

New Hampshire Statewide Trails Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes, January 12, 2010

In Attendance

Members:

- Tom Dimaggio (Chair) NH Mushers Association
- Larry Keniston NH Department of Transportation/Bike-Ped
- Scott Hatch Northeast Association of 4WD Clubs
- Jack Chapman Friends of Massabessic Bicycling Association
- Dennis Ford NH Snowmobile Association
- Judy Silva NH Municipal Association
- Jack Waldron Society for the Protection of NH Forests
- Chris Gamache NH Bureau of Trails
- Diane Hanley NH Rail Trail Coalition
- Marianne Leberman White Mountain National Forest

Staff:

- Jennifer Codispoti NH Bureau of Trails

Guests:

- Ted Austin NH Division of Parks and Recreation
- Gerry Gold Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Coalition
- Peter Desantis New England Mountain Bike Association
- Matt Caron New England Mountain Bike Association
- Charles Martin Friends of the Northern Rail Trail in Merrimack County
- Jamie Maddock

Open Meeting

7:03 PM, meeting called to order.

Introductions

Members and guests introduced themselves and their affiliations. The Chairman stated that guest questions and comments would be allowed during the meeting provided that they are relevant to the meeting topics.

Review Minutes

Minutes from the September 22, 2009 meeting reviewed and accepted.

OHRV Update

- The Trails Bureau has finished construction and work at Jericho Mountain State Park and other trails throughout the state for the construction season.
- Snowmobile season is in full swing and registrations were strong in December and for first part of January. Riders are out in high numbers in the North Country which is also helping the local economy.

Recreational Trails Program

- RTP Reauthorization: Currently no updates from FHWA
- RTP 2010 Update: FHWA will be releasing small amounts of money at a time as it becomes available. We will go through the regular application process and will fund projects as money is available. Applications are due January 29, 2010. It is likely the requests for funding will be higher than the money available. Additionally, the Bureau is working with FHWA to create a Memorandum of Agreement between DRED and FHWA so the program is a FHWA to DRED process opposed to FHWA to DOT to DRED as it is now. Guest asked about the possibility of competitive bidding. Chris G responded that the RTP is not as stringent as TE; however FHWA is saying RTP should be managed similar to TE, but that discussion is ongoing. Diane H asked if RTP was managed similar to TE if that would make it harder to get in kind donations. Chris G responded it was a possibility.

Heritage Trail Update

- No new updates specific to trail development. Diane H asked where the program stands now. Jenn C responded that many towns completed their sections, some towns recently have inquired about

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revitalizing their sections, but there is no outreach from DRED to get towns to develop their trails. Initial contact was made when the program was started, but interest has since waned and some trail segments were never completed. Diane H offered to help revitalize the effort. Discussion ensued.

New Business

- **Sunsetting State Committees:** HB1689/HB1690 are bills currently in the legislature studying the Non-Regulatory Boards, Commissions, Councils, Advisory Committees and Task Forces in NH, of which includes STAC. Legislative study committee has narrowed the total list down to three categories; Reinstated/Repeal/Unknown. Currently, the STAC is in the unknown list. Chris G wrote a letter to the committee stating the importance of STAC and that it should be reinstated. A subcommittee of STAC whose primary responsibility was for the Heritage Trail is also on the list. In the letter to the legislative committee, Chris G asked that the Heritage Trail subcommittee be repealed as it has not met for over 10 years and the work the subcommittee did can be handled by the STAC as a whole. Members asked if there is anything they can do to help and it was suggested to wait a couple more weeks to see if the STAC is taken off the unknown list. If not, letters from organizations may be helpful. Ted A clarified the legislature is 'learning as they go' about these committees and are looking at the burden they are on state staff and resources. Diane H asked if there is more STAC can do and Chris G responded it would be good to get the trail etiquette finalized and distributed as well as continue to work on the non motorized funding and other statewide issues.

- **Mushers Economic Impact Study:** Tom D updated the committee that the NH Mushers Association concluded an economic impact study last year during local NH sled dog races. Questionnaire cards were handed out asking both participants and spectators how much money they spent while there for two days only. Conservatively, 30,000 people were polled and those people spent \$5.5 million over those 2 days. NH Mushers Association has hired the Institute for NH Studies (<http://www.plymouth.edu/inhs/index.html>) to complete a second phase of the economic impact study of mushers throughout a year.

- **LWCF Program Funds Available:** The Division of Parks and Recreation announced the 2010/2011 grant round of the Land and Water Conservation Fund on 1/12/10 (<http://www.nhparks.state.nh.us/news-detail.aspx?id=218>). Funds can be used for the development of facilities or acquisition of land for outdoor recreation areas. Clubs are not eligible to apply, however NH municipalities including cities, towns, counties and school districts are eligible to apply and organizations should work with those entities if interested in applying for a grant. Total apportionment amount is still to be determined, but a cap of \$100,000 LWCF funds per approved project is anticipated. Applications are available on the Division of Parks website (<http://www.nhparks.state.nh.us/community-programs/land-and-water-conservation-fund/>) and due October 18, 2010 and the application intent form is due by March 31, 2010.

- **Legislative Update:** HB191 passed the House which adds bicycles to the Duty of Care law. Still needs to go through the Senate. The state is concerned with this trend of adding specific uses to the statute as it makes the law not longer inclusional, but exclusional which is opposite of its intention. Discussion ensued.

Old Business

- **Pisgah State Park Master Plan:** Pisgah, the largest SP in NH. Pisgah is essentially a state park in name only as it does not contain any beach, playground, day use or campground facilities. Pisgah was named as a state park by the legislature at the time of acquisition. The Division of Parks and Recreation only manages the developed recreational areas within a state park such as beaches, playgrounds, campgrounds and trails.. The remaining areas of the properties are managed by the Division of Forests and Lands for forest and land management. Management of the trails is coordinated through the Bureau of Trails. Trails and forest land are the primary resources in Pisgah. The Bureau ultimately oversees the management of the trails and presents recommendation on trails within the park. The Master Plan is now going to be split into 2 parts; Forest and Cultural Resources and Recreation Resources. The Forest and Cultural Resources part of the plan is complete. Recreation Resources will be completed over the next year. The original plan for Pisgah was to be a 'traditional' type park with amenities, however it really is a trails park. Proposals for mountain bike trails and equestrian trails are currently being reviewed as well. Friends of Pisgah is one of the predominant groups in the park, however they are not officially recognized

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by the state since there is no agreement in place. The plan is to work on defining roles and responsibilities of the groups within the park.

- NH State Parks Strategic Plan: Director Ted Austin came to the meeting to update the STAC members on the State Parks Strategic Plan (<http://www.nhparks.state.nh.us/planning-development/development-plan.aspx>). The Director first thanked the STAC for all the work they have done and their continued efforts. Director Austin explained the plan was already started when he came on board as Director and was not happy with the direction the plan was headed and wanted it to be more forward looking. The idea for the plan that was eventually withdrawn in June was to create a process to evaluate parks and unintentionally created a hierarchical list that elicited a large emotional response from citizens. More public input and comments were taken as well as meetings with groups and organizations. November 2009 the re-engineered/re-energized plan was released and went from looking at the negative side of parks to showing the strengths. Plan also includes an assessment of current and future needs of parks and how we can do a better job of running parks. Focus issues are now identified as stewardship, funding, statutory framework, management/operations, programming and products and the cost of the state park system for tomorrow. Also need to better utilize volunteer groups that are in parks and try to get new groups formed in parks where there are none currently. Much of this can be done with a newly created volunteer coordinator position.

- Share the Trail/Trail Etiquette: Diane H brought up a trail etiquette guideline from the state of Wisconsin (<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/ORG/LAND/parks/trails/Etiquette.pdf>) that was found online. This guide is clear and concise and includes all trail users opposed to the horse focused version that is currently being used. The idea now is to take pieces from the Wisconsin trail etiquette, the national version already discussed and what the STAC has come up with to create a easy to understand and inclusive guide. Members suggested that the trail yield signs are clarified in the guide and information given how to read them. Scott H would like 4x4's added to it as well. A subcommittee has been established and should review findings at next meeting.

- NH Trail Adopter Program: Jenn C is currently working on the final report for the Adopt A Trail Program, but considers the program a success. Trails were adopted and maintained throughout the year. We will be looking to expand the program into other parks, such as Pawtuckaway this year. Plans for trainings, etc are still being worked on.

Other

- Next meeting set for April 13, 2010 DRED conference room, 172 Pembroke Road, Concord. (later postponed to May 11, 2010)
- Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.