

NEW YORK STATE TRAILS COUNCIL MEETING
Saratoga Spa State Park
Administration Building, Gideon Putnam Room
March 28, 2015, 10:30 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.
FINAL MINUTES

Call to Order

Introductions

Correction/Approval of Minutes of September 20, 2014 Meeting

Motion to Approve: Bob Bryant

Second: Michael Vitti

Motion passed unanimously

Attendance:

<p>4- Wheel Drive – All-Terrain vehicles – Equestrian – Mark Wehnau, Carol Schmelz, Dan Gruen Hiking- Wes Lampman, Stephen Catherman (on behalf of Dick Hubbard), Jane Daniels Nordic Skiing – Jim Underwood, Tony Goodwin Off-Highway Motorcycles –Len Howard Off road Bicycling – Michael Vitti, Craig Fury On Road Bicycling – Ivan Vamos Running- Snowmobiles – Dominic Jacangelo, Anne O'Dell, Robert Bryant Snowshoeing – Peter Fedorick, Katie Henrickson Universal Access- Denis Livsey Water Trails- Tom Casey, Mike Prescott</p>	<p>FHWA – National Park Service – Karl Beard HRV Greenway – Scott Keller Canal Corp. – NYSDEC – S. McCrea Burnham NYSOPRHP – Nancy Stoner, Chris Morris, Chris Fallon, Lauren Ellmers, Maddy Gold NYSDOT - NYSDOH – PTNY – Greg Francese NYS NHP- Julie Lundgren (presenter) Visitor: Anthony Duncan (IMBA)</p>
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Presentation

Trail Planning: How to Protect Rare Species and Habitats - Julie Lundgren, Natural Heritage Program (NHP)

The New York Natural Heritage Program is now part of State University of New York - College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF).

Databases are critical to NHP's mission of facilitating the conservation of New York's biodiversity. The scope of these databases goes beyond other state programs, with over 13,000 records statewide. Significant Natural Communities layers are available in the NYS GIS clearinghouse and can also be downloaded for Google Earth.

NHP does wall-to-wall mapping of all ecological communities in state parks. It surveys impacted areas, sensitive areas, forest composition and health, and it works to protect sensitive species. It evaluates for reducing the spread of invasive species, protecting rare summit communities, large roadless tracts and bat populations, and planning for the impact of tree die-offs.

Trail groups can get information on line or from agency contacts, then work with the state to plan trails. NYNHP conservation guides are available on line. NHP work is not limited to State Parks, if funding is available elsewhere.

By-Laws: Recommended Changes

Anne O'Dell reviewed proposed changes to the By-Laws, specifically Article II, Section 2, regarding non-attendance of delegates:

"Interested user groups, with significantly unique trail needs, not represented on the Council, may petition for inclusion and may be admitted by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the Council. Once admitted to the Council it is the group's responsibility to remain active and participate through regular meeting attendance. Any group unrepresented at three consecutive meetings will receive notice that meeting attendance is required for continued representation on the Council. The notice will be sent by the Chair via mail or e-mail mail and e-mail to both the delegates and the representative's user group of record, with a copy to NYS OPRHP. Failure to be represented at the following regular meeting will result in ~~removal of the group from the Council~~ the group becoming dormant and having no vote. Any ~~previously removed~~ dormant user group may again, without prejudice, ~~petition~~ propose new delegates to the Council for representation. ~~In addition, any representative who fails to attend three consecutive meetings, without notification in writing, is automatically dropped and the group may find another representative. In addition, any delegate who fails to attend three consecutive meetings, without notifying the Chair or NYS OPRHP by mail, e-mail, or telephone, is automatically dropped and the user group may propose another delegate.~~"

The Trails Council will vote on the proposed changes at the September meeting.

Statewide Trails Plan, 2015 Update - Chris Morris, OPRHP Statewide Trails Program Planner

Chris briefly outlined the topics to be addressed in the STP update, ranging from demographics to trail surveys. Chris mentioned that OPRHP will be sending out Trail Organization surveys to the Trail Conference and will also be looking for assistance organizing volunteers for the Trail User count later in the year. Winter trail counts were discussed again and Nancy Stoner reminded everyone that they have been unsuccessful with finding standard protocols. Jane Daniels suggested that we develop a protocol. Peter Fedorick suggested sign-in boxes on trails be checked more regularly in winter to gain a better understanding of trail use. Currently, these logs often run out of room to sign in. Jim Underwood suggested a universal sticker for winter trail use, with the proceeds from registration used to plow parking lots, etc. Registration would also indicate how many people are using the trails.

Chris said OPRHP is always looking for photos of users performing trail work.

Lunch Break

Delegate Reports and Concerns

Tom Casey mentioned a new paddling access at McAllister County Park at the mouth of Port Jefferson Harbor on Long Island. He then discussed the onslaught of the Southern Pine Beetle.

Dominic Jacangelo discussed that the recent snowmobiling season was good. Registrations increased and memberships increased this year. There was a publicity event with the Governor earlier in the year. New York had a free snowmobiling weekend March 7 and 8 where registration fees were waived for out-of-state and Canadian snowmobile owners. International Snowmobile Congress Conference will take place June 10-13 in Niagara Falls. Breakout training sessions are open to the public without charge. Dominic will e-mail information to the delegates. <http://www.isc2015.com/>

Peter Fedorick – noted it was a good snowshoeing season.

Michael Vitti reported that his group has been grooming snow-covered trails for fat-tire mountain bikes. He will attempt to obtain permission to use a snowmobile to groom trails next year. This newer use on winter trails requires considering user conflicts with existing user groups. Mike noted that they have established user etiquette guidelines. Mike suggested that New York State Parks develop language or a memo to address fat bike usage and possibly grooming in New York State parks. Bethpage-Trail View State Parks Trails Plan is nearing completion, with the assistance of the local hiking and biking groups. When Mike asked about the program about building trails in Sterling Forest, Nancy replied that contracts were being signed with the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference and that bids will be sought for a similar program in Allegany State Park.

Tony Goodwin is stepping down as Director of the Adirondack Ski Touring Council. Josh Wilson is the new director. The Tupper Lake-Lake Placid rail corridor will soon have the rails removed and be converted to a recreational corridor. Need clarification- I'm not sure this is a given. My notes have the DEC has promised a draft plan for the ADK Rail Trail.

Wes Lampman mentioned National Trails Day events (8) on June 6 at Cranberry Lake-Lake Wanakena. DEC is allowing free camping on June 6 for these events.

Carol Schmelz reported on the Canal Clean Sweep clean up event the week of April 22 along the Erie and Champlain Canalways. The Adams Street Lift Bridge in Lockport is unusable, locked in the up position. A crossing is needed at this site. She raised the question about what to do about the bridge. Discussion ensued about converting bridges to pedestrian bridges.

Dennis Livsey noted that many of the trail issues NYSTC discusses overlap with the various forms of handicap access. Discussed different types of wheelchairs that can be used on more rugged terrain.

Craig Fury said Fats in the Cats developed a two-mile trail connection in Bluestone Wild Forest. Their next project is to reroute some trails off private property or to obtain landowner permissions.

Dan Gruen noted that equestrians are not included in the state's inherent-risk coverage, leaving landowners liable for injuries. Forty-six states have this type of coverage. He would like to see coverage.

http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?default_fld=&bn=A01476&term=2015&Summary=Y&Actions=Y&Text=Y&Votes=Y

Steve Catherman, representing Dick Hubbard (Finger Lakes Trail Conference), reported on a project in Little Rock City State Forest separating hiking and mountain biking trails and in the Catskills two other new loop trails. He encourages delegates to support extension of the North Country Trail into Vermont and connecting with the Long Trail. FLTC will host an 8-state Rendezvous near Greek Peak in September.

Jim Underwood told of a shuttle program for Nordic skiers at Gore Mountain, enhancing backcountry use. He would like to see New York State press for more statewide trail improvements. He cited New Zealand as an example of what can be done.

Mike Prescott discussed working on more accesses. The Raquette River water trail project is stalled right now. The Essex Chain will receive two all-access spots this coming summer.

Ivan Vamos discussed bike-pedestrian safety and the Complete Streets program and suggested that a brief section summarizing the law and its requirements be added to the Statewide Trails Plan. Ivan offered to provide draft text for the summary. He also praised the inclusion of a bike-ped path on the new Crown Point Bridge.

Jane Daniels noted that the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference just moved into its new headquarters. Breakneck Ridge has become the most popular hike in the Hudson Highlands, if not the state. Over 24,000 hikers have used it between Memorial Day and Columbus Day. By hiring trail stewards, they have an ongoing opportunity to educate hikers as to proper preparation to use the trail. Jane, in her volunteer capacity at the NY-NJTC offered a breakfast thank-you meeting to its agency partners; Jane encouraged other groups to do likewise.

Agency Reports

OPRHP: Nancy Stoner said she is moving on to a position as a Park Planner. She said that State Parks is very supportive of trails. She noted the new OPRHP staff including Chris Morris as the new Trails Planner, Lauren Ellmers as the new RTP administrator, Maddy Gold as an SCA Trails Intern for 2015, and Chris Fallon as the new Snowmobile Program Director. She reviewed what the Recreational Trails Program entails. The timing for the next grant round is yet to be determined. Assessment of trail conditions for accessibility and maintenance will be a new eligible category added to the next round. She cited several completed Park Master Plans that are being successfully implemented statewide.

Nancy mentioned that the statewide Agreement for the North Country Trail is coming along and they are hoping for a signing event in early June. A table was provided to delegates showing current status of OPRHP master plans, other plans and statewide plans.

DEC: McCrea Burnham reviewed a number of UMPs that should be completed soon. DEC will update its trail construction and maintenance manual; he will share the changes with the NYSTC. DEC paid for materials for several trail bridges.

Chris Fallon of OPRHP Snowmobile Unit said he is working on online safety courses for young snowmobilers.

Other

NPS: Karl Beard described the function of the National Park Service's Rivers and Trails Conservation Program. In Troy, RTCA helped pass a Complete Streets ordinance. In Ulster County RTCA is working on rails-to-trails conversions. The project may involve pulling up rails on a 32-mile corridor--a still-controversial undertaking. An initiative is underway to connect Bronx neighborhoods to the Harlem River. In Jamaica Bay they are working on a bikeway/greenway project. Hyde Park Trails has some funding to conduct natural resource surveys in 2015 and hopes to work with mountain biking groups in 2016. 2016 will be the centennial of the National Park Service. Events will be starting in April 2015.

NYS DOT: Ivan Vamos said the DOT's point person for bike-pedestrian-handicapped issues, now in the Traffic Safety and Mobility Unit, will try to attend our September meeting. Ivan said that half the hospital costs of accidents in the state involve bikes or pedestrians; thus, more resources should be geared to improving safety. He also discussed trying for bicycle-pedestrian improvements along I-787.

HRVG: Scott Keller said Hudson River Valley Greenway has been charged with creating trail corridors on both sides of the river. Completion is not possible entirely off-road. Greenway is working on a 4-map set for water trails. Hudson River Valley Ramble will occur again in September.

PTNY: Greg Francese discussed various projects of Parks and Trails New York including the Close the Gaps effort along the Erie Canalway Trail. A number of sections have been completed, are under construction, have funding and/or are in planning stages. Over 100 events will occur on April 17-19 as part of the Canal Clean Sweep. I Love My Parks Day is coming up on Saturday, May 2nd.

NYS Canal Corp: John Dimura (updates via email)

The Canal Corporation completed a new three mile paved Erie Canalway Trail segment in Rome last fall. The project helps fill a gap in the trail system in Central New York.

The Canal Corporation also completed the rehabilitation of the existing Erie Canalway Trail between Pittsford and Fairport last fall.

Phase one of the Lockport to Amherst Erie Canalway Trail segment is now under construction. The \$4.0 million project will complete 4 miles of the total 6 mile gap between Amherst and Lockport. The project will be completed this fall. The remaining 2 miles will be completed in Phase two in 2016. The projects will help create a continuous 140-mile Erie Canalway Trail route from Buffalo to Lyons in Wayne County.

Other Business

Dominic Jacangelo raised safety issues and user conflicts relating to fat-tire bikes on snowmobile trails. He noted that snowmobilers are generally looking for lights and bright colors for other users. Also, many snowmobile trails are on private land, where permission is granted for snowmobiles only. Different types of land have different regulations regarding allowed uses. He noted that another problem across all user groups is people on trails with earbuds not listening for other users. Other delegates discussed trail etiquette and the need to better publicize these. Mike V noted that they have an etiquette guide for fat-tire bikes on snow and sand that they are publicizing along their trails.

Carol Schmelz wondered if NYSTC could publicize National Trails Day. Jane Daniels said a NTD website already has a mechanism to publicize events. Motion to permit Jane Daniels to write a release concerning celebrating NTD: Mark Wehnau
Second: Dan Gruen Motion passed unanimously.

Jane Daniels suggested possible topics for next meeting:

Legal issues & insurance for non-profits

User group conflicts

Trail towns

Mike Vitti suggested sustainable trails design

Anne O'Dell said if we wish to have ATV and ORV representatives at our meetings, we have to give them a reason for attending, as they are frustrated that aside from Tug Hill, there is no area in the state to ride. She noted that she goes to CT, MA and NJ to ride a trail bike and spends her money to spend the night.

Next Meeting: Saturday, September 19, 2015, Saratoga Spa State Park

Adjourn