

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

November 8, 2017

DNCR Conference Room

In Attendance

Members:

- Chris Gamache NH Trails Bureau (BOT)
- Debbie Briscoe New Hampshire Horse Council (NHHC)
- Tim Blagden Bike-Walk Alliance of New Hampshire (BWANH)
- Andy Welch White Mountain National Forest (WMNF)
- Raynold Jackson Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF)
- Scott Monroe Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC)
- Erik Paddleford NH DOT, Bike/Ped Program (DOT)
- Peter DeSantis NE Mountain Bike Assoc (NEMBA)
- Judy Silva NH Municipal Association (NHMA)
- Tom DiMaggio NH Mushers Association

Staff/Guest:

- Alexis Rudko Bureau of Trails, RTP Specialist (staff)
- Patrick Hummel Office of Community Recreation (staff)
- Phil Bryce Director, Division of Parks & Recreation
- Avis Rosenfeld NH Horse Council
- Matt Caron, New England Mtn Bike Association

Open Meeting

6:30 PM, meeting called to order

Review Minutes

Minutes from the June 14, 2017 meeting reviewed. Motion to approve by Tim B, second Chris G. Minutes approved.

OHRV/Snowmobile Update

- Snowmobile season prep underway. Storm on Oct 30 initially sounded like it would have major impacts statewide on trails, but most reports coming in are not too bad. Some areas of major impacts from trees and lost bridges. Working with FEMA to try to get some costs covered for repair. Trails Bureau will likely award funds from GIA to get repairs done before winter. Several bridges were washed away and likely need to be made longer when reinstalled. Trail damages on WMNF would go through National Forest emergency funding, not FEMA.
- OHRV update Trails mostly shut down for the season. Only Jericho and 1 club network still open in Coos County. Storm Oct 30th shut down many riding areas while trail damages were assessed. Hop-Ev Riding area shut down so Army Corp could hold water behind the dam. Still closed until time to assess trails for damages. Registration revenues up over last year. NOHVCC/INOHVAA Annual Mtg, in Manchester was successful. 130 attendees from US and Canada met to work on OHRV matters and rode at Hop-Ev riding area. First trip to Northeast for most of the attendees. Next year mtg will be in Michigan.

Recreational Trail Program Update

Alexis R reported that the 2018 grant round scoring is done, but waiting on answering some final questions/concerns on 1-2 projects before notifying grantees of funding status. Scoring was done this year with in-house staff instead of volunteer committee like in years past. Believe it is the fairest way to score projects and most uniform. Goal is to notify grantees within the next 2 weeks

of their funding status. Funds would likely be available for work to begin once snows melt. Grantees would have all of 2018 to do project work.

Heritage Trail Update

Alexis reported there has been some movement from a group in Whitefield to reblaze and advertise their section of the Heritage Trail. Scott M reported out that he reviewed all the HT files in the Trails Bureau office over the summer. He gave a summary of the trail to the group (concept in 1988, legislatively created in 1991). Much discussion ensued about the status of the trail and that nothing will change with this legislatively mandated agenda topic unless funding is found to do something. Discussion focused then on idea of a report about 'what happened to the heritage trail?' and highlight how the concept and work faded away due to loss of committed volunteers and changes within communities. DNCR would be leading the way on any new initiatives to get the HT going again. Too many other higher priority issues with trails at this time to focus on a concept that does not seem to matter enough to others. Scott M will check the status of the trail segments in 5-6 towns in central part of the state and report back at next mtg.

Old Business

- SB 383 (hiking trail study committee) has met and issued a final report last week. Copies of report handed out to members. A lengthy discussion about the recommendations in the report ensued. SB 383 members, who are also on STAC, noted that it was a good group of individuals to work with and there was a long list of items to try to address, but the final report is only on some of the key items. The committee recommendations are specific to hiking trails in NH, but some of them could apply to other trail user groups. Franconia Notch is a major focus area at this time. Used to be about 100 cars along I-93 in the Notch 10 years ago, but this summer there were weekends with 700 cars along the side of the highway. It is illegal to park along an Interstate Highway. There is an informal I-93 Issues Task Force that has put out a survey of what trail users would support for changes in the future. DOT wants cars off of the highway next spring. There is no funding at this time to make any changes or improvements. At Monadnock the Parks may look to install pit toilets and iron rangers at all parking lots that access the mountain. Very few places have fees for trail use, but it is not fair for Parks to have to use parking fees from Hampton to make trail repairs. The final report from the committee could be used by the legislature to help with budgeting funds in the future, if the noted changes are supported.
- Bear Brook SP trail updates. NEMBA proposal several years ago which is now a joint NEMBA and NH Horse Council proposal for separate trails. Concerns with multi-use trails and all users together, primarily with the level of use we are seeking on trails. Might need to separate uses at BBSP. Phil thanked and commended the bike and horse group for working together with the agency on these trails. Loop trails are making a difference and Parks will do a presentation about this at the next STAC meeting.
- The North Country Council trail study is still going on and they are meeting with stakeholders. Phil told the group he missed the June meeting because he was biking between MN and WS and that a lot of the trip was on rail trails, and they required day use fees to use them.
- Chris reported to the committee that HB 2 (budget trailer bill) did split up the former agency: DRED. Parks and Forestry Divisions were combined with Department of Cultural Resources to create the new Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The Divisions of Economic Development and Division of Travel and Tourism Development became the new Department of Business and Economic Affairs. There is no change to the missions of Parks or Forestry, or Trails Bureau.

New Business

- Upcoming legislation: Chris noted this session seems light on trail related bills so far. Sen Feltes has submitted a bill request for a study on economic impact of rail

- trails, but not sure what would be entailed at this time. Discussion about STRAVA data and how DOT and others use this user-generated GPS tracks.
- eBike discussion deferred to winter meeting due to time concerns for the evening.

Guest Comments/Questions

Tom L asked Chris to tell the group about the NOHVCC meeting in August. Chris gave a quick update of the NOHVCC annual meeting be held in Manchester in August and that it is the first time this national association has met in New England. The OHV agencies in each state are all on the planning board for the conference.

Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday February 7, 2018. Meeting will start at 6:30

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 PM. (moved Judy S, 2nd Tim B)

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