

Statewide Trails Advisory Committee (RSA 216-F:5)

January 14, 2015

DRED Conference Room

In Attendance

Members:

- Chris Gamache NH Trails Bureau (BOT)
- Tom DiMaggio New Hampshire Musers Association
- Peter DeSantis New England Mtn Bike Association (NEMBA)
- Al Cooper New Hampshire Snowmobile Association (NHSA)
- Debbie Briscoe New Hampshire Horse Council (NHHC)
- Tim Blagden Bike-Walk Alliance of New Hampshire (BWANH)
- Marianne Leberman White Mountain National Forest (WMNF)
- Raynold Jackson Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF)
- Judy Silva New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA)
- Larry Keniston New Hampshire DOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Program

Guests:

- Matt Caron New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA)
- Tom Levesque New Hampshire Off Highway Vehicle Association (NHOHVA)
- Heather MacAllister New Hampshire Horse Council (NHHC)
- Avis Rosenfeld New Hampshire Horse Council (NHHC)

Staff:

- Philip Bryce NH Division of Parks and Recreation, Director
- Katrina Hummel NH Division of Parks and Recreation Bureau of Trails
- Patrick Hummel NH Division of Parks and Recreation Office of Community Recreation

Open Meeting

7:05 PM, meeting called to order.

Introductions

Members and guests introduced themselves and their affiliations.

Review Minutes

Minutes from the September 10, 2014 meeting were approved. Moved: Marianne L, Second: Peter D.

OHRV/Snowmobile Update

Snowmobile Season Update: A major snow storm/ice event at Thanksgiving knocked many trees down on trails throughout NH; clubs and staff have gotten most trails cleared at this. Despite the lack of snow, registrations still remain higher than December of 2013. Registrations are anticipated to increase by the end of January. Reciprocal snowmobile weekend for 2015 will take place from January 30th to February 1st. The 2015 Lancaster Grand Prix will be held from January 30th to February 1st.

Bureau has had a few meetings with Towns about the upcoming OHRV season; specifically discussing road needs and timing of reviews.

Recreational Trail Program Update

FY 2015 Funding Update: Bureau of Trails introduced the new Recreational Trails Program (RTP) coordinator, Katrina Hummel. The 2015 RTP Review Panel will meet February 10th. The Federal Highway bill for RTPs will expire in May. At this time the future of the RTP is undecided. The

Trails Bureau has open communications with the NH Congressional Delegation about the benefits and need of the program. Two years ago, when RTP was in jeopardy of being unfunded, 75% of the delegation was in favor of RTP continuing. The Bike/Walk Alliance and Snowmobile Association have separate Congressional trips to DC and they speak about the program. Some STAC members suggested creating a RTP group to proactively solicit the need of the program. Buy America Waivers are being enforced. Any steel equipment assembled or created outside of the United States will require a Buy America Waiver. This has impacted the RTP program, especially RTP requests for groomers. Last year a total of 6 Buy America waivers were approved for selected RTP projects in NH.

Heritage Trail Update

Department of Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) recently met to score applications from communities. Some of the applications noted the trail or project was planned to be part of the Heritage Trail in the future, but no separate action from any communities since last meeting. Tim Blagden is making efforts to contact existing Heritage Trail groups and cultivate new ones.

Old Business

Bear Brook trail signage and designated uses update: Bear Brook Park is the test park for signage and designated uses. Successful results from the test park will be mirrored throughout the NH Parks and Trails system. Bear Brook Park's official map can be found online. Discussions about financial limitations and how to offset costs of signage were discussed. Trail descriptions are not trail ratings but will rather provide trail information such as bridge specifications or water crossings. Director Bryce suggested setting up temporary trail descriptions on the web to allow user feedback to be collected over 3-4 years prior to permanent trail designated uses being posted at trailhead kiosks. There have been considerations to use an RFP to hire a contractor to create signage, however cost of this is a concern. A Sign Retreat will be held to allow staff from NH Parks to come together to agree upon signage needs, establish designs and language conformity among signs, and narrow down the number of signs currently being used. The purpose to enhance NH State Park and Trail sign usage is to prevent new non-authorized trail construction and non-authorized trail use; but most importantly to improve visitor experiences on the properties.. A discussion also ensued about people taking down and stealing signs as a problem to address. It was noted that stealing any Trail or Park signs are considered a misdemeanor and will result in jail time. The public is not permitted to police Parks or Trails, however peer pressure is a valuable deterrent to some behavior. The process for determining signage and designated uses will not affect the work done by the Trails Bureau and snowmobile & OHRV community on the national level. The anticipated timeframe for permanent signage is 2015/2016 and trail descriptions on the website is summer of 2015.

Special User Permit Process (Rules) continued: Fundraising for other organizations is not a mission of State Park lands. DRED gets many requests to occupy properties for events and some of them limit the public from recreating because of the events. An exception to this is if fundraising were being held in order to raise money for recreation in NH; for example if snowmobile clubs held an event to raise money and the proceeds benefit recreational trails or activities. An events calendar will hopefully be posted showing Bureau of Trail events and events throughout NH State Parks based on special permits.

New Hampshire Fish & Game Hike Safe Card: Currently Fish and Game is under financial distress and is promoting the sales of Hike Safe cards to offset search and rescue costs. If sales increase the Application Mountain Club may be contracted by Fish and Game to also be able to sell the card. There was concern that the NH DRED & OHRV funds might be used to cover Fish and Game's expenses, which is not supported by DRED.

New Business

Legislation: HB 1248 did not pass in 2014 due to a "structures on land" issue. The language of this bill is the same as the snowmobile and OHRV laws, except it is specific to non-motorized users. The bill makes a statement that recreational users of lands understand the risks and agree to not hold landowners liable for the actions of the recreationalist. The bill number is HB 290.

STAC will be notified of hearing dates. DRED has had communication with Representative Brown about the bill.

Secretary of State 2015 NH Statement of Financial Interests – RSA 15-A: The purpose of the State Financial Interest Statement is to promote public transparency. It is to be filled out per individual, not group. All appointed board members are required to fill out a statement in order to be certified by the NH Secretary of State, and remain on STAC and other State committees.

Guest Comments/Questions

Trail Etiquette was requested to become more visible on the NH Parks and Recreation webpage. It can currently be found at <http://www.nhstateparks.org/explore/visiting/trail-etiquette.aspx>. Meeting minutes from past STAC meetings can be found under “Get Involved” tab on the NH Parks and Recreation webpage. It can be found at <http://www.nhstateparks.org/get-involved/commissions-committees/statewide-trails-advisory-committee.aspx>.

It was noted to use Twitter and Facebook feeds for any updates made on the NH Parks and Recreation web page.

The Friends of Pisgah have submitted reviews for bridge repairs in Pisgah State Park, can those bridges be made to accommodate equestrians. Bridges are being made to 5' wide to accommodate maintenance and rescue needs with ATVs. Should be sufficient for a horse. 3 separate projects for Bear Brook State Park were addressed: 1) trail descriptions needed by spring. Horse Council to email out their draft to STAC members for input. These will be general trail descriptions of conditions; 2) group to discuss trail maintenance needs for 2015 and 2016. Parks to lead this group with Horse Council, NEMBA, Musers and Snowmobile Association and 3) STAC subcommittee to address future trail designation criteria on all properties.

Next meeting

Next meeting is set for Wednesday May 13, 2015 at 7 pm at DRED HQ.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.