

**MINUTES** FINAL - as of 7/13/07  
**Governor's State Trails Council Meeting**  
Wednesday, April 11, 2007  
Governor's Conference Room  
116 East State Capitol, Madison, WI  
10:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.

**State Trails Council Members Present:** Ken Carpenter, Randy Harden, Tom Huber, Ramsey Lee (via telephone), Mike McFadzen, Dave Phillips, Martha Schouweiler, Tom Thornton, Robbie Webber

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Present:** Scott Hassett, Laurie Osterndorf, Bruce Chevis, Peter Biermeier, Brigit Brown, Diane Conklin, Larry Freidig, John Pohlman, Andrew Hanson, Joe Renville, Joseph Warren

**Natural Resources Board Members Present:** Jonathan Ela

**Legislators Present:** Representative Al Ott, Justin Sargent for Sen. Judy Robson, Kimmie Collins for Rep. James Kreuser

**Others Present:** Sam Landes, Ken Linzmeyer, Rob McConnell, John McSherry, Dave Peterson, Judy Peterson, Luana Schneider, John Schnorr, Pat Thornton

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**Agenda review/repair and approval of January meeting minutes**

- Phillips called the meeting to order. Approval of the January 22, 2007 meeting minutes by McFadzen. Thornton seconded. Minutes approved.

**Chair Report**

- Phillips introduced some issues he would like the council to discuss in 2007.
- Invasive Species. All user groups share the responsibility of controlling invasive species. *A handout about an effort to create best management practices for recreational users was passed out.*
- Snowmobile and ATV emissions. Phillips would like to focus part of the July or October meeting on this issue as well as discussing sound and air quality. Phillips would like Harden and Thornton to help take the lead.
- Funding for parks and trails. Wisconsin is almost last in the nation for state budget funding for parks and trails, but the state wants tourism and outdoor recreation to be a significant part of the economy. This is an ongoing issue and Phillips would like the STC to play a part in raising the amount of obligated funds for parks and trails.
- Water trails. Phillips and Schouweiler are working to create a water trails subcommittee as well as a resolution to bring before the council.

- Legislative Committee on State Trails Policy. Phillips remains neutral on some of the bill proposals, but stated that the process started by the committee was able to bring some important trail issues up for discussion. The bill proposals will next go before the Joint Legislative Council for review.
- Phillips introduced a resolution in support of a study committee for non-motorized trails. The study committee would be separate from the Legislative Committee, which had an ATV focus. Text of the resolution was discussed and amended by council members. McFadzen motioned to accept the resolution as amended. Seconded by Webber. Resolution passed. Phillips will attach a cover letter to the resolution and send to the co-chairs of the Joint Legislative Council as well as members of the Legislative Committee and the areas of the state they represent.

### **State Trails Council Member Reports**

- *Hiking/Walking.* Phillips stated that one of the proposals that came out of the Legislative Committee on State Trails Policy would benefit a segment of the Ice Age Trail. Phillips will give an update of the resolution in support of a non-motorized trails study committee at the July meeting.
- *Equestrian.* The new edition of the Wisconsin State Horse Council Trail Guide will be available next week. The directory will include all horse trails in Wisconsin, not just state-owned trails. Some advocacy articles are included in the new directory. The Wisconsin State Horse Council is also helping to sponsor a trail building course May 9-12 at Governor Dodge State Park.
- *Off-Road Vehicles.* The Wisconsin All-Terrain Vehicle Association (WATVA) is looking at some of the same issues brought up by the Legislative Committee. WATVA is looking at trespass, titling and license plates for ATVs and other off-road vehicles and other issues. *Harden passed out a handout concerning ATV emissions and a handout about the 2004 Wisconsin ATV bill.* The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is setting some new standards for emission laws. It was noted that some ATV manufacturers outside of the U.S. are not required to meet certain certifications.
- *Snowmobiling.* The 2006-2007 winter snowmobiling season was shortened significantly by low snowfall. *Thornton passed out a handout on snowmobile emissions.* Manufacturers are working with the EPA on emission standards similar to those set for ATVs. Thornton and Harden will give an update at the July STC meeting.
- *Bicycling.* Tuesday, April 10 was Bike Lobbying Day at the Capitol. The Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin (BFW) and other bicycle advocates used the annual event to talk to legislators about bike access and funding issues. Carpenter stated the event was one that other groups should participate in to inform legislators about trail funding issues.

- *Cross-Country Skiing.* The big issue for cross-country skiing over the winter season was lack of snow. The Birkebeiner race in northern Wisconsin had to be modified due to low snowfall totals. Skiers have been forming relationships with downhill ski areas to look into snowmaking possibilities.
- *Water Trails.* A water trails survey was distributed in March at Canoecopia, a large paddle-sport expo in Madison. *A handout with the results of the survey was passed out.* The River Alliance is applying for a grant to help create a print and web based guide to the northern lakes of Wisconsin. The subcommittee is researching the water trails programs of other states as well as water trail camping opportunities in Wisconsin. *Schouweiler passed out a water trail concept paper* to the council and asked members to provide feedback.
- *Department of Transportation.* The Federal Government has asked the DOT to make a number of rescissions. It has been the DOT's policy to not rescind any RTP funds. Some of the cuts will impact Transportation Enhancements (TE). The Joint Finance Committee can make changes. Some communities have asked if the cuts will affect funds that have already been awarded to projects. Huber stated that all TE projects that have been approved will receive the full amount that was awarded. McFadzen encouraged council members to talk with the Joint Finance Committee on TE issues.
- *Users with Disabilities.* Lee interviewed a few groups and stated that they were very happy with having trail opportunities. The groups liked the trails for ways to exercise and to be social, and especially liked having trails close to their homes, but are concerned about having trail surfaces suitable for wheel chairs.

### **Trail 63 Update**

- Pat Thornton, Bayfield County Tourism and Recreation Director, updated the council about Trail 63 in Bayfield County. There are some legal issues with trail 63. The trail is a federally granted right of way. In the past, the Forest Service has moved the trail off the railroad grade. Bayfield County would like to see the corridor maintained as a trail. Phillips asked how the STC could help with this issue. Thornton stated she would like to see the state become involved. Bayfield County is concerned about the legal costs. Harden stated that the Wisconsin All-Terrain Vehicle Association is offering support to Bayfield County. Brown will look into the timeline.

### **DNR Report**

- Biermeier updated the council on the motorized state recreation area concept. The Natural Resources Board (NRB) gave approval for the DNR to look into the planning process for a motorized area. The DNR is collecting data, soil quality, land prices, user group input and other information and will also receive input from ATV stakeholder groups. The data will be compiled into a background analysis. When the analysis is complete, the DNR will take a town meeting approach this summer to receive additional comments. The DNR will put a package together before taking a paper to the Natural Resources Board.

- Ela stated that if the DNR is bringing a paper before the NRB it would be best to see a proposal that includes what the DNR's role in the motorized state recreation area would be, who the partners and participants would be, and a list of other options and alternatives.
- The Amery to Dresser Environmental Assessment has been completed and signed off on.
- The Bureau of Parks and Recreation is in the final stages of completing master plans for the Pike Lake Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest and High Cliff State Park. Parks is in the process of working jointly with Forestry on many other master plans.
- The DNR is in the process of hiring a new State Parks Director. The application process has been started and interviews are expected to be conducted soon. Bruce Chevis, will be Acting Director through mid-May. After Chevis, subsequent acting directors will handle the Director duties until the position has been permanently filled.
- Trail Crew position announcements have been posted on the internet and have been sent out to the public. The trail crew is a one-year pilot project. The future of the program is dependant on funding and the results of the 2007 season. Many managers have expressed interest in having the crew work on their properties. Project locations for 2007 will include Wyalusing, Governor Dodge, Tower Hill and Potawatomi state parks as well as Kettle Moraine State Forest. McFadzen stated that he was looking forward to seeing some of the completed work of the trail crew.
- One of the Governor's budget recommendations will provide funds to completely renovate the ATV/motorcycle trails at Richard Bong State Recreation Area if it is approved.
- The DNR is proposing some changes to administrative code NR 45 which is concerned with rules and regulations on DNR properties. Some of the proposed changes deal with trail issues. A link to the changes is on the DNR website. There will be public hearings in May. The DNR will collect all comments that come in and make any changes to the language before taking the proposal before the NRB.
- The Trails Program has started a trail counter program on a few of the state trails in Wisconsin to get a better idea of the number of trail users. The Capital City, Elroy-Sparta and Glacial Drumlin state trails will have the counters placed on them. The University of Wisconsin-Madison Engineering Department is assisting with the project.
- Brown stated the DNR passed on the option to purchase the railroad abandonment between Milwaukee and Glendale. The segment is not in the Trails Network Plan and does not have other trail connections. The county may be interested in purchasing the segment.

## **Noon Presentation**

- McFadzen gave a presentation that highlighted the health, transportation and economic benefits of trails to the State of Wisconsin. The presentation also focused on the importance for raising the amount of funding obligated for trail projects.
- Representative Al Ott stated that all aspects of the budget are tight and that it would be difficult to raise the amount of state money for trail projects. Rep. Ott also suggested that the council talk to members of the Joint Finance Committee.

## **Recreational Trails Program Projects Overview**

- Larry Freidig, DNR Financial Assistance Specialist, updated the council on the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) and some of the recent projects funded by the program. *Freidig passed out the 2007 Grant Guidelines and Application packet to council members.* Freidig announced his upcoming retirement and introduced his replacement, Diane Conklin.
- 2006 had nearly \$1.1 million available for projects after taking subtractions for administration, costs of the STC and a small amount for community financial assistance.
- RTP money helped to fund the printing of the Trail Etiquette and Safety Brochure and has provided money for State Park System Trail Crew. Freidig is waiting for the allocation process to finish for 2006. When the process is finished, project selections will be made in June from the applications received earlier this year.
- The Bureau of Facilities and Lands divides funds between local and state projects determined by a ranking format. Scoring criteria for applications is listed in the Grant Guidelines and Application book. Thornton asked if there are times when RTP funds are taken back. Freidig stated that after projects are awarded, there is a signed contract. The DOT has never taken back awarded money.
- RTP projects are selected based on need, timing, and the type of matching funds. Projects must be trail related and open for public use. Brown asked about the provision in the law that projects cannot use RTP funds on trails that were non-motorized but became motorized.
- A user group or club can apply for RTP funds if they are registered with the Secretary of State and list trails as a primary purpose. Communities and other sponsors are more likely to get RTP funds if they can come up with a 50% match. Conklin stated however that the matching funds should not discourage anyone from applying for RTP funding.

## **NH-AL ATV Trail Stakeholder Committee Update**

- Phillips stated that there has been some controversy about the placement of ATV trails in the forest. The Stakeholder Committee is looking at locations for potential trails. For the most part, the trails have been proposed to stay on forest land with small sections of the trails and connections going on county land in Iron and Oneida counties. Vilas County does not want ATV trails on county land. There are still barriers that must be worked out for the proposed sites.

- Harden stated that the Committee will meet again and make recommendations for ATV trail sites. The Committee will give their recommendations to the DNR. There will then be a public hearing. Information and comments collected will go back to the Stakeholder Committee and they will then make a final recommendation that goes before the NRB in late summer or fall.
- One of the issues the Stakeholder Committee is working on is to propose trails that will hold up to ATV use. Many current trails and routes in the forest use old logging roads which are not always maintainable and may go through wetlands or other sensitive environments. New techniques in trail design could help to create trails up to construction standards.
- The July STC meeting will be at NH-AL State Forest. Phillips would like to schedule time for council members following the meeting to have a chance to look at some trails in the forest.

### **Glacial Heritage Area**

- John Pohlman, DNR Land Management Specialist, updated the council about the Glacial Heritage Area. The Glacial Heritage Area, the area between Milwaukee and Madison, was identified in the DNR Land Legacy Report as an important concept that could meet southeast Wisconsin's conservation and recreation needs. The area shows similarities to how eastern Michigan was developed. The main goal of the Glacial Heritage Area is to connect some of the already existing state properties and protect other properties before they are lost to development. *Pohlman passed out a map of the study area.*
- Agriculture protection is an important part of the concept and is linked to wildlife and scenic protection. The DNR is working with many partners in the area. Jefferson County has a very good long-range farmland protection program and is well positioned to implement the program. Huber stated that the data shows that if nothing is done soon, it may be the last chance to do something about preserving trail recreation and conservation opportunities in the area. Phillips asked how the STC could help with the project as it progresses.

### **Other Business of the State Trails Council**

- Harden updated the council on the Memorandum of Understanding between WATVA and the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation (IAPTF). One of the outcomes of the MOU was the creation of a Trail Incident and Safety Report Form. The form started as a pilot project and is now an official DNR form. The form has been successful at identifying trail incident hot spots and issues.
- Sam Landes updated the council about the potential railroad conversion of the Cheese Country Trail. Trail supporters had learned that the railroad was looking at the possibility of putting rails back on the trail corridor that could connect to an Ethanol Plant. McConnell stated that some truck drivers in the area are concerned about losing their jobs. Trail clubs would like to see the trail stay in tact. Brown stated that there has not been any trail in Wisconsin under the Rail-to-Trails law that has converted back to a

railroad corridor. There is no set process for un-banking rail trails and any process started would be lengthy.

**Public comment**

- Luana Schneider stated that she is looking forward to the Motorized State Recreation Area (MSRA) stakeholder group. Schneider also stated she would like to see a proposal for more than one MSRA which would make access more convenient for people in all parts of Wisconsin.
- Ela stated that the funding for all DNR programs needs to be looked at to provide a long range and sustainable solution for the programs' budgets. Phillips agreed with Ela and stated that one of the main goals of a non-motorized study committee would be to look at trail funding sources.
- Phillips declared adjournment. Meeting adjourned.

**Addendum**

- The State Trails Council passed a Resolution in support of a Study Committee on Non-motorized Trails.