

NEW YORK STATE TRAILS COUNCIL MEETING
Five Rivers Environmental Education Center
56 Game Farm Rd, Delmar, NY 12054
October 20, 2018 10:30 am – 3:00 pm

Council Attendance:

New Agency Representatives:

Departures:

Additions: Donna Chapman (NY-NJ TC); Hiking

4-Wheel Drive – Todd Syska

All-Terrain Vehicles – Jeff Binga

Equestrian – Dan Gruen, Bill Lasher, Carol Schmelz

Hiking – Donna Chapman

Motorized Trail Bikes –

Nordic Skiing –

Off-Highway Motorcycles –

Off-road Bicycling – Samantha Langton, Michael Vitti

On-road Bicycling – Ivan Vamos

Running – Jerry Smith

Snowmobiles – Dominic Jacangelo

Snowshoeing – Katherine Henrikson

Universal Access – Denis Livsey

Water Trails – Tom Casey, Mike Prescott

ECNHC – Brian Yates

FHWA –

National Park Service – Karl Beard

HRV Greenway – Elizabeth Campochiaro

NYS Canal Corporation –

NY-NJ Trail Conference –

NYSDEC –

NYSOPRHP – Chris Morris

NYSOPRHP – Nicole Unser

NYS DOT – Tom Benware

PTNY – James Meerdink

Others in Attendance: Scott Morrill, Massachusetts Off Highway Vehicle Coordinator, Massachusetts Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA).

Call to Order & Welcome: Chris Morris welcomed new hiking delegate Donna Chapman.

Jerry Smith commented on the state's big-budget trail projects as too expensive and urged the Council to push for a more comprehensive trail development across the state. Others added that the state should also budget for trail maintenance.

Correction/Approval of Minutes of April 14, 2018 Meeting:

Motion to approve minutes: Jerry Smith Second: Jeff Binga

Motion passed unanimously.

Presentation: Scott Morrill, Massachusetts OHV Program

Scott Morrill commented that Massachusetts isn't very OHV friendly, given the population density. The state has revamped its OHV laws, but they still haven't kept up with new technology, such as side-by-side UTVs. We need to bring riders to the table. They will ride illegally if they don't have legal venues, and then they will ignore other regulations (not wearing helmets, etc.).

Components of the program include an OHV Coordinator, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Massachusetts Environmental Police, private landowners, user groups, businesses, and large land owners (e.g., municipalities, land trusts).

The DCR provides two areas for OHVs (single-track dirt bike only) in eastern Mass., with 25 miles of trail combined. Western Mass. has four areas totaling 85 miles, while there are no areas available in the central parts of the state.

Mass. Environmental Police have statewide jurisdiction of public and private land and provide OHV safety courses.

There are currently no riding areas on private land. We are working on incentives for landowners (e.g., tax breaks, easements). 63% of Snowmobile Association of Mass. trails is on private land, a possible template for OHVs. We are counting on clubs to do outreach to find more riding opportunities. We offer guidance to individuals interested in starting clubs.

The N.E. Trail Riders Association is responsible for most volunteer work in eastern Mass.; the Snowmobile Association does most of the volunteer work in the west.

Scott discussed the 2010 law that created OHV regulations, including age restrictions, registration mandates, and an OHV fund. Local law enforcement can enforce state OHV laws and retain 25% of revenue from fines. Funding sources also include partnerships with user groups and other state agencies doing in-kind work, and RTP grants.

A 13-member OHV Advisory Committee includes user groups, enforcement and public health officials, land managers and other interested parties.

Scott also discussed land evaluation for suitability and sustainability.

During the ensuing Q and A, Dominic Jacangelo discussed liability insurance and how it works for snowmobilers in New York.

Selection of 2019 Meeting Dates: April 6 and October 19

Lunch Break

Delegate Reports:

James Meerdink reported on a \$100 million grant from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation for trail work in western New York. Money will go toward work in La Salle Park, a rail-trail in Orchard Park, and for closing trail gaps. An off-road trail will allow bicyclists safer access to Niagara Falls. Carol Schmelz added that there will be three types of trail related projects: organizational capacity, trail planning and matching funds for trail physical improvements. Money for trail maintenance was also reserved from this allotment.

James also discussed a Road and Trail Intersection Checklist, where users can take photos of an intersection and submit them for grading by PTNY. There is an app available through PTNY's website.

Samantha Langton discussed early planning stages for a regional association of cycle clubs. She also discussed Unit Management Plans in her area, including one involving a shooting range in proximity to trails. In Black Creek, the discovery of endangered cricket frogs may affect trail plans. A group called Stewards of Stewart dissolved over issue with the park manager; Fats in the Cats may try to pick up some of their work. She hopes to start discussion to keep the Walkway Over the Hudson, currently open dawn to dusk, open for longer hours to enable bicycle commuting. Fats in the Cats is trying to get more people certified as chain sawyers and will fund a class of up to 30 volunteers.

Denis Livsey noted he submitted comments on the Boreas Pond UMP.

Ivan Vamos said a recent Complete Streets conference in Saratoga Springs was a success. New York City has now permitted pedal-assisted ebikes on its streets. He is working toward NYS approval of these bikes. Some NY-Canada border bridges once open to pedestrians and cyclists no longer allow such traffic.

Dominic Jacangelo wondered if we could have someone bring an ebike to a Trails Council meeting for a demonstration. Snowmobilers are working with American Trails on the International Trails Symposium and have committed to having a display. A webpage providing current snowmobile conditions, maps and other information is in the works; individual clubs will be able to post material. He mentioned a useful Polaris phone app. He discussed trying to get an abandonment filing on the Saratoga-to-Tahawus line so it can be used as a trail route.

Jeff Binga said NYSORVA will sponsor an April 28, 2019 workshop and trail ride in Oswego County. NYSORVA has also initiated a safety program. Jeff discussed the difficulty in obtaining accurate data on ORV accidents. He would support a mandatory safety course, an online one at minimum, for all ATV riders. He mentioned an off-road test track near Binghamton designed for those who "like to play in the mud."

Dan Gruen discussed issues of low staffing at Brookfield. Volunteers may organize to pick up the slack.

Mike Vitti discussed Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day in early October and an event at Cathedral Pines on Long Island. A local Subaru dealer offered a \$2,000-a-year grant to his organization. His maintainers are switching to battery-operated tools. He mentioned the Trail Forks app which allows reporting trail conditions and shows locations. Hiking Project, sponsored by REI, behaves similarly for hikers. He discussed difficulties in getting equestrians to clear their own trails in Manorville County Park, despite offers of help from CLIMB, the mountain bike group. He reported on a long effort to create a trail of about five miles in the old Colonial sand mine in Port Washington.

Bill Lasher is working on two trail projects with Saratoga Backcountry Horsemen.

Donna Chapman mentioned Sterling Forest. A trail map is available through the NY-NJ Trail Conference website. Bear Mountain trail project done: 85,000 hours over 14 years, 2.5 million visitors to the trail.

Mike Prescott said the Northern Forest Canoe Trail is alive and well. Much of the work has shifted to Maine and New Hampshire. He mentioned the Moose River Plains as a wonderful place to paddle.

Jerry Smith commented on exorbitant fees for buses going to cross-country events such as the state championships in Sunken Meadow.

Tom Casey thanked Carol Schmelz for submitting her report in advance and encouraged other Trails Council members to do likewise when possible or desirable for placing details on the record. He mentioned a Blueways Project meeting scheduled for November 29 on Long Island, where we will push for easier access for all users. West Hills trails will be reopened following a dumping scandal. On October 27 the Long Island Greenbelt Trail Conference, which maintains 150 miles of hiking trails, will have a celebration of its 40th Anniversary.

Equestrian Report by Carol Schmelz:

1. Frontier Town has only 10 miles of trails. Connector trails and loops are needed to access town state forest lands, or people must trailer their horses out of camp. Camping spots are herringbone style, 14' wide, back-in only. Horse trailers are 9' wide which leaves only 2-1/2' on either side, if someone can back in straight and centered. That leaves no area to tie a horse to the trailer to saddle up, which means riders must carry their equipment to another location to tack up. Campers will be unable to push out a slider or awning. There is only one fireplace for the horse sites. Hibachi grills are on every site. The entire parking lot is crusher run. There is electric on every site. There are no maps of the trail system at this time.

2. Boreas Pond is a 7-mile drive away from the campsite and 10 miles of blacktop in, so too far for day rides. It's 34 miles roundtrip to the pond and back. It's supposed to open July 4th, 2019.

3. Not enough DEC staff is on hand to oversee Otter Creek. There is no one to enforce the rules. Loose dogs are everywhere. Barking dogs and loud music in camp all day are disturbing to those who wish to nap, read or just relax after riding. Friday night the toilet paper is stocked, but by Sunday night you have to bring your own. The trails in general have been greatly improved, and the horse people appreciate that. Lost power at the campsite means no water for the horses and the only bathroom. A backup generator would be welcome. At the ranger station there was no number to call for assistance. Emergency numbers should be posted. One person who called 911 was directed to the DEC in the Catskills, which referred him to the local DEC in Lowville. This process takes too long.

4. In Allegany County, Phillips Creek horse trails need drainage remediation. Local horse people have been working closely with the DEC's Nate Tucker and Chelsea Sheridan to have these problems resolved. The next meeting is October 30 in Belfast, which Carol plans to attend. They are hoping for additional funding and gravel from the DOT to fix potholes, as gravel is hard to get in large quantities by the DEC.

5. Question for Finger Lakes Trail: What color would you like the equestrians to use to mark their trails in Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties? Other suggestions?

6. Carol included notes on the \$100 million Wilson gift, discussed previously by James Meerdink.

7. At Bond Lake Park in Niagara County, equestrians met with the Park Manager and staff this week over the issue of horse manure on the park trails. We will develop a flyer for equestrians and put it in the horse trailer parking lot. In the future there will be some areas off limits to horses. By spring we should have solutions in place.

8. At Knox Farm Park in Erie County, the Western Chapter of the NYS Horse Council works hard to clean up all the trails from winter's damage, lay down chips, and remove broken tree limbs from the park. Everyone uses the same walk areas but it is the equestrian community that is doing the work. The stables are empty of life; if the RFP was more reasonable, there would be an opportunity to make money at the park.

Agency Reports

NYS Department of Transportation – Tom Benware:

NYS DOT is involved with the Empire State Trail, with 27 separate projects. A big part of the work involves trails crossing roads. NYS DOT has been updating its online bike map, perhaps within a year. Samantha Langton raised questions about cyclists having to dismount in certain construction areas and

on certain bridges. Tom Benware asked her to supply a list. Bill Lasher mentioned bike trail markings disappearing from a route in his area.

Hudson River Valley Greenway – Elizabeth Campochiaro:

HRVG awarded \$500,000 for trail projects in the Hudson Valley. They are working on the Hudson-Albany Electric Railway project.

National Parks Service – Karl Beard:

City of Troy bikeway extended 3-1/2 miles a success; Ulster County, working on Empire State Trail, three separate projects, one of which is done; will hold a trails roundtable in Dutchess County;

OPRHP Planning updates – Chris Morris:

Amsterdam-Pattersonville 5-mile section of Erie Canalway opened.

Green Lakes State Park has closed on an adjoining acquisition.

Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics training will be held in the Hudson Valley Oct. 29 - Nov. 5.

The RTP program is trying to give better guidance on engineered structures, to make it easier for non-profits to plan work.

Intl. Symposium planning underway

Trail ethics videos will be available soon.

Planning is underway for rehabilitating Hempstead Lake State Park.

In response to a question from Mike Vitti: Contractors can use mechanized equipment to build trails. More discussion ensued regarding chainsaw training and other trail work. Clarification on what volunteers can do or how they can be trained is needed. Jerry Smith suggested that already-trained sawyers be certified as trainers.

Next meeting: April 6, 10:30 AM at Five Rivers Conservation Center

Adjournment: Motion: Samantha Langton Second: Tom Casey