

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

October 19, 2016

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)
- 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)
- Larry Keniston New Hampshire DOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Program
- Scott Monroe Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC)
- Dean Beaman NH Snowmobile Association (NHSA)

Staff:

- Patrick Hummel Division of Parks & Recreation, Volunteer Coordinator
- Alexis Rudko Bureau of Trails, RTP Specialist

### Open Meeting

6:35 PM, meeting called to order and introductions made.

### Review Minutes

Minutes from the May 18, 2016 meeting reviewed. Minutes approved by voice vote

### OHRV/Snowmobile Update

Chris G noted that snowmobile clubs are working on trail projects to have things ready for the winter riding season. Everyone is hoping for a better snow season than last year. Chris G gave brief overview of OHRV season. Trails are shutting down for the season and trails in Pittsburg closed Sept 30<sup>th</sup>, with Colebrook area closing just after Columbus Day and Coos Highway connectors closing on Nov 1. Bureau and landowners closing down more trails at the beginning of Nov to help with trail damage we are seeking during the freeze/thaw cycle in November and early Dec. Tom D asked what is the snowmobile opening date? Depends; on snow levels, landowners, etc. Clubs cannot get reimbursed for grooming until Dec 15<sup>th</sup> and many of the landowner agreements use the Dec 15<sup>th</sup> date as the day when permission begins. Army Corp is letting Musers train with ATVs until the snowmobile trails open. In that area of the state t would likely be safe to plan on Dec 15<sup>th</sup> date.

### Recreational Trail Program Update

Chris G

### Heritage Trail Update

No updates or activity since last meeting. Committee discussed whether to keep this item on the agenda or drop it due to lack of any activity. Committee recommendation is to remove it from the agenda. Chris will check the statute to determine if this is noted as a specific agenda item or not. If not it will not be listed on future agenda.

### Old Business

Trail Group Insurance/Parks Liability insurance follow-up: Patrick H gave the group an update on the failure of HB 1569 (volunteers for DRED) and the discussions that occurred in the House and Senate that led to it being voted ITL. House wanted the Attorney General's Office to defend all organizations that provide volunteer work on trails or in parks. Phil B noted the State could not agree with this unknown increase in costs and liability. DRED found that it has ability to purchase insurance through another statute. If a policy is bought it would only apply for work done on

DRED lands, no other properties. AG's Office says that insurance is still a requirement for organizations to have agreements with State. Individuals do not need insurance. The "defend and indemnify" language is out of individual agreements, but still in organizational agreements. The organization's insurance policy would cover this provision. There is no timeframe for the state policy. Bureau of Risk Management is working on it. Trails groups did not 'lose' anything from the bills failure. Bill would have increased protections to groups. Agency is disappointed in some of the partner organizations that led the charge to change the bill and ultimately were responsible for its failure. A few opinions outweighed the greater need for a lot of other organizations. Future insurance policy is subject to funding availability. Discussions about communications about bill amendments. Some groups could not keep track of all the changes occurring. Organizations lost out on ability to get some insurance coverage due to bill failure. Agency still does not have all the answers about what will be needed in the future. Could bill be tried again next year? Yes, but agency likely will not try again for a few years after more information is known. NHOHVA has broadened its policy and other trail groups can become Associate members and buy insurance policy. Additional discussions about the number of non-profits that exist. The Center for Non-Profits reports too many exist for the size of the state and that if an organization cannot afford \$1,000 for insurance then perhaps the groups should not exist. Many non-profits are not operating in compliance today. Despite disappointing end to the bill it has increased awareness and perhaps some good will come of it all.

Legislative updates: SB 383 is expected to pass legislature. Bill will create a study committee to look at hiking trails in NH and make recommendations on funding, volunteers, trail maintenance, etc. Bill is only looking at hiking trails, not multi-use trails. SB 521 is expected to pass legislature. Bill is modeled after snowmobile club incentive legislation. OHRV registrations will increase by \$30 in 2018. Anyone that proves they are a member of a NH OHRV club that is a member of NHOHVA will not have to pay the \$30. HB 1396 has an amendment on it to create an OHRV law enforcement committee to look at on-road use issues and general LE issues. Riders want LE on trails, but a lot of conflicts with F&G CO time in the summer and fall. They are on a lot of hiker rescues and not able to patrol as often as needed. OHRV LE grants should be sent to town with trails, not help towns with local rider issues and no public trails.

### **New Business**

Debbie B noted the flier about a Basic Trail Maintenance for Volunteers workshop being taught by the Stewardship Network that will occur in Amherst. Good opportunity for organization members and should be promoted. Harry B mentioned that NH Timberland Owners Association (NHTOA) has maintenance workshops also. TOA members are the landowners we all rely upon so it might be good to learn from the landowners.

Harry B inquired about equine proposal for CLH. NHHHC seems to partner with other trail groups and not look to take on role themselves; question about why? Debbie noted their group is loosely organized, mostly women, with little background or training on trail work. There is no horse group in the north country and riders are not members of southern groups.

Tim B asked about Musher use of ATVs for training on federally funded rail trails. Chris G gave history of the 10 years of use and Tom D gave information about why mushers want to have dogs train by pulling ATVs for safety reasons. Mushers needs the weight and braking power of the ATV to slow/stop dog teams during low snow times in fall and winter. Letter from Trails outlines requirements and trails that may be used. Issue is on Northern RT from this winter. Dog team was attacked by walkers with unleashed dogs. Sled dog was stabbed by walker who struck the dog team with ski pole. Unleashed dogs not permitted on DRED properties, including rail trails. Federal Highway regulations do not allow motorized-wheeled vehicles on trails. This use is not recreational ATV use and is different. Tim noted his concern is solely for trail surface if used by ATVs. Bikes are impacted by the loss of "fines". Tim requested minutes reflect that he feels Trails Bureau exceeded its authority to allow mushers to train with ATVs on TE funded trails.

**Next meeting** scheduled for Wednesday October 19, 2016.

Question about 7pm start time and whether 6 or 6:30 would work better for members. Most members felt earlier would be good to try. Next meeting will start at 6:30 to see how it works for members.

Motion to Adjourn moved by Debbie B, second Peter D. Meeting adjourned at 8:52 PM.

APPROVED