

MINUTES FINAL - as of 4/11/07
Governor's State Trails Council Meeting
Monday, January 22, 2007
GEF 2 Building
101 S. Webster Street, Madison, WI 53707
10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

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

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Present: Peter Biermeier, Brigit Brown, Joseph Warren

Others Present: Roy Burlingame, Ken Linzmeyer, Rob McConnell, Dave Peterson, Judy Peterson, Luana Schneider, John Schnorr

Agenda review/repair and approval of October meeting minutes

- McFadzen called the meeting to order. Approval of the October 27, 2006 meeting minutes by Phillips. Thornton seconded. Minutes approved.

Chair Report

- Ali Dwyer has resigned from the STC to pursue other interests. McFadzen asked council members to talk to Brown or the Governor's office with suggestions of possible bicycle representatives to fill Dwyer's position through 2009.
- The July 13, 2007 STC meeting will be held at Northern Highland-American Legion (NHAL) State Forest. The location will give council members an opportunity to see what the NHAL ATV Trail Stakeholder Committee has been working on.
- McFadzen summarized the final meeting of the Legislative Committee on State Trails Policy held on January 4, 2007. The council was set up as pro-motorized and McFadzen complimented Harden for helping to open up spots on the council to include both motorized and non-motorized users. McFadzen argued for the committee to look into segregated funding for non-motorized uses and additional funding for a motorized intensive use area, but stated that Senator Dale Schultz deferred discussion of funding for those purposes. The law making process started at the meeting with reviewing the nine bills already drafted for the committee. Brown summarized the bills and stated that members of the committee must vote on the entire package, not the individual bills.
- Harden stated that there has been a large amount of flawed and biased information presented at the Legislative Committee meetings by some individuals. Harden hopes the STC and DNR can work to provide accurate information to all user groups and lawmakers. Harden stated that he would not be upset if the package of bills failed to be passed by the committee, as the Wisconsin All-Terrain Vehicle Association (WATVA) is planning on looking at some of the issues as an organization.

- The legislation process for the bills is lengthy. The bills are only combined as a package until votes from the Committee come in, and at that point the bills can be dissected, with some parts discarded and some parts accepted. If the package of bills passes out of the Committee, it will go to another committee such as Transportation or Natural Resources and those committees can make additional recommendations. If the bills pass out of committee, those with appropriations will still need to go before the Joint Finance Committee, and then the House and Assembly, and at each point the language of the bills will be reviewed and may change.
- Phillips stated that some of the bills may be flawed, but it was important that the legislative process is being started. As the bills are broken out of the package, amendments can be added. Phillips also stated that there is a need to have a similar legislative committee for non-motorized trails, and if the package is voted down completely, it may hinder a similar process for non-motorized trails. Lee agreed that council members should consider passing the bills.
- Huber recommended that STC members who will be voting on the bills (McFadzen and Carpenter), attach comments to their votes since they have to vote on the bills as a package.

DNR Report

- Biermeier updated the council on the motorized state recreation area concept. The DNR has formed an internal committee to look into the managing and funding aspects, possible partnerships, user experiences, distance of travel for visitors, possible incorporated uses such as campgrounds and concession stands, different regions and soil types. The committee hopes to be able to report back to the DNR as a whole in May. The DNR will review all of the background information and research provided by the committee. In the meantime, Biermeier asked anyone with an interest in the motorized recreation area concept to inform him of their ideas and specifically the type of user experience and conditions that they would like.
- Biermeier hopes to have a draft of the Wisconsin State Park System Strategic Plan ready for public review by April.
- Biermeier gave an update of the Amery to Dresser State Trail Environmental Assessment (EA). The DNR has been addressing the large amount of public comment that came in from the public hearing sessions. Soil studies have been completed and are in the review status. The process for the Amery to Dresser EA is lengthy, but the DNR will be able to apply much of the background data to other railroad grades in the future. Biermeier will update the council at the April meeting.
- Tim Miller, Park and Trail Manager for the DNR Northern Region, will be the Acting Parks Director for six weeks beginning on January 22. If the position has not been filled in that time, there will be subsequent acting directors in approximately six-week intervals until the position is filled permanently.

State Trails Council Member Reports

- *Hiking/Walking.* A portion of the Ice Age Trail on a former railroad grade is proposed to be rerouted off of the railroad corridor to allow ATVs on the entire length of the corridor. Funding for the relocation is being looked into. The NHAL ATV Trail Stakeholder

Committee has received a large amount of public comment. Vilas County has shown support for the forest, but does not want ATV trails in the county. Phillips reiterated his comments about the Legislative Committee, for the need to have a similar committee for non-motorized trails.

- *Users with Disabilities.* Lee offered to lend his help and support to council members as they work with the Legislative Committee. Phillips asked Lee to continue looking at access issues on all trails for users with disabilities.
- *Water Trails.* Schouweiler has been working to form a water trails subcommittee that will help provide a direction for the creation of a water trails program in Wisconsin. Jim Bokern, who has a great deal of experience and paddling in the Lac Du Flambeau area, has agreed to be on the subcommittee. Brown will work with Schouweiler to fill out the other members of the subcommittee. Phillips offered to help Schouweiler draft a resolution that the STC could review by the October meeting.
- *Off-road Vehicles.* Harden expressed his gratitude for being able to serve on the council as a motorized representative, but stated that there is a need to separate ATVs, motorcycles and trucks to better represent each group. Harden feels there has been a large amount of flawed and biased information presented at the Legislative Committee and NHAL ATV Trail Stakeholder Committee meetings, and hopes the STC and DNR can provide accurate information to those committees and lawmakers. WATVA's annual meeting will be held the weekend of March 31, 2007.
- *Department of Transportation.* The DOT has been working on a suggestion plan for communities that conforms with the pedestrian guidelines in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Some communities were not aware of all the requirements in ADA. The DOT is updating the long-range transportation plan to try and triple the number of recommended new trails, and will be looking into paving more road shoulders, adding bike trails, and identifying other trail segments. The DOT is also looking to update the state bicycle map with suitable routes for bike travel.
- *Equestrian.* The Wisconsin Horse Council is helping to sponsor their second trail building course. The 2007 course will be held May 9-12 at Governor Dodge State Park. The new edition of the Wisconsin State Horse Council Trail Guide will be available soon and has a more expansive collection of maps. The trail guide also provides rider comments, a list of lodging opportunities near horse trails and other area attractions. Land managers, volunteers and riders all gave their input to the guide. The 2007 Midwest Horse Fair will be held April 20-22.
- *Snowmobiling.* The lack of snow in northwest Wisconsin is hurting the resorts that rely on tourism generated by snowmobiling. Some of the resorts have had to close down, which is a rarity for that part of the state in mid-January. Iron River has only three inches of snow and other areas are just starting to groom. The trails in Iron County are good, but overuse on the trails is reducing their quality.
- *Bicycling.* The largest bicycle organization in Wisconsin, the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin (BFW) will be hiring a new executive director. Brown has been working with IL, MI, and IN on creation of a Lake Michigan Bicycle Route that will identify safe trails and roads to designate one route around the lake. Huber stated that the Wisconsin DOT

has received much interest in a bicycle route between Chicago and Door County and would be willing to help Brown on the project.

- *Cross-Country Skiing.* As with snowmobiling, the lack of snow this year has been a problem for cross-country skiers. Skiers are using downhill ski areas such as Sunburst that make their own snow. Lapham Peak is able to make snow and has some skiing opportunities. Cross-country skiing has been on the decline as a whole, and organizations are working to develop skiers at a younger age to spark their interest in the sport. The Wisconsin Nordic Network (WINN) considered a merger with another Midwest skiing organization, but decided against the move.

State Trails Report

- Brown informed the council about new state trail openings for 2007. An 11-mile addition to the Fox River State Trail will make the trail open to the town of Hilbert, and an addition to the Nicolet State Trail in Forest and Florence counties will increase the length of the trail to 65 miles. Trail uses on the Nicolet addition will be the same with the exception that horses will not be allowed on the trail in Forest County. The Devil's River, Wolf River, and Badger state trails are currently still under development, however sections of the Badger State Trail are expected to be open in 2007. The DNR is in the process of negotiating with the railroad concerning the new Hank Aaron State Trail extension.
- Three sites, Wyalusing State Park, Kettle Moraine-North State Forest and Potawatomi State Park, have been proposed for the WSPS trail crew to work on in 2007. Brown is in the process of acquiring machinery and tools and hiring employees to fill out the crew, and will give an update at the next meeting.
- The DNR Trails Program, with the help of the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation and Wisconsin All-Terrain Vehicle Association, has been working on a Trail Incident and Condition Report. The report will be used to monitor the condition of trails and identify "hot spots" where certain trail conditions or legal incidents are most prevalent. Brown is taking the report to the DNR Parks Management Team (PMT) for final approval. When the report is approved by PMT, it will be posted on the internet and will be able to be downloaded and filled-out. Brown will send out copies of the approved report to council members and ask that they share the report with their user groups.
- The Trails Program has also been working on a set of trail use brochures that list all the state properties for one use. As drafts of the brochures are completed, Warren will send to council members to review and share with their user groups.

2007 Officer Elections

- Huber presented a slate of officers for 2007: Dave Phillips, chair, Randy Harden, vice chair, and Ken Carpenter, secretary. Huber motioned to accept the nominations, seconded by Lee. Passed unanimously.
- Huber asked the council to consider moving officer elections to coincide with the annual October meeting instead of having officer terms carry-over into the next year. Council members agreed to have the next elections at the October STC meeting.

Other Business

- McFadzen summarized some of the accomplishments the State Trails Council has achieved over the past few years. The STC passed resolutions supporting acquisition of new rail corridors and an extension to the Hank Aaron State Trail, supported consolidation of ownership on the Bearskin State Trail, supported increasing TE funding, supported safer rules for snowmobiling and the responsible use of motorized vehicles, supported the concept of a state motorized recreation area, and also passed resolutions against small game hunting on state park properties and against the use of trails as power line corridors.
- McFadzen thanked members of the council and DNR staff and asked the council to continue to network with legislators, to work at increasing TE funding and to work to raise the profile of state trails. Huber, on behalf of the STC, thanked McFadzen for the extra amount of time and effort he put into being chair.
- Brown indicated that some council member's terms will be expiring in 2007 (Carpenter, Harden, Lee, and Thornton). Brown asked members interested in continuing to serve on the council to let her know before the next STC meeting on April 11, 2007, and to also contact the Governor's office with a request to be reappointed.

Public Comment

- Rob McConnell, with WATVA, expressed mixed feelings about the Legislative Committee and added that the Committee's recommendations were not good as a package, but had both good and bad individual parts.
- John Schnorr, with the Wisconsin Off-Highway Vehicle Association (WOHVA), announced that the travel management rule open houses in the Nicolet-Chequamegon National Forest, which were discussed at the October STC meeting, begin the end of January. Schnorr also announced that WOHVA will be teaming with the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council (NOHVCC) to hold an OHV route designation workshop in September or October and invited all council members to the workshop.
- Luana Schneider, with the Wisconsin Four Wheel Drive Association (W4WDA), expressed her concerns with the Legislative Committee suggestion that private industry provide areas for motorized recreation. Schneider stated that this proposal would be too prohibitive to private industry as the private areas would be unlikely to afford the liability insurance needed. Schneider also stated that W4WDA is looking forward to working with the DNR on the concept of a motorized state recreation area.
- Dave Peterson stated that the Legislative Committee on State Trails Policy was long overdue, but did not represent all users equally, and did not take into consideration the trails that allow compatible multiple-uses. Carpenter stated that multiple use issues may need to be looked at by another committee, and offered the Tomorrow River State Trail as a good example where multiple uses are compatible. Brown stated the STC will probably want to monitor the status of the Legislative Committee, as it has brought up many issues of both motorized and non-motorized uses.
- Motion to adjourn by Huber. Seconded by Phillips. Meeting adjourned.