluation process. There is concern about ORV access if the pipeline is developed. There is already ORV access under the power lines. This has been brought to Fish & Game. Forest & Lands will look into it as well. The Department cannot do anything with the pipeline until an application is submitted.

10. New Master Plan needs?

Many topics (ie – parking) discussed over the course of this meeting are topics outlined in the 2003 Master Plan and should be revisited and updated. The master planning process is long and expensive. Can we amend sections without redoing the whole project? The plan is online for review. This will be tabled until the next meeting.

11. Open Floor

Request to purchase two oxygen tank response packs (\$192.45/unit) for Mountain Patrol. These packs would be fully outfitted and designed for quick grab-and-go incident response. Motion to purchase, seconded, and approved.

Is MAC willing/able to provide funding for Beth to take the required Wilderness First Responder (\$945 for the 10 day class) course? Motion to fund, seconded, and approved.

Where does the firewood sold in the campground come from? Ossipee Mountain sells pre-packaged, kiln dried wood. In the past, all firewood was purchased from the state prison farms but with their supply not being able to keep up with the parks demand and the increase of wood quarantines the decision was made to purchase wood from Ossipee.

Is there any information on the sale of the Hike Safe at the park? The cards are not sold at the park. They are only sold online through Fish & Game. However, they are advertised at the park.

At the last meeting (February 2, 2015) the question of whether or not the campground at GPA makes money was raised. What that question researched? Yes, the campground does make money (exact numbers not available at the time of the meeting.)

MAC would like the volunteer newsletters emailed to them and appreciates Lee's effort in putting on the BBQ for the volunteers. A greater involvement of MAC in the volunteer program may increase the number of volunteers. Lee offered that recommendations from the "outside" and people not already invested in the park have not stayed with the program.

Will Monadnock host First Day Hike again? Yes, we had a good turn out last year (80+ participants)

Has a new lease with the Town of Jaffrey been approved? No, the Division will send a suggested lease agreement to the Town for their review. Does the town feel negatively about the park? This is a sensitive issue. The town manager needs to be reassured about the park and its benefits.

12. Set date for next meeting

March 17, 2016 4pm

13. Adjourn