

New Hampshire Statewide Trails Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes, January 11, 2011

**In Attendance**

Members:

- Tom DiMaggio (Chair) NH Musers Association
- Chris Gamache NH Trails Bureau
- Debbie Briscoe NH Horse Council
- Judy Silva NH Municipal Association
- Scott Hatch Northeast Association of 4WD Clubs
- Dennis Laliberte Educators/Summit School
- Jack Waldron Society for the Protection of NH Forests
- Larry Kenniston NH Department Of Transportation/Bike-Ped
- Marianne Leberman White Mountain National Forest
- Dianne Hanley NH Rail Trail Coalition

Staff:

- Jennifer Codispoti NH Trails Bureau
- Bill Gegas NH Trails Bureau

Guests:

- Lelia Mellen National Parks Service
- Hal Graham Trailwrights
- Peg Graham Trailwrights
- Gerry Gold Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Coalition
- Peter DeSantis New England Mountain Bike Association
- Matt Caron New England Mountain Bike Association

**Open Meeting**

7:05 PM, meeting called to order.

**Introductions**

Members and guests introduced themselves and their affiliations.

**Review Minutes**

Minutes from the September 14, 2010 meeting reviewed, approved.

**Member Updates**

A past tradition of the STAC was to have a different member organization make a brief presentation to the committee on trail related topics relative to that organization. The committee would like to return to this tradition. Debbie B of the NH Horse Council has offered to do this for the next meeting. A presentation by Larry Keniston, NH DOT Bike-Ped may follow for the next meeting.

**OHRV/Snowmobile Update**

The 2010-2011 snowmobile season had a good start leading into Christmas break with over two feet of snow in some areas. Unfortunately a warming pattern quickly melted much of what was received. An incoming storm promises good amounts for some areas the day after this meeting. Currently there is little to no grooming happening. Registration sales are important to the management and funding of these trails. Snowmobiling is the winter lifeblood for businesses in many areas.

Temporary reciprocity with VT for snowmobiles will be in effect January 21-23. This was organized in cooperation with the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST). NH registered sled riding in VT must show proof of insurance. This was established as an economic stimulus initiative. The area that will see the most impact will likely be the Connecticut River valley. This provides each state an opportunity to show off what it has to offer and draw in additional registrations. Several years ago NH/VT had a reciprocal trail along the border. VT then rescinded. Both sides are looking at expanding reciprocity once again. This may become an annual event.

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A second year for the Jericho ATV Festival at Jericho Mountain State Park will likely not happen as a grant to help fund the event was denied to the local ATV club. Many charitable foundations do not have much money to grant out these days. The club is looking at some other possibilities and options.

### **Recreational Trails Program**

The future of the RTP is still unknown at this time. The program is still operating under a continuing resolution. The current resolution is effective through March 4<sup>th</sup> in which \$672,113 has been apportioned to NH. A new surface transportation bill may not be voted on until the next presidential election. The committee voted to draft a letter to congress in support of the program. Individual member organizations will have to obtain approval from their respective authorized officials in order to sign onto the final letter. A draft version will be sent out to the members first. The Coalition for Recreational Trails had created a council of supporting organizations for the RTP that is being presented to both the House and Senate. Any organization can join in on this national list too. Link to be distributed to the members.

The BOT will send out a request via email to the STAC for selection committee volunteers soon.

### **Heritage Trail Update**

No new project updates, however interest in various north country communities and the town of Hooksett has been expressed.

### **New Business**

NH Parks Division updates: Director Austin has left his post to return back to the private ski industry. DRED is currently searching for a new director. Gail Wolek, Deputy Director, has been name Interim Director in the meantime. Becca Taylor has left her position as the Volunteer Coordinator. Jenn Codispoti has taken on some of that position's responsibilities for now. The Division's Public Relations/Media coordinator Amy Basset has accepted a promotion as the new Assistant Director in the Division of Travel and Tourism. Although she was a valuable part of the Parks team, her bonds with the Parks Division are strong so it will still benefit the Parks Division.

Statewide Trail Plan: The only existing State Trail Plans were completed in 1974 and 1997. The BOT, USFS, AMC and other have recently discussed the need for an updated plan. Much has changed since the last plan in '97. There is a lot more emphasis on the relations with private landowners, and needs for easements and public access. Trails didn't get much mention in the Park's Division 10 Year Strategic Plan. It has been confirmed that the development of a statewide trail plan is eligible for RTP funding. The BOT will again look for assistance from the Office of Energy and Planning for this, but at the same time will work through STAC. The new plan should address all things trails in NH including economic impact issues, tie into the next Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and make suggestions for alternative funding among other topics. Trails and trail management in NH is sometimes fragmented. A new plan could help tie these pieces together. The time frame for completion will be state fiscal year 2012. Required matching contributions against the RTP funds will need to be determined before the plan is initiated. The STAC unanimously agreed to the need of a new plan. Currently preliminary discussions are being held.

Legislation: LSRs and Bills coming in include one to designated smoke free areas within Parks most likely common areas such as parking lots, sitting areas, etc. One will propose establishing search and rescue fees for guests of AMC and RMC high mountain huts. The issue remains that the majority of those who receive S&R services don't contribute to the funding of S&R. This Bill will not likely come out the way it is going in. Another Bill will address indemnification of volunteers on DRED managed lands to be included under the direction of any authorized DRED personnel. This will also add to the landowner liability law non-profit entities or volunteers working on public or private land. (Relative to liability insurance when working on DRED lands: See "Old Business" below). BOT will keep STAC updated on hearings scheduled.

NH Trails Day/Other Common Trail Maintenance Days: BOT to look at using Facebook, Twitter or other social media sites to distribute info on trail maintenance days/project that other groups can join in on. 2012 will be the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BOT which will likely be celebrated on NH Trails Day 2012.

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Communication between groups is paramount to get additional volunteers out. Online social networks with auto email updates may help.

**Old Business**

DRED land volunteer agreements: General draft forms currently under review. The preliminary goal is to make them easy for volunteers to use and enter into. Purpose is to enhance liability protection for volunteer and state. Some groups will be asked to enter into memorandums of agreement. First will be motorized trail groups as there are already many working agreements in place.

Liability Insurance: DRED will not require insurance from volunteer groups to enter into cooperative agreements. Trails have been cleared by the AG's office for this requirement. The return public benefit value of volunteers is recognized. As mentioned above, the first groups to enter into MOAs will be motorized groups. MOAs will be coordinated with other groups after legislation relative to volunteer liability is finalized. Agreements will be for 5 year increments with any group stewarding DRED lands. One standard template will be used with addendums relative to the group and property.

Trail Etiquette Guide: Final version presented (with some minor edits for spelling and formatting required), accepted by STAC. General guideline will be posted on the Parks & Recreation/Trails website and available for link from other groups' sites. STAC would like to see continuation of this in alternate media such as key-chain and sticker distribution. Stickers and key-chains will be based on the adopted trail use yield sign (winter and summer versions). These should be yellow in color, with printed recognitions/endorsement by STAC. Possibly developed as trailhead signs too. RTP funds to be considered.

**Guest Comments/Questions**

Gerry G of the SRKG Coalition asked how trail groups can approach DOT to get specific trailheads along state highways plowed in the winter, preventing users from parking on the road shoulders and wing rows. Currently the STAC seat for the DOT is vacant. Typically this is filled by someone from DOT maintenance. This seat will likely be filled soon. In the meantime the BOT will approach DOT about it.

**Next meeting**

Set for April 12, 2011, 7 PM, DRED conference room, 172 Pembroke Road, Concord.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.