

**Statewide Trails Advisory Committee (RSA 216-F:5)**  
 February 22, 2022  
 DNCR Conference Room (172 Pembroke Rd, Concord, NH 03301)

**Attendance**

STAC Committee Members:

Name	Organization	Attended?
Chief Craig Rennie	NH Trails Bureau (BOT)	Yes
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	NH Gov. Commission on Disability	No
Terry Callum	NH Snowmobile Association (NHSA)	No
Tom Levesque	NH Off Highway Vehicle Association (NHOHVA)	Yes
Amanda Peterson	Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC)	Yes
Dennis Pavlicek	NH Municipal Association	No
Raynold Jackson	Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF)	Yes
VACANT	NH Heritage Trail	N/A
Director Robert Johnson	NH Farm Bureau Federation	No
Debbie Briscoe	NH Horse Council (NHHC)	Yes
Tom DiMaggio	NH Mushers Association (Chairman)	Yes
Tom Thomson	Landowner Representative	Yes
Nicholas Sanders	NH Department of Transportation-Bike/Ped	Yes
Tim Blagden	Human-Powered Winter Sports	No
Peter DeSantis	New England Mountain Bike Association	Yes
Abby Evankow	NH Bike-Walk Alliance (NHBWA)	Yes
Stanley Carte	White Mountain National Forest	No

Guests:

Name	Organization
None	

DNCR Staff in attendance:

Name	Organization
Alexis Rudko	Bureau of Trails, RTP Specialist
Director Phil Bryce	Division of Parks & Recreation, Director
Eric Feldbaum	Div. of Parks, Community Recreation Office
Jesse Zacrow	Div. of Parks, Community Recreation Office, Volunteer Coordinator

**Open Meeting**

6:48, meeting called to order.

**Introductions and Review Minutes**

Roll Call of members. Minutes from the August 24, 2021 meeting reviewed. Question about Heritage Trail nominee volunteer, Commissioner has not approved yet. Minutes approved.

**OHRV/Snowmobile Update**

- **Snowmobile update:** ~43,000 registrations as of last week. This year we have more registrations than last year. Tough conditions right now because of ice and bare ground. Only Pittsburg has good snow currently. Potential snow this Friday (2/25/22).
- **OHRV update:** nothing new at this time for riding (season has not started) but many legislative items.
- **GIA:** Currently there is a round of grooming reimbursement occurring.

- [Current Legislative items](#) (on NHstateparks.org – about us – division – current legislation)
  - o [\(2021\) HB 311](#) – rail trail BMPs. Mass has published BMPs for rail trail construction and maintenance that focuses on soil testing for contaminants from old railroad use. Trails has been attending study committees to answer questions and if these Mass BMPs are a good fit for NH. Biggest concern is cost for testing. Pulling rails is a huge undertaking and the rails themselves need to be surveyed for abutter encroachment. Soil testing is an additional expense. This could limit rail trail development. Trails Bureau is only working on Littleton at this time but could impact any future rail trail conversion meaning less trails for all users.
    - Discussion on if containments are found: who is responsible for removal? Trails doesn't know because the cost is so huge. A DES brownfield site testing for a ¼ acre site is ~\$15K and that only covers *testing*, not clean up. On a rail corridor itself we would not be able to estimate cost because on how long they are.
    - Question about survey: does DOT have surveys already? DOT Bureau of Rail & Transit has the old VAL (valuation) sheets (usually over 100 years old) but the encroachment changes since then the VAL sheets were made.
  - o [HB 1188](#) – rec vehicles on class 5 roads
    - 5 year study committee. Trails has been attending meetings and this committee has expanded to include all sorts of topics. Very complicated discussions.
  - o [HB 1292](#) – permitting use of drones on statewide trail system.
    - Director Bryce: Parks' position is to oppose this in general to preserve the user's experience. There also is a privacy issue with people taking pictures using a drone. We offer special use permits (SUP) for drones for commercial shoots, scientific research, documentaries, search and rescue but not as a recreational activity. You technically can't launch/land a drone on state property. Also have to worry about FAA rules. Parks also does not have the staff with enforcement capability to police misuse. The bill states the "state wide trail system" which also includes private landowners (which is 82% of NH).
    - Discussion from group that in general members agree to not allow drones as recreational activity on state parks
  - o [HB 1109](#) OHRV on class 5 and 6 roads & [HB 1128](#) financial liability on class 6 roads
    - Related to municipalities that allow that those used on class 5 and 6 roads.
  - o [HB 1498](#) – establish OHRV safety program
    - Supported by NHOHVA and NHSA. There have been many accidents from inexperienced riders. Trails believe it will be delayed for further study.
    - Comment about having program include trail etiquette. Indicated that trail etiquette would be part of the class if the class is adopted.
  - o [HB 1579](#) – landowner liability concerns
    - Trails testified in support to better cover landowners including RR and utility ROWs. Extra protection with duty of care laws.
    - There is an amendment to include "and their agents" to help utility workers, but there is a question on what an "agent" is, not necessary a contractor, but someone who act on behalf of the landowner. Like someone who can make decisions for the property (land manager), which not the same as a contractor.
    - This came about because a landowner who owns and operates a logging company allows motorized use on property was sued by users who crashed. Users hired a lawyer because the landowner is protected but not the business they also own and operate on the same property.

- Concern is that if the business gets sued then other landowners with businesses will close their property for fear of being sued by public use.
    - Question about this bill covering open waterways vs. frozen water, and Chief does not recall a waterways discussion.
  - [HB 1554](#) – online payment of fees and fines for OHRV & SM
    - Fish & Game's database system doesn't allow for online processing at this time but maybe in the future.
- On 2/18/22: Trails Bureau hosted the Executive Councilor Kenny (District 1) snowmobile ride. Tradition that started over 30+ years ago. Cancelled ride because of warm weather but spent the morning speaking about trail issues and etiquette.
- In January 2022, Trails Bureau is seeking to secure a permanent easement in the Conway Bypass to preserve our Corridor 19 snowmobile trail. DOT's Bureau of Right of Way is no longer going to build the bypass.
- On March 1<sup>st</sup> there is a stakeholder meeting for the [NH State Rail Trails Plan](#) that DOT is working on. Scheduled to be finished in June 2022. This will be a virtual zoom meeting.
- Bureau of Trails has been regularly coordinating efforts with NH Rail Trail Coalition of various rail trail related topics.

#### **Recreational Trail Program Update**

- Project X FFY-2020 individual projects are finished, and the project year is almost 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 going through federal NEPA review. Anticipated opening is late May/Early June.
- Project A FFY-2023 will have solicitations for projects from April to June of 2022 with 3 workshops with TDB dates/time/locations. Attendance to at least one workshop is required to apply regardless of previous application experience. Workshops will be in person only again and posted to the [RTP website](#) with the application in April.
- To update on federal status: the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021](#) became public law on November 15, 2021. This reauthorized RTP funds from 2021-2026 (5 years).

#### **Heritage Trail Update**

- Jason Soukup sent letter directly to Commissioner Stewart requesting appointment but no answer yet.

#### **Old Business**

- Reiterate STAC meeting and purpose by looking at [NH RSA 216-F:5](#). Ask members for quick comment on what you want from this committee.
  - Debbie: originally wanted the question to understand what the committee members' roles are in trail planning and development. This was covered tonight a bit more by discussing input of house bills. Committee members don't get things mailed to them ahead of time as a heads up. Regional commissions are doing trail plans but STAC members are not informed in general. The new Pawtuckaway parking lots did not have input from the horse community and the horse trailers are difficult to maneuver in those lots because of slope and tight turns.
  - Tom T: reiterated that it is important to keep as many people informed on committee if you want suggestions, but impossible to do 100% of the time. Looking at House Bills, when in full speed, its difficult to handle.
  - Tom L: Having a heads up information in timely manner would allow for input on bills to Chief/Director.
  - General agreement from committee about having information faster to prepare comment.

- Suggestion from Chief: other advisory committees have one member get appointed to cover legislative issues and send to all members. This is a way for members to keep on top of items and spread the work around.
    - Director Bryce: legislation is complicated and the governor's office signs off on our testimony after our agency makes sure the testimony follows our mission. STAC would need to meet bi-weekly if you want to keep up with the sheer volume of HB.
    - Chief: it would be great to hear from each of you what your general issues are from your particular group.
    - Chair: please remember you are your representative for your whole group, not just our personal opinions but from your whole organization as a consensus.
  - Nick: does DOT need to have 2 members on STAC?
    - Chief: (to Nick) DOT is a huge agency with many roles that involve trails, it would be helpful if DOT leadership could identify another DOT role that would be most suited for STAC meeting discussions.
    - Director Bryce: at some point we want to update all our statutes, but DNCR has many relationships with DOT: rail trails, highway crossings, etc. and one DOT representative cannot address all the trail issues associated with the agency.
- Unapproved cutting of trails on state property
  - Director Bryce: This seems to have died down a bit in various parks. NHTSA is having big effort with education with keeping people on trails. There is a fine for anyone cutting rogue trails, but parks staff cannot enforce any laws with this.
  - Educational signage has helped in some situations, but we have to be strategic with what signs go where to avoid over clutter and having users be "blind" to the signs because they are overwhelmed.
  - Gates can be used in some areas but are expensive and raw materials are hard to acquire.
  - Some private landowners are cutting rouge trails on state property that abut their private property.
  - There was cutting at Artist's Bluff – no signs to prevent anyone from cutting trail but the rouge trail was fixed.

#### **New Business**

- **SUP/MOA** – with towns for trail maintenance
  - Bureau of Rail & Transit gave Trails Bureau permission to issue these on rail trails they own/manage and they will be updated to include chainsaw safety.
  - For now this is starting in southwest NH and we will work our way around the state to include other rail trails.
  - Are there chainsaw safety protocols for the state? (DNCR)
    - Volunteer Coordinator: DNCR hosts chainsaw safety classes for DNCR volunteers throughout the year which includes a course. Our employees all follow this. The allowances for chainsaw use by DNCR volunteers under our course are very limited and basic, no cutting any standing trees.
  - According to DNCR chainsaw instructor: in order to cut on state land you still need permission to do so by going to go to park manager (which is true).
  - What other machines can volunteers use?
    - Director Bryce: we just have chainsaws for now to get ahead of it. Motorized trails have a long tradition of machine use. In our policy – the person giving the certification must feel they can be responsible for the safety training.
  - What are first aid requirements for sawyers? (on DNCR lands)
    - No certification for general chainsaw use but certified loggers need first aid. The DNCR chainsaw policy require first aid kit be on hand.

- Other questions about motorized MOA/MOUs not being addressed with these MOA/MOUs. Only for towns and non-motorized groups under the town's MOA.
- **SCORP update**
  - The 5-year SCORP update is coming up in 2024. Parks entered into agreement with UNH Department of Recreation, Management and Policy. This document is a requirement under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program and the Office of Outdoor Recreation will be soliciting public comments from STAC members/organizations once a document is ready for review by public.
  - There will be surveys, but they will be focused on areas that are not currently recreating and how to get them to recreate. Survey data is already collected for current user groups.
  - Rough draft will be another year coming and there will be a dedicated website for public comment and documents.
- **DNCR with Outdoor Recreation Industry Development**
  - This was added to agenda a while ago but no one present to speak about it.
- **Signing guidelines for DNCR properties**
  - There is a rough draft document for each member to review and provide comment on. This document was also emailed to all members. **Please return all comments by April 1<sup>st</sup> to Trails Bureau.** STAC comments will be compiled for further review when document gets DNCR reviews. This document will include STAC trail etiquette signs.
  - Are there national rail trail signing guidelines similar to OHRV & Snowmobile signs?
    - There are some guidelines but not a document we can use for NH. These signs would be very specific to the location they are in.
  - These signs will be tied to the state parks signage (same font/color/etc.) so a user knows they are on a parks' managed property.
  - Comment: signs change from state owned property to town own property, it could be useful to have the town signs the same. From the user perspective they do not care if they are on state vs. town property.
    - State cannot compel town to use the same signage.

#### **Guest Comments/Questions**

- No guests present.

#### **Next meeting**

- tentatively set for June 21, 2022. At DNCR.
- Have a meeting in early January to catch early legislation/HB. Make STAC meetings every (roughly) every 4 months for 3 times a calendar year.

Meeting adjourned/seconded at 8:37 PM.