

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

May 14, 2014

DRED Conference Room

In Attendance

Members:

- Chris Gamache NH Trails Bureau (BOT)
- Marianne Leberman White Mountain National Forest (WMNF)
- Debbie Briscoe NH Horse Council
- Peter DeSantis New England Mtn Bike Association (NEMBA)
- Larry Keniston NH DOT Bike/Ped Program
- Harry Brown NH Off Highway Vehicle Association (NHOHVA)
- Al Cooper NH Snowmobile Association (NHTSA)
- Raynold Jackson Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF)
- Phil Bryce Director, Division of Parks & Recreation
- Tom DiMaggio NH Mushers Association
- Denis Laliberte Educators
- Judy Silva NH Municipal Association

Guests:

- Tom Levesque Merrimack Valley Trail Riders
- Matt Caron NEMBA
- Paul David NEMBA
- Kathy Turnbull Bear Brook Stables, Equestrian
- Dan Dwyer NEMBA
- Renee Wormell Granite State Carriage Association
- Avis Rosenfeld NH Horse Council
- Therese Smith Granite State Carriage Association

Staff:

- Lisa Meffert Trails Bureau
- Tara Blaney State Park Operations (South Region Parks)
- Greg Preville State Park Operations (Bear Brook SP)
- Patrick Hummel Community Recreation Office

Open Meeting

7:05 PM, meeting called to order.

Introductions

Members and guests introduced themselves and their affiliations.

Review Minutes

Approved Minutes from the January 15, 2014 meeting. Moved: Harry B. Second AI C.

OHRV/Snowmobile Update

-NH had a good riding season this winter and it longer than average grooming season and clubs put in a lot of winter trail work. Some riders were still finding snow in areas of Pittsburg a week ago. Registration revenues are up but we don't have final winter numbers at this time. Local businesses had good economic impacts from the winter.

-OHRV season begins May 23rd. With the long winter and heavy late snows there was a chance that the trails might open later this year but they are drying out quickly and most trails will be open for the Memorial Day Weekend.

Recreational Trails Program

-1)The Bureau has awarded about \$900,000 in community grants for the 2014 grant round. Thank you to the STAC members that served on the grant scoring and selection committee.

2)The RTP grants timeline will be changing to better be able to obligate the Federal funds earlier and help out grantees with the work season. RTP applications will be advertised in July with a deadline of September or October (moving timetable ahead about 3-4 months). The goal would be to have contracts valid for a calendar year so organizations would have a full construction season to do work. Federal Highway Administration had requested that we obligate funds earlier than this year, which was later than normal, to show actual activity being done. Members commented this would be great change for volunteer organizations to be able to get work done during the full non-snow season.

3) The Federal Highway Bill (MAP-21) expires Sept 30th of this year. Congress trying to get a new multi-year bill passed before this one expires. RTP's future is directly tied to it remaining in the new highway bill. There are efforts to make RTP a stand-alone program and not part of the other transportation initiatives but there is also efforts to put all of the funds toward highway projects. At this time a Governor may "opt out" of the RTP and use the funds for highway projects and Florida and Kansas have done so. STAC members need to make sure the program stays as an individual entity to return the funds back to where they are paid from.

Heritage Trail Update

-No new updates.

Old Business

-DRED Administrative Rules have been approved by the Joint Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules (JLCAR) and the updated Rules are on the Division's website. The Rules for Trail uses and issues went for approval as they were last presented to STAC in January.

- Denis L requested that Special Use Permit fees and process be an agenda item and he presented paperwork for review and discussion by the group (see attached State of NH-Special Use Permits, Points of Consideration and Recommendations). Denis coordinated an annual event called the Hampshire 100, which is a bike race that uses a small portion of Greenfield SP and the Hillsboro Branch Rail Trail but the permit fees have increased each year. A lot of discussion ensued about pricing for permits and if a standard fee schedule could be developed for groups to use? Not really. Director Bryce explained why permits are used or needed and how the general process works. Each event is different and fees are based upon factors such as time of year, impact to developed Park areas or outside day use areas, number of attendees, is staff assistance needed and a variety of other factors. The Division agrees that it can be difficult right now to figure it all out but is working through making it as straight forward as it can for outside groups. Anyone planning an event should plan to contact the Division early and before advertising the event. This topic will remain on the agenda for further follow up at the September meeting.

New Business

-(Chris G) Legislative updates were discussed briefly. HB 256-FN (voluntary hiker card) was briefly discussed and the price of the card and its purpose were relayed to the group. HB 1248 (assumption of risk) copies were passed out with the section of the bill that the Senate Judiciary Committee had issues with. The bill was recommended for Interim Study and not passed by the Senate. SB 240 (10 day temporary OHRV non-resident registration) SB 311 (snowmobile regional registration authorization) have both been passed.

-(Chris G) Designated trails vs historical trails discussion was based upon miscommunications by multiple entities and confusion over 2 different existing maps for Bear Brook SP. NEMBA was using a 1991 map of the park that showed a trail that was in use but not on the official DRED/Parks trails map. The map referenced turned out to be a forest stand map for timber management that made a reference to a trail found. A meeting earlier today between DRED and NEMBA went over the topic and it was decided to formalize the trail through a Department process. Request was made that before complaints go to facebook or other on-line sites that calls between partners be made to try to resolve issues first.

-(Chris G) Trail use designation criteria draft was distributed to the group for discussion purposes. The criteria are in an initial draft and have not been reviewed by any others at this time. Purpose is to follow up from the January 2014 meeting about when multiple uses should not be encouraged or permitted on the same trail. There were cases when having all uses share the same trail increased user conflicts and the agency needs a way to work with the user groups to figure out how to designate which trails for which uses. The draft criteria (attached) was distributed to the group. General comments were that each park would need individual reviews for certain trails and that the draft needs to include winter non-motorized uses also. The draft criteria is intended to evaluate trails for non-motorized uses, not motorized; because there are other statutes for what trails allow motorized uses. XC skiing was asked to be included for winter criteria about trails that are appropriate and not. Bear Brook SP would be the property that would be used as the test case for this draft criteria and a subcommittee was set up to work through the summer on applying the draft criteria and developing signage and use plans for existing trails. The subcommittee is: Ray Jackson (SPNHF), Peter DeSantis (NEMBA), Debbie Briscoe (NHHHC), Al Cooper (NHSA), Tom DiMaggio (NHMA) and DRED staff from Parks & Recreation and Forests & Lands.

Guest Comments/Questions

Next meeting

Next meeting is set for Wednesday September 10, 2014 at 7 pm at DRED HQ.

Meeting adjourned at 8:54 PM.

Draft Criteria for trail use designation on trails on DRED lands (non-motorized):

- -pedestrian/hiking use permitted on all trails
 - -motorized uses (snowmobile and OHRV) permitted on designated trails per RSA
 - -sled dogs use permitted on multi-use rail trails and wider trails, which are posted as open, per Rule
 - -criteria for bicycle and equine use
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- As a base all trails are open to all non-motorized uses, unless posted closed
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- Trails which meet the following criteria may be restricted from equine use:
 - Narrow, single-track, trails purpose built for a specific user group, that has areas with limited terrain for multiple types of users to safely pass each other and/or structures not built to hold heavier weights (bridges)
 - Single track trails along steep hillsides with limited area for other users to pass
 - Steep trails up the fall line with unstable soils or built stairs
 - Trails with substantial sections of constructed stairs or other structures for hiker access
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- Trails which meet the following criteria may be restricted from bicycle use:
 - Hiking trails in congested areas where the use would impact day use hiking access
 - Trails with long sections of constructed stairs or other structures for hiking access
 - Trails purpose built for another specific use that were not intended for bicycle use
 - Steep trails up the fall line with unstable soils

Other property factors may impact trail availability for certain uses: within special management areas, times of year for wildlife breeding, etc.

Goal is to have appropriately designated uses for trails to improve visitor experiences, provide access for recreational needs and provide a limited variety of trails for multiple experience levels of trail users.