

Statewide Trails Advisory Committee (RSA 216-F:5)
 June 28, 2022
 DNCR Conference Room (172 Pembroke Rd, Concord, NH 03301)

Attendance

STAC Committee Members: need at least 9 for a quorum.

	Name	Organization	Attended?
1	Craig Rennie	Chief of NH Trails Bureau (BOT)	Yes
2	Captain Mike Eastman	NH Fish & Game Department	NO
	VACANT	NH Office of Strategic Initiatives	N/A
	VACANT	NH Department of Transportation	N/A
	Director Charles Saia (VACANT)	NH Gov. Commission on Disability	N/A
3	Terry Callum	NH Snowmobile Association (NHSA)	Yes
4	Tom Levesque	NH Off Highway Vehicle Association (NHOHVA)	Yes
5	Amanda Peterson	Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC)	NO
6	Dennis Pavlicek	NH Municipal Association	NO
7	Raynold Jackson	Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF)	Yes
8	Jason Soukup	NH Heritage Trail	Yes
	Director Robert Johnson (VACANT)	NH Farm Bureau Federation	N/A
9	Debbie Briscoe	NH Horse Council (NHHC)	Yes
10	Tom DiMaggio	NH Mushers Association (Chairman)	Yes
11	Tom Thomson	Landowner Representative	NO
12	Nicholas Sanders	NH Department of Transportation-Bike/Ped	YES
13	Tim Blagden	Human-Powered Winter Sports	Yes
14	Peter DeSantis	New England Mountain Bike Association	Yes
15	Abby Evankow	NH Bike-Walk Alliance (NHBWA)	Yes
16	Stanley Carte	White Mountain National Forest	Yes

Guests:

Name	Organization
Avis Rosenfield	NH Horse Council

DNCR Staff:

Name	Organization	Attend?
Alexis Rudko	Deputy Chief, Bureau of Trails	Yes
Phil Bryce	Director, Division of Parks & Recreation	Yes
Eric Feldbalm	Division of Parks & Recreation, Community Recreation Office	Yes

Open Meeting

6:32PM, meeting called to order.

Introductions and Review Minutes

Introduction of members and guests made. Minutes from the February 2, 2022 meeting reviewed. Minutes approved. No changes needed.

Poll of each Member group

- Debbie (Horse Council): add equestrian to drop down menu under “activities” on parks website. (NOTE: this was done in July 2022).
 - o Regional Trails Plan – Central planning Commission – focused on Granite state rail trail 2021 – horse people were not aware of it. Doesn’t seem like they are reaching out to the non-motorized groups. Seems like the plan is based on transportation and focused on bikers and walkers.

- Terry (NHTSA): thin snow at the moment. Snow was thin back in Feb. We had good registrations. Better than previous years. Hopeful next year will be better. No user conflicts at this time.
- Tom L (OHRV): overuse is quite a burden on volunteers and BoT. Volunteerism has declined over years. Aging population of volunteers. Last year had a lot of complaining about lack of law enforcement on trails. Need more education with new riders. OHRVs were sold out at dealers but with uneducated riders. Law enforcement stepped up with more details in north country from southern districts. Put pressure on local law enforcement to assist in policing. Hoping to have NHOHRV group become more active in assisting clubs.
- Tim B (non-motorized winter sports): people cross country skiing and snow shoeing are hard to find on state managed trails. They stay off because state trails are used for snowmobiling primarily. @ Nordic events users are not complaining because they are not on public trails.
- Abby (bike walk alliance & NHRTC): working on state rail trails plan to DOT. Waiting for final draft. Biggest challenge is for insurance for volunteers. Received MOAs, SUPs, etc. and is very daunting.
- Tom (Sled dogs): not a good snow year – had to look for snow where we could. Used roads/trails that we have not used in many years. Tried to get our name back on NH Parks website to show where we could be on trails (NOTE: completed in July 2022). Dog teams are very quiet and could be very dangerous for dog team to come upon other users. Try to keep trail as wide open as we can. Just started to dip our toes in the water to add our users to volunteer on trails. Biggest problem is making other trail users aware that dog teams could be out there. Currently trying to add where we will be on trails bureau website.
- Ray (SPNHF): of the 100s of miles they have they asked to report on 2 areas: (1) Mt. Major = very popular trail. Started a volunteer trail outreach program. Volunteers talk to hikers about safety and leave no trace principles. Planning 2nd phase trail remediation to address erosion concerns. (2) Mt. Monadnock: in addition to 8 days of “trails week” they also have 4 week SCA crew on Marlborough trail. AMC profession trail crew for 5 weeks on Dublin Trail (2 mile trail uphill and very labor intensive).
- Jason (Heritage Trail): new to committee. Not much for trail user conflicts.
- Nick (NHDOT): do not represent any specific user on trails, but observation from use: don't see many people with conflicts but did see people on mountain bike trails using dirt bikes. But this is rare to see. Rail Trail Plan: solicited comments and Bureau of Rail & Transit is working on draft plan hoping to be by the end of June. (NOTE: this was pushed to August 2022 for deadline)
- Stan (WMNF): lots of issues. Last year the use was down from 2020 but still above normal. Biggest issue is workforce capacity. No temporary seasonal workforce.
- Peter (NEMBA): Trail closures, ex: in Bear Brook the fitness trail was closed. No notification to the users as to why the trail was closed and no advanced notice.
 - o Phil: parks closed that trail which doesn't happen often. Closed for safety because the stand of pine trees is falling apart and it needs to be harvested. The exercise things were not maintained. It was built by boy scouts but no group has ever stepped up to maintain. Parks is looking to hire a public information officer to get notices like these to user groups and public. Were looking to have that position in Park Operations to help with the website and signage in parks/trails.
 - o Ray: took a chainsaw safety course – all of you that have passed this course I may need you to help cut trees.
 - o Phil: this section is not allowed to cut these trees since they are standing. Volunteers can only cut downed debris. But we could use volunteers to help clean up after.
 - o Craig: motorized volunteers have to have chainsaw safety training as well.
 - Terry: additional piece where people have high deductible insurance plan. Injury to person can be very detrimental. NHTSA added an additional

insurance deductible for SM clubs. If person did not have health insurance this would cover a person as 1st coverage up to \$5K. If they have health insurance it would be secondary to someone making a claim. This encourages volunteers to continue to volunteer who were nervous before. We use Allied from Cincinnati. This is an additional piece they brought to the table. This policy does not restrict to membership to clubs. So if volunteers outside of clubs (as long as event is managed by club) need it they can make a claim (ex: a skier or hiker who wants to volunteer even if they are not part of the SM club).

- Tom: good exercise for meetings, we can touch base at each meeting.
- Phil: this is very important. We need to give you the freedom to say what's going on. Started community meetings with towns that have issues and it has made a big difference with agency relations and towns (user groups, etc.).
- Abby: we have a specific trail user complaint: dust and erosion from OHRVs make biking difficult.
- Craig: biked the Presidential – it was dusty but users were cautious.
- Tom: e-bikes on OHRV trails. We are trying to educate our users. OHRV trails were being developed for OHRVs not bicycles.

Legislative Update

- Reported a bunch of bills from Feb
- HB 311 – carried over from 2021. Committee to study rail trail BMPs. Study that formed from that is focused on dust mitigation. Original bill was about RR containments but it has continued and shifted focus to dust.
- HB 1188 – committee to study OHRV use in state. 5 year study committee looking all sorts of OHRV impacts.
- HB 1292 – drones on state wide trail system. It got killed.
- HB 1109 – authority for city or towns to limit on roads – should pass
- HB 1128 – liability for damage on class 6 roads – killed
- HB 1498 – safety for SM – recommended to HB 1188 (study committee)
- HB 1579 – landowner liability for rec activists – included RR properties. We testified in favor for this. Specifically to protect landowners for recreational use. Added in language. Phil: worked with F&G attorney with our attorney.
 - o Corridor 13 in Bennington will hopefully soon be covered with this and be open again
- HB 1554 – online payment of registration of fees for OHRV, and GIA increase for reimbursement. Signed into law by Governor on June 17th (takes effect August 16th)
- Other items:
 - o Alexis was promoted. And RTP coordinator posted (closes July 7th).
 - o BoT will be planning meetings with NHOHVA & NHSA to rewrite GIA rules.
 - o Meets with NHRTC – discussing fees for users to put \$ into non-motorized trails.
 - o May 3: NH rail trail stakeholder meeting
 - o May 4: public safety meeting with ATV Journey to Jericho. (ATV fest).
 - o We work closely with F&G on OHRV & SM issues.
 - o Meet monthly with DOT for rail trail issues.
 - o All districts have been doing projects:
 - D1: Ammonoosuc rail trail in Littleton – 2 miles of rail pulled – RTP & xNHAT. Planning to pull last 2 miles in fall 2023. Installing gates on new sections with RTP & xNHAT.
 - Major washout in Lisbon – we fixed it w/ emergency DES permit with bioengineered option ~\$65k using motorized funds for all users. And we saved Rt 302.
 - D2: Rock Rec – replacing gates, ditching, regrading, gravelling. LWCF & RTP grant funded.

- D3: on Northern RT – looking to pave under 3 tunnels, RTP funded.
- Division is hiring a non-motorized coordinator for Bureau of Trails. Not finalized and posted at this time, but with division of personnel at this time. Will work with Bureau of Community Recreation. Primary function will be addressing deferred maintained at Mt. Monadnock. We renewed agreement with SPNHF so this is part of that agreement. Position will be paid with parks funds, not motorized registration fees.

OHRV/Snowmobile Update

- Snow – FY-2022 45,326, which is ~2000 less of previous FY-2021 but were higher than pre-covid.
- OHRV - FY-2022 44,687 registered which is ~2000 increase from FY-2021.

Recreational Trail Program Update

- Project X FFY-2020 is closed with DOT and FHWA.
- All project Y FFY-2021 community projects, except one, are complete. Department projects will finish over the summer of 2022.
- Project Z FFY-2022 projects are open with FHWA. The community project contracts are on Governor & Council for June 29th, 2022 (tomorrow). Grantees will be notified to start projects after G&C approval.
- Project A FFY-2023 applications were due on Friday June 17th.
 - These projects will be subject to stricter Buy America laws as the result of Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act of Nov 2021. This means all glass, drywall, plastic, lumber and non-ferrous materials will be subject to Buy America compliance. Problem is we don't know how to document this.

Heritage Trail Update

- Welcome Jason Soukup to STAC!
- Review Heritage Trail Statues: law was passed in 90s, law says we will have statewide trail that follow the Merrimack river from Mass to Canada. Some made them but not all. Manchester, Nashua, Bedford has good amount of completed heritage trails. I got involved because freight RR which changed hands from Pan-Am to CSX. We are looking to connect heritage trail with this new landowners. We pushed new law to take excuse off the table of taking rails with trails off RR properties because of liability issues. Hoping to get 99 year lease on section to connect heritage trail (or Granite state rail trail) to connect these sections. We have invested a lot of money to this project. Mayors of Nashua and Manchester will be sitting with this new RR owner. Were hoping they will say yes. A barriers we have: Mayors want this and executive counselors but no one knows where governor stands on this issue. We plan to ask Governor on this topic with a letter but does anyone here know where he stands?
 - Phil: there is an office of outdoor recreation in DBEA. Parks can only focus on state lands. Suggest contact that commissioner (Taylor Caswell) for state support. This is a major economic driver.
 - Tim: when governor accepted the 6/10 mile for Northern Rail Trail he was raving about how great the private partnerships are with rail trails.
 - Phil: CSX bought it and there will be freight on it? Will there be trails next to it?
 - Jason: yes its called "rails with trails". This is only used once or twice a week. We're talking about Manchester millyard to Concord.
 - Tim: rail with trail may help with Conway Scenic RR.

Old Business

- MOAs for towns
 - These are going slowly but are being worked on within the bureau. Blank MOAs were emailed to towns for their boards of selectmen to decide if they want to pursue a MOA with the state for a state-owned rail trail. Some decided to refuse, others were eager to get going. This is ongoing and will continue. Towns with

MOAs will need to have any volunteers operating under their MOA to become chainsaw safety certified. This can be through the state or under another certification. Towns without an MOA can still pursue RTP grants to help assist the bureau with rail trail maintenance within their town if they choose. Towns are encouraged to work with their local motorized and non-motorized clubs when pursuing a MOA.

- Signing Guidelines
 - o STAC members were polled for comments for the signing guidelines. This is going slowly because of changes within the bureau and grant award season. The bureau is still working on these and the following are some determinations from reviews: these guidelines will be for state Rail Trails only (the state cannot impose permanent signage on private properties). Nothing is grandfathered in (if an old sign is misleading, it doesn't get to stay because it's already there). The trails bureau field staff will have ultimate discretion to approve or reject any proposed signage and they will remove signs if necessary. There will be no duplicates from the OHRV & snowmobile signage. Signage will be geared towards all users (motorized & non-motorized). Signs that the trails bureau already produces will not be added to guidelines (general rail trail rules and such). Sign clutter is to be avoided, so the amount at a post and frequency of posting it to be controlled. Some signs are better suited for kiosks rather than trail use.

New Business

- Director Phil Bryce announced his retirement from state service. 😞
- Trail Planning & Development (Debbie)
 - o Pisgah State Park: we did a tour of the park's horse trails. Map shows several horse trails. In 2011, looking to have more loops. 2 equestrians on friends of Pisgah. Friends of Pisgah have rebuilt a bridge and are experimenting with slippery bridges. They are using ¼" fabric with 1" thick peastone on top that will embed into fabric. Water passes through fabric and stones provide surface. No documentation for how long it will last and what it will do to wood underneath. Reservoir trail has issues and horse people can't use it even though it says it's a horse trail. There is a gate at one of the bridges but the bypass is a U- turn and horse cannot make it through the pass through. There is a drop off just after that gate. So even though we have permission to use the trail we cannot get past the gate. Suggest to reconfigure the gate so horses can pass through. There is a V shape that allows horses to go through but prevents the motorized users from passing (NOTE: cannot prevent wheelchair access, V-shape may violate ABA). Ranger is working on some other improvements on reservoir trail. Seems on map that non-motorized trails are being separated from motorized. Horses are using a lot of parking at that area.
 - o Phil: how do you feel about paying for parking to support the gates/staff/issues at park?
 - Debbie: we have generally been ok with this.
 - Tom: a V shape gate will prevent the mushers from passing.
 - Terry: with a gate bar that low that would create a hazard. The standard gates the bureau uses is for general safety.
 - Debbie: if you move gate to parking lot area it would have more room to go around. Just a suggestion for Parks and Manager.
 - Phil: Kim Nelson is park manager for Pisgah. Send to Kim & Clair (Copy Phil & Shawn) for follow up. (NOTE: emailed in July).
 - o Update for Bear Brook horse campground
 - Phil: we submitted ARPA fund request for campground expansion planning. The designs were for campgrounds @~\$62 million which is 10 times the amount of money we have to build them. A lot of the designs

were fancy, so were scaling them down to what we can do. We will not have outside contractor do bid documents. We'll do that in house because we will scale it down. No time frame at this time.

Guest Comments/Questions

- Avis Rosenfield (NH Horse Council): I have my chainsaw certification. We cannot cut anything above waist height. No battery operated chainsaw.
 - o Observation: I was riding my horse in Bear Brook and group of bicyclers had bell on which made a much safer interaction. Very pleasant experience.
 - o Horse group was largest group participating in volunteer day at Bear Brook.
 - o Thank you for Pawtuckaway State Park parking lots (built by Trails Bureau). Made turns no problem. But cannot make lower hill entrance with full load.
 - o Asked by Grant state carriage association: what can we do to get carriages more access on rail trails and state parks? Can't get around gates.
 - Phil: if you have a staffed entrances the staff can let you in and out. But the rail trails (or just unstaffed locations) cannot be widened to accommodate b/c other unauthorized users will get in. Ask other states how they handle it?
 - Avis: one suggestion would be solar panel with key card and you pay for it. Go to gate, put card up there and gate get pushed open. Similar to what NH Snow Slickers has.
 - Phil: looking for long term solutions, but no sure how to address at this time. Have to account for vandalism to panels.
- Tim: thank you for having gravity trail study at Rollins State Park. Looking to have trail design coming down.

Next meeting tentatively set for Tuesday November 15th, 2022 @ 6:30pm.

Motion to adjourn, seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 8:47 PM.