

NEW YORK STATE TRAILS COUNCIL MEETING
John Boyd Thacher Visitor Center
830 Thacher Park Road, Voorheesville, NY 12186
April 6, 2019 10:30 am – 3:00 pm

Council Attendance:

4-Wheel Drive –

All-Terrain Vehicles – Jeff Binga

Equestrian – Bill Lasher, Carol Schmelz

Hiking – Donna Chapman, Quinn Wright

Motorized Trail Bikes –

Nordic Skiing –

Off-Highway Motorcycles –

Off-road Bicycling – Samantha Langton, Michael Vitti

On-road Bicycling – Ivan Vamos

Running –

Snowmobiles – Anne O'Dell

Snowshoeing – Katie Henrickson

Universal Access – Denis Livsey

Water Trails – Tom Casey, Mike Prescott

ECNHC –

FHWA –

National Park Service –

HRV Greenway – Elizabeth Campochiaro

NYS Canal Corporation –

NY-NJ Trail Conference –

NYSDEC – McCrea Burnham

NYSOPRHP – Chris Morris, Tom Hotaling, Nicole Unser

NYS DOT – Tom Benware

PTNY –

Others in Attendance: Tim Hutchinson

Call to Order & Welcome:

Carol Schmelz called the meeting to order at 10:33 AM.

Correction/Approval of Minutes of October 20, 2018 Meeting:

Motion to approve minutes: Samantha Langton Second: Michael Vitti

Motion passed unanimously.

Announcements:

Chris Morris mentioned several departures from and additions to NYSTC and agencies:

- Erik Egan, Trail Running stepping down
- Dylan Carey: new representative for PTNY
- Mona Caron: new representative for the Erie Canalway Nat. Heritage Corridor

Chris thanked the The Downtube bike shop in Albany for providing two electric assist bicycles for today's meeting.

Delegate Reports:

Katherine Henrickson said the winter was great for snowshoeing.

Samantha Langton discussed new trails in the offing through the work of Fats in the Cats. She discussed an issue with obtaining a stewardship agreement with DEC at Taconic-Hereford but has a new agreement with Scenic Hudson in the Hudson Valley. There is also an issue with motorized bikes on trails in the Taconic region.

Mike Vitti described the Suffolk County Hike and Bike Trail Plan. The idea is to inventory existing trails and look for connections to other trails and to other attractions (restaurants, historic sites, etc.). Tom Casey is also a committee member. The next meeting is May 23.

Mike described a raffle for trail volunteers with various swag items and other prizes. Clif Bars sponsored.

CLIMB has 50 Trail Ambassadors to help bikers with repairs and to teach trail etiquette. A step up are Trail Patrolers, who are affiliated with the National Ski Patrol and are certified in CPR.

CLIMB has been collecting ticks and sending them for testing to see which parks are most likely to have Lyme Disease present.

Bill Lasher described an area in the northwestern part of Saratoga County (Palmertown?) where trails are being developed. One idea is to connect Moreau State Park with Saratoga National Park. There is private land in between; one large landowner has given permission for a trail to cross his land. Bill wanted the whole corridor to be multi-use, but some parts are not suitable for horses; he hopes instead to form loops, etc. He also discussed state and county forest land north of and adjacent to Moreau State Park.

Carol Schmelz reported that the Western NY Equifest attracted thousands of visitors. Her other concerns included:

NYS Parks: In Gilbert Lake State Park, Otsego County, why are there restrictions about riding horses there in the spring and fall? There is nothing about horseback riding on the website for this park. Horse people donate time and effort to help with the trails and volunteer at the park. Why the restrictions? Are the restrictions seasonal as in other parks?

DEC: In Allegany County, at the Phillips Creek trailhead, water in the fall was black; the pump was too hard for some people to use, and they had to go down the road to a farm to get water. Carol reported this problem to nathaniel.tucker@dec.ny.gov. Follow-up on this issue is required before the start of the trail riding season.

Volunteers could not qualify for the PTNY grant because they did not have the 501(c)3 support in time. Consequently, the trail work was put on the DEC schedule for 2019.

At Otter Creek, Erie Canal Bridge abutments were destroyed by ice. It looks like the bridge will not be reconstructed. Thanks to a beaver dam in that location, the water is now shallow enough for horses to ford the stream. Where does that leave snowmobilers? Businesses are suffering on the other side of the canal.

Carol mentioned a 2019 NY Recreation Summit in Lake Placid April 7-9 sponsored by NYS Recreation and Park Society and the NYS Therapeutic Recreation Association. Hundreds of people are expected to attend. She sent NYS Trails Council brochures and an announcement about the International Trails Symposium. Also included were her equestrian comments about how horses contribute to the health and happiness of their riders. Riding horses is part of our national heritage.

Tim Hutchinson introduced himself and discussed his experiences touring on his motorcycle. He found New York to have the most restrictions on off-road riding. He came to see what the NYSTC is all about and what is available for motorcycle riders. He discussed issues with motorcycles being barred from some local roads and also said people with disabilities need more opportunities for access.

Anne O'Dell has retired from the NYS Snowmobile Association. Membership and numbers of snowmobiles are down from past years. Lack of snow and cost are factors; it takes \$6-20,000 to get into the sport. She advocated for tearing up the Adirondack railroad track and making it a trail. Ivan Vamos added that the area has many people who bike to work and others who do Olympic-level training who

would benefit from the trail. McCrea Burnham said the train is a money loser. Anne also mentioned upcoming the International Trails Symposium. She and Chris Morris noted that volunteers who work the event can enter for free.

Nicole Unser said there was a decrease in snowmobile registrations. There were also 21 fatalities this year, many the result of speeds not appropriate for conditions, others involving alcohol. New York is one of the top two states in such deaths. Katie Henrickson asked how snowmobile fatalities compared to those on ATVs; Jeff Binga said there were few on ATVs, but that it was harder to collect data for them.

Quinn Wright said a North Country National Scenic Trail reroute and an extension into Vermont finally passed in the Federal government. He encouraged NYSTC members to volunteer at the International Trail Symposium. The first lean-to on the Finger Lakes Trail was built in 1965; soon there will be 51 on the 481-mile trail, with 12 more needed to be built. Finger Lakes Trail Days July 26-27 is designed to encourage use and tourism. Cattaraugus County is GPS-ing all its trails. Users clamor for maps and signage, but NYSDOT regulations on signage are stymieing the placement of signs.

Tom Casey reported that Suffolk County has organized a Blueway Trail Project Committee to create water trails and more launch sites. The county has nearly 1,000 miles of coastline. The project will inventory existing accesses and their condition and seek ideas for improving them, including signage. It will also publicize links from the water trails to other types of trails and to downtown amenities, such as restaurants and restrooms. The county hopes to add 20 new launch sites for openers and hopes to complete the committee work by the end of this year. The biggest concern among paddlers is that too many launches currently are for local village or town residents only, discouraging tourism and more widespread use by Long Islanders.

The L.I. Greenbelt Trail Conference's recent members' meeting had Grace Healy of the Trust for Public Land as a guest speaker to discuss the Empire State Trail extension. The Central Pine Barrens Commission will hold a meeting on May 16 to discuss the trail and how it conforms to the Pine Barrens Protection Act.

L.I. Greenbelt Trail volunteers maintain 150 miles of trails, at about 4,000 man-hours a year.

Lunch Break

Ivan Vamos distributed a Capital District Transportation Committee brochure and discussed the CDTC Transportation Improvement Plan. A 5-year program just adopted includes nearly \$5 million a year for TIP projects. There are 18 trails totaling about 200 miles being worked on.

Ivan also discussed accesses across the Canadian border. Some bridges have been reconstructed and been made nearly impossible for pedestrians. At Ogdensburg, a ferry may alleviate the problem. There are bills for various motor-assisted bikes in the legislature, but there are issues involved.

Jeff Binga said his clubs are focusing on safety and also considering lowering dues for riders who take an on-line safety course. If not enough people take the courses, he will work to make them mandatory. He is still working to change perceptions of off-road sports, especially with legislators.

Denis Livsey asked Ivan Vamos about the state of the Complete Streets movement. Ivan felt Complete Streets is making progress, that things are getting better. Tom Benware said there are bills in the works to improve the law. Denis also inquired of McCrea Burnham on the status of a modification near Boreas Pond. McCrea said it was intended to reduce erosion but was not all-access; Boreas Pond itself will eventually be all-access.

Mike Prescott discussed the North Country Canoe Trail. There are few spots in Vermont and Canada still being worked on, but the 470-mile trail is mostly done. Many places are still frozen; plan on paddling from early May onward. There are 6,000 ponds and lakes in the Adirondacks.

Donna Chapman mentioned an Appalachian Trail www.atvista2020.org trail symposium, July 31- August 3. There's been an increase in trail use but a decrease in volunteers on the AT. Donna is now trails chair for Dutchess and Putnam Counties.

AT Conservancy is beginning a project, on May 16 at Pawling, to educate users on trail options.

Agency Reports:

DEC: McCrea Burnham mentioned the UMPs distributed at the meeting. UMPs are the best places to get trail projects started.

A major High Peaks project involves trail reroutes. Working on road and parking issues on NY 73. Accessible trail projects at Carpenter Falls and Zoar Valley.

Volunteer Service Agreements: A volunteer organization and DEC were both sued over an injury; as the law is written, individuals are covered but not organizations as a whole. Legislation could solve the issue. Meanwhile, DEC may require work plans and a sign-off before work begins.

NYS DOT: Tom Benware discussed the Empire State Trail and the Erie and Champlain Canalways. NYS DOT is still working on a bike map for its website and deciding how it will be maintained and updated. We are in year 4 of a pedestrian-safety plan involving crossing signs, enforcement, etc. Carol Schmelz asked about the timing of pedestrian-actuated traffic lights. Tom said they are calibrated according to road width and other factors. Carol noted that the times are often too short for those with disabilities.

Hudson River Valley Greenway: Elizabeth Campochiaro said that an Empire State Water Trail will complement the Empire State Trail. HRVG is taking the lead on developing it, though there is no funding as yet. Albany-Hudson Electric Trail (36 miles) construction will start this month. See www.ahettrail.org.

The Greenway has \$500,000 for trail grants, with priority to projects linking to the EST.

The Hudson River Valley Ramble will have its 20th Anniversary this year.

A new Hudson River Train Tour app will tell you what's out the window as you train travel from Albany to New York.

OPRHP planning updates: Chris Morris noted that planning updates are on the back of the agenda. Chris will be presenting at the International Trails Symposium. An RTP grant at OPRHP will update data on trail assessments for accessibility.

There are now Regional Trail Coordinators at several OPRHP Regions (Allegany, Thousand Islands, Saratoga, Finger Lakes); we are hoping to have more. Chris' job is to support them and find funding.

An Erie-Cattaraugus Rail Trail proposal has advocates and opponents.

OPRHP RTP Grants updates: Thomas Hotaling said recreational trails grant solicitations will go out in early May. This year they are for municipalities and not-for-profit groups. Grants range from \$25,000 to \$250,000. He brought copies of the selection criteria to the meeting. Samantha Langton noted that the program is reimbursement-based, so some towns and organizations don't apply, as they do not have the money.

Nominations for outstanding RTP projects are due May 1.

OPRHP Snowmobile Program: See Nicole Unser's comments under Delegate Reports.

New Business

Topics and ideas for presentations: Katie Henrickson said she is curious about how people design trails and reroutes. Mike Vitti suggested how to make trails sustainable. Mike: tick expert; volunteer management and engagement. Denis Livsey suggested bridge and walkway design.

The Council accepted Tim Hutchinson as a delegate.

Next meeting: October 19, 2019, 10:30 AM at Five Rivers Conservation Center

Adjournment: Motion: Tom Casey Second: Quinn Wright