

MINUTES FINAL - as of 10/12/07
Governor's State Trails Council Meeting
Friday, July 13, 2007
Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest
Crystal Lake Campground Picnic Shelter
10:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.

State Trails Council Members Present: Ken Carpenter, Randy Harden, Tom Huber, Mike McFadzen, Dave Phillips, Martha Schouweiler, Tom Thornton, Robbie Webber

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Present: Peter Biermeier, Brigit Brown, Terry Jordan, Tim Miller, Steve Petersen, Joseph Warren

Legislators Present: Senator Roger Breske

Others Present: Thomas Basting, Ron Bergin, Rocky Caffarella, Tom Churle, Terry Coplien, Sheehan Donoghue, Alan Drum, Sue Drum, Hilda Felbab, Les Felbab, Mark Haag, Merrill Hoswill, Helen Huike, Marvin Huike, Jim Joyce, Jim Knuth, Janice Kostreva, Candy Kozloski, Jeff Kozloski, Joanne Kozloski, Stan Kozloski, Matt Matteson, Rob McConnell, Dodd Millar, Richard Neitzel, Joel Patenaude, Dave Peterson, Norm Poulton, Fred Radtke, Phil Rausna, Ann Reiser, William Reiser, Rick Runge, John Schnorr, Debbie Schumaker, Bill Schumann, Ed Shulta, Ethel Shulta, Marilyn Sward, Steve Sward, James Thomas, Pat Thornton, Brook Waalen, Vernon Wiggenhauser, Jan Wise, Jerry Woolpy

Agenda review/repair and approval of April meeting minutes

- Phillips called the meeting to order. Approval of the April 11, 2007 meeting minutes by Thornton. Harden seconded. Minutes approved.

Chair Report

- Phillips introduced Steve Petersen, Property Superintendent for Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest. Petersen explained some of the day-to-day issues that he must deal with as property superintendent. Petersen gave a background to the NHAL ATV Trail Stakeholder Committee. The Natural Resources Board (NRB) asked the committee to determine if ATV trails were viable for the Forest, and if viable, to determine a location for ATV trails. The committee met 18 times over a year and a half. The committee did not reach a consensus but is preparing a report for the NRB. Open houses will be held in September for public comments and there will also be a 30-day comment period. Phillips mentioned that the STC passed a resolution in 2005 supporting the trails portion of the NHAL Master Plan which included the formation of a study committee to look into the possibility of having ATV trails in the forest. *Handout: NHAL ATV Stakeholder Committees' working maps.*
- Phillips introduced Fred Radtke, Vilas County Supervisor. Radtke stated that Vilas County has been working to develop paved trails in the county that are being used by bikers, walkers and in-line skaters. The trails are connecting communities and making

the area a bicycling destination. *Radtke passed out Vilas County Resolution 2003 – 68, a referendum concerning ATV operation on county land.*

State Trails Council Member Reports

- *Hiking/Walking.* Phillips commented on the North Country Trail. The National Scenic Trail which travels from North Dakota to New York is close to being complete in Wisconsin. Stewardship dollars and federal-side Land and Water Conservation funding have been used to help acquire land for the trail. Phillips would like to see the trail included on the Wisconsin Department of Tourism website. The Badger State Trail is officially open. Phillips was at the grand opening celebration. The trail will eventually connect Illinois to Madison. Phillips complimented Radtke on the network trails in Vilas County and offered comments on the way hiking trail use is managed in England.
- *Equestrian.* Carpenter is continuing to work with the Glacial Heritage Area concept. The group is working on a presentation for the NRB. Horse Council representatives have been talking to Senator Russ Feingold’s office concerning the adjustment of health care coverage. Representatives would like to see medical expenses caused by recreational activities covered under all health insurance plans. Phillips asked if Carpenter could send any comments about the health care issue to council members. The Horse Council is looking at the issue of trail connections and accessibility.
- *Off-Road Vehicles.* The Wisconsin All-Terrain Vehicle Association (WATVA) Trail Patrol Ambassador program is working to stage some additional trail training scenarios. Deputy Sheriffs, Conservation Wardens and Trail Patrol Ambassadors went out on trail “hot spot” to enforce violations. Some riders received tickets. ATV groups and DNR staff are working to improve the trails at Richard Bong State Recreation Area. Harden would like to see additional Off-Road Vehicle representatives on the STC to better represent the 4-Wheel Drive Truck and Off-Road Motorcycle communities.
- *Snowmobiling.* Last season was slow due to lack of snow and registration numbers suffered. The funding for snowmobile trails also suffered. Thornton stated that ATVs are outselling snowmobiles in the state and there will need to be enough trails to support the increasing number of ATVs in Wisconsin.
- *Bicycling.* The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is funding a statewide project to look into giving people an opportunity to travel between places without the use of a car. One of the goals of the project is to promote physical activity. Groups are working on the Safe Routes to School program and also the concept of Complete Streets, a national movement to build roads in communities that work for all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists. Phillips suggested the STC look at Complete Streets as an agenda item for the October meeting.
- *Cross-Country Skiing.* The biggest issue for cross-country skiing for last season was lack of snow. Youth and racing programs are continuing to grow in Wisconsin.
- *Water Trails.* Report given later in meeting.

- *Department of Transportation.* The DOT is working to update the Wisconsin Bike Maps to have ready for publication in 2009. The DOT is also updating the long-range comprehensive policy plan to look at trail possibilities for 30 major corridors.
- *Users with Disabilities.* Lee submitted comments in writing to the Council. Lee is planning to visit local parks in St. Croix County to examine trail access for user groups.

DNR Report

- Dave Borsecnik, Work Unit Superintendent at Lake Kegonsa State Park, will be the new State Park System Director starting at the end of July.
- The Wisconsin State Park System (WSPS) Strategic Plan is close to being done and will be available for public review in a few months. The Strategic Plan will be a blueprint for the future of the WSPS. When the plan is available there will be a 30-day review and public comment period. The plan will also be put on the DNR website.
- The Bureau of Parks and Recreation would like to take the concept of a State Motorized Recreation Area to potential users for feedback this fall.
- The Draft Master Plan for the Ice Age Trail corridor in Waushara County is finished. The draft will go for approval before the Natural Resources Board in August. The Peshtigo River State Forest Master Plan will be going out for a 30-day public review period. The Black River Falls Master Plan is not yet ready for public comment.
- The Amery to Dresser State Trail continues to be involved in a lawsuit. Judicial action may not happen until September or October.
- The WSPS Trail Crew is undergoing training and will be working at Kettle Moraine Northern Unit through the end of August, then moving to Governor Dodge State Park.
- The Rails to Trails Conservancy is heading up an effort to significantly increase funding for active transportation (i.e. self-propelled transportation like walking and bicycling) in the 2010 Federal Surface Transportation Highway Bill. A total of 40 cities across the United States have been targeted, based on their demonstrated commitment to active transportation. Madison and Milwaukee are two of the cities targeted. Bicycle and pedestrian activists from both cities met in June. A steering committee is being formed and will work on the initiative.
- *Biermeier passed a handout about the impact of the Assembly version of the State Budget to the Wisconsin State Park System.* The Senate and Assembly versions are very different with the Assembly version cutting significant funding to the Stewardship program. Senator Roger Breske stated that a final version of the budget will take some time. Sen. Breske also stated that he would like to see incentives for landowners that allow ATVs and snowmobiles on their land, an increase in fines for trespassing, and would also like to see some damage abatement programs. Sen. Breske suggested user

groups contact their legislators and members of any special legislative council regarding the budget.

Noon Presentation

- Lester Felbab gave a presentation that highlighted the techniques that Oneida County uses to create their ATV trails and explained some of the ATV trail projects the county has worked on.

Invasive Species Best Management Practices

- The DNR is working in conjunction with user groups to create terrestrial invasive species best management practices for recreation. All types of recreation are capable of spreading invasive species. This is an issue that will continue to come up and all user groups should be sending a representative to the meetings. Groups need to participate or they will risk not being able to have the level of participation they may seek at a later date. All user groups will be expected to buy in to the recommendations of the committee. Information is posted on the internet.

Proposed Resolution in Support of Bayfield County

- The former railroad corridor in Bayfield County which is the subject of a lawsuit is a federally granted right-of-way and the section of land in question is an important connection for recreational uses. Resolution moved by Schouweiler, seconded by Harden. Resolution passed.
- Harden stated that ATV groups worked on a fundraiser to help with the legal costs for Bayfield County. A check for \$2,500 from WATVA was presented to Thornton.
- The Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs had previously presented a check for \$5,000 to Thornton to give to Bayfield County to help cover the costs of attorneys' legal fees.

Proposed Resolution in Support of Stewardship Renewal

- McFadzen asked about adding language to the resolution concerning the maintenance of trails. Brown stated that the Stewardship Program is the largest pot of money used to purchase new land and that a backlog of maintenance projects could drain the entire program, and also stated that funding for management of lands acquired with Stewardship is an issue being discussed. Thornton stated that ATV and snowmobile trails get funding from registration fees and non-motorized trails need to have a similar way to get funds. Resolution moved by Thornton, seconded by Webber. Resolution passed.

Water Trails

- Schouweiler gave a summary of the history of water trails and routes in Wisconsin and also summarized some of the water trails programs in neighboring states. *Schouweiler passed out a publication of water trails from the Wisconsin Conservation Commission.* The Minnesota DNR has a very good collection of updated maps both in print and online. *Schouweiler passed out Lake Superior water trails maps and other information about water trails in Washington State Parks.* Minnesota has 38 staff working on trails and waterways. Brown stated that registration helps pay for the cost of water trails programs in other states.
- Terry Jordan, DNR Northern Region Trails Coordinator, explained some of the water routes in the area. *Jordan passed out a few maps and water trail information he had collected for the St. Croix Scenic Riverway.* Jordan stated there is a lot of information available, just not in one place. Jordan talked with representatives from some of the Native American Tribes in the area who were willing to allow water trails to go through their land. Jordan stated that he is willing to help with the water trails subcommittee.
- Biermeier stated that the Wisconsin Department of Tourism is willing to work with the DNR to promote water trails and routes in Wisconsin. Water recreation is one of the fastest growing forms of recreation in the state. Biermeier stated that water trails are land issues. Everything that has to be done for the trails, parking areas, facilities, etc. is done on land. The cost of building a water trail is also significantly cheaper than building a trail on land. The cost per mile for a water trail is a few hundred dollars compared to several thousand per mile for trails on land.
- Brown stated that the next steps would be to have someone in a part-time position coordinate the effort, and compile and make available in one place, all of the information already available. Huber asked if the STC could help to get a part-time person that could be paid with federal or state dollars. It was suggested that the water trails subcommittee brainstorm some funding sources for a position.

Other Business of the State Trails Council

- Brown updated the council on the STC Bylaws relating to representation. Council members appearing before a public body, such as formally testifying, must not give an impression that they are representing the STC unless they have previous authority from the STC to act on behalf of the Council on a specific issue.
- Brown asked Council Members to let her or Phillips know of any new business to put on the agenda for October.

Public comment

- Several individuals gave comments to the State Trails Council regarding the use of All-Terrain Vehicles inside the boundaries of NHAL State Forest. Following is a summary of the comments:

- *Summary of Comments Supporting ATV use in the Forest:* There is a need for more ATV trails as the number of registered ATVs now rivals registered snowmobiles. Law enforcement and ATV groups are training new and young riders how to ride responsibly. There are different viewpoints for the sustainability of ATV trails. A sustainable ATV trail looks different from a sustainable hiking trail. New changes in engineering are also helping to keep trails sustainable. Many of the proposed trails in the forest will utilize already existing logging roads. Small businesses in northern Wisconsin that rely on snowmobile tourism are being hurt by mild winters and would benefit from more ATV tourism. ATV riders help pay for trails through registration fees and would like trails that connect communities in the same way that bicycle trails are connecting communities in the area.
- *Summary of Comments Opposed to ATV use in the Forest:* NHAL State Forest has numerous lakes and streams and was designated to protect the headwaters of the Wisconsin River. ATVs pollute the environment, destroy wetlands and reduce water quality. The forest provides space to enjoy the peace and tranquility of the outdoors and ATVs contribute to sound and noise pollution. All ATVs do not stay on designated trails and it only takes one vehicle to cause significant damage. There are already numerous miles of ATV trails in northern Wisconsin and there does not need to be more located in the area, especially in a sensitive environment. ATVs are a threat to biodiversity of the forest and can spread invasive species. Healthcare costs are rising statewide and ATVs do not promote healthy lifestyles. Law enforcement cannot enforce current trails and would not be capable of enforcing additional ATV trails.
- Brown stated that the DNR legal opinion regarding responsibility of the department for ATV trails that was given to the DNR Secretary will be posted to the State Trails Council website once it is made public.
- Phillips declared adjournment. Meeting adjourned.

Addendum

- The State Trails Council passed a Resolution in support of Bayfield County.
- The State Trails Council passed a Resolution in support of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.