

MINUTES FINAL - as of 7/11/08
Governor's State Trails Council Meeting
Tuesday, April 15, 2008
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, Jim Joque, Dave Phillips, Tom Thornton, Robbie Webber

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Present: DNR Secretary Matt Frank, Laurie Osterndorf, Bill Smith, Peter Biermeier, Gary Eddy, Kate Fitzgerald, Jeff Prey, Dan Schuller, Joseph Warren

Legislators Present: Representative Andy Jorgensen, Representative Al Ott, Representative Gary Sherman, Patrick Walsh for Senator Russell Decker

Others Present: Don Erickson, Ken Linzmeyer, Rob McConnell, Dave Peterson, Judy Peterson, Harold Schmidt, Luana Schneider, John Schnorr, Bill Schumann

Agenda review/repair and approval of January meeting minutes

- Phillips called the meeting to order. Amendment to the agenda: the “Tussockia/Ice Age Trail Issue” was removed from the agenda and “New Business of the State Trails Council” was moved to the open time period.
- Approval of the January 7, 2008 meeting minutes by Webber. Thornton seconded. Minutes approved.

Chair Report

- Proposed legislation AB600 came out of the Committee on Rural Economic Development with a positive vote. The bill did not make it to the floor before the Legislative Session ended. The proposed bill may be brought up again during the next Legislative Session.
- The Legislative Study Committee for Non-Motorized Trails is one of the study committees that was selected by the Legislative Council. The committee will likely be similar to the motorized study committee and will look at funding and other trail issues.
- Phillips reviewed some previous resolutions passed by the State Trails Council. Phillips stated that the Council may not directly make decisions but has provided guidance and information on many issues.

State Trails Council Member Reports

- *Equestrian.* The Midwest Horse Fair will take place at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison from April 18-20. The event is open to the public and provides a chance for

people outside the equestrian community to learn about the world of horses. The Wisconsin State Horse Council will be sponsoring the third annual trail design school in Prairie du Chien at the end of April. Instructors will teach participants to build and design sustainable multi-use trails, which are suitable for horses and all trail users.

- *Department of Transportation.* Applications for both the local Transportation Enhancements Program and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Program are due by the end of this week. Most of the bicycle and pedestrian facilities funded by these programs are for trails. The DOT is working with the University of Wisconsin-Madison to update the Wisconsin Bicycle Map. The map, available on the DOT website, is broken down by county and is very popular by bicyclists as well as many other users. The DOT is also working to create a best practices guide for developing and improving pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks.
- *Off-Highway Vehicles.* The Wisconsin All-Terrain Vehicle Association (WATVA) sent a written formal memo to the DNR Forestry Division in opposition to the trail standards and proposals for NHAL. There is a pilot program beginning for light utility vehicles to use some traditional ATV trails in some of the northern counties. The program will end in September 2009, with a report on the pros and cons of the program due in 2010. Off-highway vehicle and motorcycle groups are working with legislators towards starting their own registration and funding programs. WATVA held its annual meeting in Stevens Point. The Trail Patrol Ambassador program continues to be a very successful program working with law enforcement. Over the past year the program has certified more than 1000 students, patrolled more than 7000 trail miles and increased the hours spent on trails by 50 percent.
- *Bicycling.* The Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin is taking the lead on the Complete Streets Initiative and is determining the best course of action to take by working with the DOT and with the Wisconsin Legislature. There is much support and partnership on the initiative with road builders also interested in participating. Improving pedestrian access and facilities will be a large part of the initiative as well.
- *Snowmobiling.* The 2007-2008 snowmobiling season was very good across the state. Trail operators were out grooming all winter. Because of the snowfall and amount of grooming, there will be less funding to pay for maintenance and other projects. There were 25 fatalities, with 19 alcohol-related. Thornton stated that the majority of riders are responsible, but there is a stigma with snowmobiling that many of the riders drink. The Wisconsin Snowmobile Council and DNR are looking at the laws in Minnesota and Michigan to see how similar laws could be applied in Wisconsin to help enhance the sport and keep riders safe. The Court of Appeals in Chicago ruled in favor of Bayfield County concerning the railroad corridor in the county. The case will now be coming back to Federal Court in Wisconsin.
- *Users with Disabilities.* Andy Janicki has been appointed as the new Accessibility Coordinator for the DNR. Janicki suffered a spinal injury but continues to be an avid outdoorsman and is very knowledgeable of disability issues. Joque would like to have Janicki attend a future meeting to update the Council on projects the DNR is working on.

Joque stated he is also looking to work collaboratively with the DNR Disabled Advisory Council and Julie Amakobe, Staff Liaison to the Council. Senate Bill 49 was passed by the Wisconsin Legislature that allows free access to state parks for disabled veterans and former prisoners of war. There are 650 miles of accessible trails listed on the DNR website. Joque stated there is always room for improvement, but this is a very good commitment to providing accessible trails.

DNR Report

- Bill Smith is currently the Acting Director for the Bureau of Parks and Recreation. The DNR is looking to fill the position permanently. The second round of interviews will be taking place shortly, and hopefully in the next few weeks the position will be filled.
- The DNR staff recommendation concerning the ATV trail proposals in the NHAL State Forest is posted on the Natural Resources Board website. The DNR is recommending to the NRB to not move forward with the trail proposals in NHAL. There were many issues with the trail proposals and the quality of recreation would not be the most ideal. This staff recommendation is very specific to NHAL and the DNR feels that trails can be sited in other areas of the state.
- In 2006 the NRB endorsed the idea of a concept study for a motorized recreation area in Wisconsin. Since then the DNR has been researching the concept and has collected background and design information for the concept study. The DNR would now like to convene a meeting of motorized user groups to discuss what the user needs of a motorized recreation area would be. The concept would primarily be for motorized recreation, but there may be ancillary uses such as equestrian, mountain biking and snowmobiling. After meeting with users, the DNR would like to take the concept back to the NRB for endorsement. Phillips stated that the State Trails Council has already passed a resolution of support for the concept of a Motorized Recreation Area.
- The Circuit Court ruled to prohibit motorized recreation on the state trail corridor between Amery and Dresser. The DNR is not going to appeal the decision, but will work with Polk County on a more comprehensive trail analysis and to develop the trail within the court ruling. Thornton asked if someone can take the strategy from the Amery to Dresser court ruling and apply it to other state trails in Wisconsin to take away motorized access and stated that there may be a need to change the language of state statutes. Smith stated that the court decision is very specific to Polk County and is not precedent setting for trails statewide.
- There will be two trail crews in 2008. One crew will be finishing the 14 miles of new mountain bike trails at Kettle Moraine State Forest – Northern Unit, the other will be rerouting a horse and snowmobile trail at Governor Dodge State Park then moving on to Wyalusing State Park to work on rehabilitating the hiking and nature trails there. Leaders of both crews are being trained this week. The rest of the KMNU crew has been hired and will start working June 1. Both crews expect to be fully staffed with five members each. The DNR is hiring three more members for the Governor Dodge Crew. The position announcement is posted on the internet. Biermeier stated with trail use up in every area, he hopes the Trail Crew can be part of the Park's program for years to come.

- Response to the new State Trail Pass Survey has been good. To date, the DNR has received several hundred responses for the 2008 State Trail Pass Survey, many from equestrians and motorcyclists. The survey questions relate to trail activities and anyone who purchases a State Trail Pass is asked to take the survey.
- Due to remaining concerns from some potentially affected parties, the Managed Forest Land law that passed in the governor's budget restricting recreational use is proposed to be amended. Other concerns will also be addressed in the proposed Administrative Code change. The proposed changes include new definitions of "compensation" and "owner/ownership" and adjustments to annual stumpage rates. There will be Teleconference Hearings on April 16 at Madison, Eau Claire, Stevens Point and Green Bay. *Handouts: Notice of Public Hearing, Hearing Background Memo, and Proposed Revisions to Chapter NR 46.* Phillips stated that these new rules could be a very big problem for protecting the Ice Age Trail.
- Biermeier stated that there are many "Get Outdoors" related days in Spring. Bike to Work Week is in May, Earth Day is April 22, National Trails Day is June 7, and Open Parks Day is June 8. The DNR will be having a celebration on June 5 for the new Aldo Leopold State Trail System designation. The DNR is working on the "No Child Left Inside" initiative, a national movement to get kids into the outdoors. June 14 will be the Governor's proclamation to encourage kids to get outside.
- Jeff Prey, Senior Planner for the Bureau of Parks and Recreation, updated the Council of current Master Plan projects. There is a proposed amendment to the Hank Aaron State Trail Master Plan relating to the project boundary to connect Lakeshore State Park and other facilities in Milwaukee to the trail. The DNR is planning to present a draft of the Master Plan for Straight Lake to the Natural Resources Board in the Fall of 2008 and is finishing the Master Plan for the Pike Lake Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest. The Black River State Forest and Coulee Experimental Forest are two Master Plan projects the DNR will be finishing in 2009. Point Beach State Forest, High Cliff State Park, and a Master Plan for the Cross Plains Reserve, which the DNR is working on with the National Park Service, are projects planned to be finished in 2011. Harden stated that he hoped corrections can be made to the trail planning process from NHAL to apply to the Black River State Forest Master Plan

Meeting with DNR Secretary Frank and Legislator Round Table

- DNR Secretary Matt Frank spoke on a number of topics of interest to the Council. The DNR and STC have a great partnership and Secretary Frank thanked the Council for all of their efforts. The STC is important for bringing user groups together to discuss different perspectives and balance user conflicts, and must oftentimes work on tough issues.
- The Stewardship Fund was reauthorized with additional funding and had bipartisan support from the legislature. This was an important step to ensuring that some of Wisconsin's most special places can be protected, before those opportunities are lost forever. Wisconsin has a proud environmental history and it is special that the State

Trails System was reauthorized as the Aldo Leopold Legacy Trail System. The non-motorized legislative study committee will take a look at funding issues.

- There will be some disappointment from ATV users regarding the NHAL decision. The DNR understands that motorized recreation is increasing in popularity and would like to devote serious efforts to the progression of the motorized recreation area concept. Phillips stated that even though the decision concerning the ATV trail proposal in NHAL was not what many people wanted, it was a good process for bringing the stakeholders group together. Secretary Frank stated that the DNR is always thankful for the work of advisory groups and is committed to providing recreation opportunities to all users.
- Thornton asked if there would be any ramifications from the Amery to Dresser court ruling for other state trails. Secretary Frank stated the ruling was specific to the Amery to Dresser trail. The DNR would review state statutes but would not be looking to make any immediate statutory change. The DNR will be working with Polk County on the trail corridor. The DNR wants to show some leadership and work with communities and individuals to create positive recreation opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized users without user conflict.
- Secretary Frank stated that Wisconsinites inherit a great tradition of protecting our natural resources and enjoying the outdoors and it is important to pass this tradition on by connecting families and citizens to the outdoors. Harden stated that the 2008 Outdoor Youth Education Expo will be held May 15 and 16 in Beaver Dam. The expo provides a great opportunity for kids to take part in outdoor activities such as camping, hiking, riding an ATV, biking, and hunting and fishing. About 5000 kids in 4th through 6th grades are expected to attend the expo.
- Representative Al Ott stated he would like the Governor's proclamation to get outside to explain how urgent the matter is. Representative Ott also stated that the legislature would likely be called back for a special session regarding the budget adjustment bill and the Great Lakes Compact.

Complete Streets Initiative

- The Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin is partnering with the Wisconsin Health Coalition, the Wisconsin Partnership for Activity and Nutrition, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin and others on the initiative. The groups are working to see how they would like to proceed with the initiative, and if that would mean working on policy with the Wisconsin Legislature or more directly with the DOT. Huber stated that much of what has been recommended already is what the DOT would like to implement. The groups are working to finalize some language and strategy, before convening with the Governor's Bicycle Council and STC. Webber stated that the National Bike Summit provided a chance for bicycle advocates to discuss the complete streets initiative with U.S. Senators and Representatives. Webber stated that 30 percent of the population does not drive and a goal for the initiative is to have the complete streets policy included on long range transportation plans. Webber and Huber may present a Complete Streets Resolution for the Council to discuss at the July STC meeting.

Other Business of the State Trails Council

- Harden stated that since AB600 was introduced, he, Phillips and Brown have been discussing how the STC can be more inclusive in meaningful ways. Harden stated that the STC only meets 4 times a year for less than 16 total hours which does not provide much opportunity to try to meet the needs of all trail users. Harden stated that in light of AB600 it might be time for the Council to rediscover the vision, mission, goals and operation of the STC to identify a process that allows all user groups to be involved. This work would most likely need to be done outside the regular council meetings which would require extra time and resources. Biermeier noted that per the STC Bylaws, anyone can make a request for appearance before the STC.
- Phillips stated it was a good idea for Council Members to take a look at the organization and purpose of the STC. Phillips stated that legislators he has talked to would prefer to have the STC work on this issue internally.
- Harden stated that one option would be to have a subcommittee work outside of quarterly council meetings with guidance from the STC. Someone to facilitate the meeting, take notes and handle logistics may be needed. One of the goals of the subcommittee would be to look at the structure of the STC.
- Webber asked how members of the subcommittee would be selected and what would be required of them. Phillips stated he would like to form a subcommittee to look at the STC mission, structure and ways for better public input. Phillips asked the Council to send him a list of potential members they would like included on a subcommittee, including a description of each potential member's expertise and interest. Phillips, Harden and Brown will review the list of potential members. Harden and Phillips will give an update at the July STC meeting.
- Carpenter stated that in Wisconsin the STC provides some counsel to the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), and asked if the STC could receive regular updates from the DNR regarding RTP projects and timelines. Biermeier stated that DNR staff responsible for administering RTP funds can have a written report prepared for STC meetings and may also be able to attend some meetings in person.
- Biermeier stated that Dorian Grilley, head of the Minnesota Parks and Trails Council, will be at the July STC meeting to talk to the Council.
- Webber asked if a representative from the Wisconsin Department of Tourism would be willing to talk to the STC regarding the trail topics that Tourism is currently working on. Smith stated that Tourism is working with State Parks on providing more trail information, especially web-based information, as well as working on the Travel Green Initiative, which many local businesses are also taking a part in. The DNR will contact Tourism to see if someone may be able to attend a future STC meeting.

Public comment

- John Schnorr, with the Wisconsin Off-Highway Vehicle Association asked about his open record request. Biermeier stated the DNR was working to compile all of the information requested.

- Luana Schneider, with the Wisconsin Four Wheel Drive Association (W4WDA), stated she was glad to see the STC was going to look at ways to improve representation for all trail users. Schneider stated that off-highway vehicle and motorcycle users have been grouped together with ATVs and would like to have their own recognition and identity.

- Rob McConnell stated that the master plan for the Black River State Forest is going through some of the same problems as the NHAL trail proposals. McConnell stated he was not happy with some of the trail design standards or the proposals that would eliminate some campsites and displace trail users and hoped these problems can be changed.

- Dave Peterson stated he was concerned that the court decision regarding the Amery to Dresser State Trail could set a precedent for other trails in Wisconsin. Smith stated that the court decision was specific to Polk County.

- Motion to adjourn by Huber. Seconded by Thornton. Meeting adjourned.