

NEW YORK STATE TRAILS COUNCIL MEETING
Saratoga Spa State Park
Administration Building, Gideon Putnam Room
September 15, 2012
11:00 am – 3:00 pm

MINUTES

1. Call to Order – Roll Call
 - The meeting was called to Order at 11 am by Vice Chair Ivan Vamos. He announced the recent death of Katherine Wolfe. The Council observed a moment of silence in her honor.
 - Roll call was taken and representatives present were: Moak Detraglia, Carol Schmelz, Sharon Young Slate, Mark Wehnau, Jane Daniels, Wes Lampman, James Underwood, James Mitchell, Craig Fury, Ivan Vamos, Samantha Langton, Dominic Jacangelo, Robert Bryant, Katherine Henrikson, Tom Casey, Martin Daley, Elijah Yearick, Karl Beard, Elaine Troy, Nancy Stoner, Diana Carter, Rob Messenger, Dick Hubbard (new delegate) and visitors: Irene Szabo (FLTC), Tim Kleeger (Off-road Bicycling), Deb Christy (St. Lawrence County Trails Coordinator).

2. Correction/Approval of minutes – March 24th, 2012 Meeting
 - One comment and one correction - made to the minutes of 3/24/12 – Comment to commend the note taker for the page 1 sentence “There was much Discussion on the topic.” Correction to page 2 in the Paragraph that starts with “Jane Daniels...” Change the word “under” to “over the” making the corrected sentence read “and a May 5 dedication of a pedestrian bridge over the Taconic Parkway.” The minutes were accepted as amended/corrected.

3. New Delegates
 - Quinn Wright resigned from the Council effective this September as a delegate for Hiking. Dick Hubbard from the Finger Lakes Trail Conference was nominated to replace Quinn. His nomination was accepted and the Council voted to accept him as a new delegate.

4. Presentation/Discussion – Ivan Vamos – Working with Officials
 - Ivan presented tips on working with Officials. The focus on information and advocacy is important since MAP-21 changed the funds allocation process and now designates a “Transportation Alternatives” section instead of the “enhancements” section of the past. It is this section of federal Law that holds the funds for trails, bikes and pedestrian accommodations. States can now opt out of 50% of the “Alternatives” funding with no explanation and can opt out of 100% in the face of an emergency. It is important that officials at all levels hear from advocates for continued spending to improve infrastructure for alternative forms of transportation (Biking and walking). Ivan suggests meetings, letter writing and frequent contact and reminders about the importance of funding for all forms of transportation. As an example, he cited the letter from NY Bicycling Coalition to Gov. Cuomo urging him to NOT opt out and divert these funds to road construction. The letter was signed by 90 Organizations.
 - Specific Project Advocacy requires:
 - i. Knowledge of the Project
 - ii. Knowledge of possible opposition to the project

- iii. Knowledge of groups sympathetic to the project
- iv. Benefits to be derived, such as economic benefits, health benefits, tourism increases, traffic congestion mitigation, air quality benefits, etc.
- v. An information sheet about the project, to be used as an advocacy piece
- vi. A communication plan for keeping in touch with decision makers about the project.

Much discussion ensued – focused chiefly on funding projects and beginning by identifying the landowner(s) at the location of the proposed project.

It was pointed out that MAP-21 is a Federal Law with a 2 year duration. NYSDOT has let it be known that it may take 18 months to decide how funds will be spent. A concern was raised about what might happen to un-obligated funds from the previous round of federal funding – estimated to be about \$30 million – and whether or not any of these funds will be spent to benefit all users of transportation alternatives.

Dominic Jacangelo presented in Powerpoint form the results of an owner survey and economic impact study of Snowmobile owners and users. The study/survey was conducted by Dr. Patrick Turbett and the Potsdam Institute of Applied Science, was funded by the NY State Snowmobiling Association and focused on the 2010-2011 winter season. The study was large, including responses from 6000 or more owners of the approximately 90,000 registered snowmobiles in New York State. Salient findings were:

- Snowmobile owners/riders are employed people with High School or higher degrees, earning \$ 80,000 or more yearly, living in rural or suburban areas who join snowmobiling clubs, register and insure their vehicles and give of their time in trail maintenance and volunteering.
- \$ 434 million dollars is spent in New York each year by snowmobilers
- \$ 702,000 in fuel taxes is generated each year
- Average number of miles travelled each year (actually on the sled) is 1000
- Average daily expenditure per sled, per day during a multi- day ride is \$ 110
- The highest number of riders is in the Adirondack region, followed by the Tug Hill Plateau and Central NY.

The report is extensive and will be shared with the business community and posted to the NYSSA website. It will also be shared with the Trails Council. (Done) Estimated roll out is October 2012.

5. Elections

From the By-Laws revised November 2011.

“Article IV –Officers

1. The officers shall be the Chair and Vice-Chair. The Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation will provide administrative and secretarial support until such time as the Commissioner or the Council deems otherwise.”
 - The nominating committee presented 2 names as Officers for 2012-2013 Jane Daniels – Chair; Ivan Vamos - Vice Chair No other nominations were proposed from the floor. Since the recommendation came out of committee, no second was needed. The slate of officers was accepted as presented. Jane Daniels Chaired the remainder of the meeting.
 - The Council requested our new Chair to send a Thank You letter to the outgoing Chair, Anne O’Dell, for her years of work on our behalf.
 - Council members wishing to express personal Thanks can write to Anne at 310 Brimstone Hill Rd., Pine Bush, NY 12566 or email her at anne@anneodell.com

Since we have some new members and are beginning a new Council year, it was decided that the By-Laws will be e-mailed to all delegates. (Done)

6. Delegate Reports and Concerns –

Water Trails – no report

Biking – report by Craig Fury from Fats in the Cats – working with scenic Hudson and developing trails on Illinois Mountain. Also has access to DEC property and is working to develop 2 new trails in Woodstock and Bluestone Wild Forest. Mr. Fury also expressed appreciation for the positive language about Off road bicyclists that is being found in some of the new master plans out of the National Park Service.

ADK Trail crews – reported by Chris – there were 16 professional crews working to make repairs needed as a result of last year's flooding. Foot bridges have been replaced, a footbridge at Marcy Dam was replaced/repared. Many volunteer groups also worked this summer, notably in the Johnsbury and High Peaks area.

Nordic Skiing – Jim Underwood – Also reported much trail maintenance done this year. Jim also made note of the heightened potential for avalanches this winter if we get snow. Snow falling on the open dirt of the landslides caused by the 2011 flooding sets up a perfect avalanche risk. DEC needs to keep an eye on the situation.

Equestrian – Mark Wehnau – Some concerns were expressed about Otter Creek, the approach to permitting for horses at that site, the inadequate bathroom maintenance and lack of sufficient bathroom supplies. In contrast, Sugar Hill was praised for easy and welcoming permitting, friendly staff and clean and well supplied bathrooms. It was pointed out the Sugar Hill benefits from the almost daily attention given to the site by a retired neighbor who volunteers his time.

Hiking- Irene Szabo reported on the 7 State North Country Scenic trail – the Finger Lakes portion goes through NY. NY will host the Annual Trail conference in 2014. Dick Hubbard (Finger Lakes Trail Exec. Dir. And new delegate to the Council) reported that in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the conference – volunteers hiked 560 miles in one day (June 2) and covered all 560 miles of the Finger Lakes Trail. This trail is now a “system” of trails with off shoots leading to other trails, such as the great Eastern trail system. The Finger Lakes Board is planning to construct lean-tos at least every 10 miles along the trail.

Mention of an accidental death of a volunteer trail worker led to a discussion of insurance against accidents during trail work. Several groups are investigating this possibility to augment their current coverage.

Snowmobiling – Dominic Jacangelo – Work on winter trails is being completed. Everyone should be hoping for snow this year. Signs are being put up in Washington County. Construction of a new bike/hike trail along 6 miles of the Champlain Canal will be discussed at a public meeting with the Canal Corp. on Wed. Sept 26 at 6 pm at the Washington County Annex Building 2, On Rt. 4. NYSSA is partnering with State Parks to deliver training classes on safety in trail clearing and using chain saws.

An article by Neil Woodworth, on the subject of regulations governing approved construction materials, was published in the Adirondack explorer. The article was shared with all delegates.

Hiking – Jane Daniels – The Girls Scouts promoted hiking this past summer to commemorate the Girl Scout's 100th anniversary and Juliette Lowe (Founder of the Girl Scouts). Appalachian Trail

Conservancy is establishing “Trail Towns” and Warwick is the first town in NY to be so designated. The NY-NJ Trails Conference continues to maintain and promote trails. We are all encouraged to invite our local officials to come out and use the trails.

7. Lunch Break (**Subs were provided, salads were shared**)

8. Agency Reports

A. OPRHP

Nancy Stoner

- There is no news about the next round of RTP funding. NYS DOT is working on interpreting the new MAP-21 legislation and developing program guidelines for the Transportation Alternative funding which includes RTP.
- Park Plans: **Mills-Norrie-Staatsburgh** draft master plan (Taconic Region) received public comments through the end of August; a final plan should be out by the end of the year; **Thacher/Thompson’s Lake** (Saratoga/Cap. District Region) draft master plan expected by end of year; Hamlin Beach Site Development Plans (Genesee Region) – final to be completed soon – if interested, please contact regional office; Rockland Lake Complex draft master plan (Palisades) – draft by end of October; Sunken Meadow draft master plan (Long Island) – by end of the year [Note: aside from Hamlin, publication of all plans have been delayed for various reasons]; 2013 Plans: Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park (Taconic), Letchworth SP (Genesee), and Genesee Valley Greenway (Genesee/Allegany).
- State Parks’ Commissioner is exploring ways to support backcountry trail maintenance in State Parks while enhancing stewardship and expanding the volunteer base.
- The delegate to the Council from FHWA has been reassigned and can no longer attend our meetings. It is suggested that a letter from the Council be sent to FHWA requesting a new delegate be appointed. Our new chair, Jane Daniels will send a letter. It was also noted that our DOT representative has not attended the meeting for several years. A letter will be sent requesting an update on that delegate.
- Diana Carter reported that the SCORP update is due December 31, 2013. OPRHP has a planning grant to complete the updates and a draft should be ready by September 2013.
- Statewide Trails Plan - Action Plan – Ongoing projects include: statewide trails inventory (OPRHP expects to have an Intern to focus on this), and Economic Impact studies (PTNY/Canal Corp. on the Canalway Trail and NYSSA for economic impacts of snowmobiling to NYS); 2012 Action items: Statewide Trails Count (PTNY to report) and Statewide webinars (subcommittee to work on). 2013 action items: Develop trails-related resource lists for regions of the state and establish a statewide volunteer training and recognition program.
- 2013 National Trails Awards presented through American Trails are currently accepting nominations. Application deadline is October 31st. See <http://www.americantrails.org/2013/awards.html>
- There is a sub-committee working to identify webinar topics of interest.
- A Press release on Sept. 13 announced a new free app for iPhones using QR codes to access information about NY State Parks. Nancy will send the press release (done)

B. DEC Rob Messenger

- The “Rapid waters” plan has been “sent up” for approval.
 - The ATV Policy has been altered, but not yet approved, so it is still considered to be an “Internal” document. Public comments will be solicited in the future.
 - Question for the delegates – Does anyone know about the ATV Use plans in NH ? Delegates suggested looking at Maine, NH and Minnesota as having good multi use plans.
 - The surveys that Justin did yield more than 10,000 responses, way more than expected. Analysis is ongoing.
 - In response to the earlier discussion about accidents involving volunteers doing work on trails, it was reported that DEC lawyers are particularly concerned about the phrase “the State will not incur any liability as a result of the program” and have differing opinions about what this means related to Workman’s Compensation Coverage for volunteers with no other resources. As of this reporting there have been no policy changes within DEC, it’s business as usual and discussions continue.
- c. Other Agencies/Partners
- Canal Corporation was unable to send a delegate but wanted to report that there are currently 3 “Close the Gaps” projects along the Canalway Trail: 1.5 mile segment in City of Little Falls; one mile segment in Village of Lyons; and an 8-mile gap 8-mile gap between Lockport and Amherst.
 - Parks and Trails, NY (PTNY) – Elijah Yearick reported on the trail user count survey conducted this past summer. 12 volunteer groups did surveys at specific locations and could do multiple counts. Eli will have a report in late October (After his wedding and honeymoon – Congratulations Eli)
 - PTNY – Martin Daley reports - We’ve partnered with the New York State Canal Corporation to perform an economic study on trail use. The study is being performed by Dr. Paul Scipione and a team of students from SUNY Geneseo. Students are utilizing trail intercept surveys to collect data and PTNY is utilizing automatic sensors in 8 places along the canal to gather count data. We plan to analyze the data collected and run it through models developed by the National Bicycle and Pedestrian documentation project and the Dr. Lindsey model that has been used in past surveys.
PTNY – We’ve launched a new cycling guidebook, *Cycling the Hudson Valley*. Modeled after our popular *Cycling the Erie Canal Guide*, the new publication was made possible with support for the Hudson River Valley Greenway and Hudson River National Heritage Area. The book is available on our website.
PTNY – PTNY’s latest round of “Growing the Grassroots” grants are now available. This grant of up to \$3000 is available to park and trail organizations. In the past, these funds have been used to develop brochures, websites, fundraising tools, and board development for small organizations. The grants cannot be used for operations or capital costs associated with trail or park construction or maintenance.
PTNY- has been deeply involved in efforts to protect dedicated bike and pedestrian programs within MAP-21, the nation’s new transportation bill. How our state DOT interprets this legislation has yet to be determined. We’re urging DOT to dedicate Transportation Alternatives funds to Bike and Ped projects and to release funds that have yet to be obligated under previous rounds of the enhancements program. We’ll keep folks informed in alerts, e-news, and on our website. We strongly encourage the Statewide Trails Council to request that NYSDOT send representatives to the council meetings. The initial “I Love my Park” weekend was held the first weekend in May and will be repeated in May 2013. More information is on the PTNY website. www.PTNY.org

- National Park Service – Karl Beard - Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar, unveiled the National Water Trails System in August of 2012. There are 9 designated water trails. The Hudson River Water Trail is the longest. The Bronx river water trail may be next. Standards for designation as a water trail can be found at NPS.gov/watertrails Karl will send additional information to Nancy Stoner, who will send it to the Council. Applications to have your local trail designated as a National Trail are due on Nov. 1. Announcements are made on National Trails Day, first Saturday in June. Karl reported on the Finger Lakes water trail initiative and of including the vision poster. Karl and friends spent time kayaking along a proposed route – and has asked us to send him any photos or designs we might have of accessible canoe or kayak launch sites. His e-mail is karl_beard@nps.gov
- It was announced that the Hudson River Ramble has now expanded to 4 weekends in September and to include many activities along both sides of the Hudson, throughout the Greenway.

9. Old Business – none

- It was announced that Tom Wolfe (retired DEC) is recovering from kidney transplant surgery and is doing as well as can be expected. We wish him a speedy and complete recovery.

10. New Business – The new Chairperson would like to schedule one short presentation of interest to all for the next meeting and each meeting thereafter. For the next meeting, Martin Daley from PTNY will give a presentation on advocacy. If you have a presentation, please contact Jane Daniels at jdhikes@gmail.com
It might also work to have a few visuals, such as poster presentations, available to display in the meeting room. Another topic of interest might be the ways in which our member groups are successfully using new technologies, social networks and messaging techniques to promote programs and inform the public. Think about what you might be able to contribute to the Council's learning for the next meetings.

11. Next meeting dates/locations: For 2013 the dates chosen are:

- **March 23, 2013 at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center (NYS DEC) in Delmar, NY**
- **September 21, 2013 at Saratoga Spa State Park.** Times are 11am to 3pm.

Adjourn

- Meeting was adjourned at 2:45 pm