

Sunrise Trail Coalition

Meeting Minutes 8/26/09, 2:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Helen's Restaurant, Machias, ME

Attendance: Rich Bard, Wayde Carter, Bill Ceckler, Polly Ceckler, Stephanie Clement, Charlie Corliss, Carol Cuddy, Gary Dowling, Sally Jacobs, Jay Johnson, Sandy Johnson, Joseph McBrine Jr., Sara McConnell, Gail Peters, Wayne Peters, John Picher, Scott Ramsay, Stephen Richardson, Kathleen Shannon, Dan Stewart, Timothy Tunney, Skip Varney, Dave Wood

1. Sign-in sheet circulated. Introductions and welcome to visiting State Officials: John Picher, Scott Ramsay, John Picher, Stephen Richardson, Dan Stewart, Skip Varney.
2. Minutes of July 22, circulated.
3. Treasurer's Report – Dave Wood will give it later when he arrives.
4. MDOT/MDOC Updates

Charlie reported that the parking lots at Ayers Junction and Washington Junction are complete and that 32 miles have their final surface. Bill asked whether the trail is open for use. Scott said that the official message is that the trail is closed. Contractors need to be able to finish their work. They can block the trail any time that they need. Dan added that it is hoped that the trail will open soon from Route 1 to Ayers Junction.

Rail removal from Cherryfield west started last month. It crossed Henderson's land at noon yesterday. The plan is to work with one crew so rails will be removed for a couple of weeks and then the crew will go back to retrieve scrap. The bridges are complete west to Columbia Falls.

John Picher said that some areas of the trail have a surface that is too fine. Not all sections that they looked at will be accepted without some additional surface improvements. Sand is washing into streams and wheels are digging in by about a half inch. The gravel size-requirements are being adjusted to 10% $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 1.5" and 90% smaller than that. A finer surface will be overlaid from Whitneyville to Machias. All the gravel will be this size mix from Whitneyville west. He said that the problem is that the natural material in Washington County is either too sandy or too rocky. He added that the surface may not be as fine as desired, but it is what is available naturally in the local area. He also said that once the trail surface is rolled and compacted, and traffic is using it, the surface will get better.

Dan added that a lot of the previous reports were from riders on portions of the trail that were not yet completed. He added that the final surface should be acceptable for hybrid bicycles.

Kathleen asked about dust. She reported that many businesses are concerned. Charlie said that he is trying to work with the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) on calcium chloride application systems. He added that calcium chloride was laid down for the blueberry festival. He cautioned that it is not prudent to lay more down until the trail surface is complete.

Sally said that she thought that the more fine materials there are in the surface materials, the more dust is created. John agreed, but stated that the fine materials are needed as cement. Kathleen asked how often calcium chloride is laid down on other multi-use trails, and Scott replied that other trails may apply it once a year, depending on the weather.

John reminded the board that some material segregation will happen on the trail. The rocks may accumulate on the edge. He added that the Maine Department of Conservation (MDOC) has been working hard with the contractors to improve the materials used on the trail surface. He added that the contractors are doing the best they can with the natural materials available in the region. He also said there is not much money for maintenance, and it will take more funding to maintain the trail for bicycle use. Scott added that the only money available for maintenance is \$50K from MDOT and money from snowmobiles and ATV programs. Bill reported that the trails in Aroostook County are graded once every 3-4 years. Scott reported that MDOC hopes for greater use on this trail than on Aroostook trails.

Kathleen reported that she has received inquiries from other states about the trail, and she has been reporting that it is closed. Sally wondered if the construction company could post where they are working so that folks could informally use the trail outside these areas. Scott and John reported that these signs keep getting taken down.

Bill asked if the contractors are re-screening materials that are too large, and John replied that they are. Dave said that the mix of materials is more important than the size of the rocks. He brought information. Scott said that he hasn't seen information from multi-use trails. Dave said that smaller rocks are O.K., but the trail needs to be suitable for bicyclists and ATV's. Scott said that the trails along the St. John are unique because they are crushed shale.

Dave said that he has spoken with the Bar Harbor Bicycle Shop and that they would not recommend the trail without a better surface. Dan reported that the contractors tried 15/16", but it ended up as silt. Scott added that the contractors are doing what they can with their equipment, and this is going beyond their existing contract. He asked everyone to wait until September 2010 to judge whether the trail is usable because the contractors are trying to make adjustments as recommended by MDOC. He added that four different mixes have been used out of six gravel pits.

Bill said that bikes on gravel roads work fine and added that everyone should give MDOC a chance to finish the trail. He added that the problem has been the large chunks of rock that come through. Someone said that larger rocks are what hold the trail together by creating surface stability. Without this, the trail corners start banking. Dan said that he has spent two days with MDOC and that it is clear that as the surface materials get smaller, it gets better for road bikes. He added that this raises the cost, and it would be worse if the trail could not be maintained. He said that the finished sections are respectable and will be able to be maintained without ridges.

John said that with a 10-foot-wide trail, a problem is that everyone wants to drive in the middle, which doesn't help clear out the rocks. Bill said that sweeping seemed to work well. John added that rolling the trail and putting down calcium chloride also seems to help.

2. Law Enforcement Discussions

Charlie said that the Maine Forest Service stopped 67 ATV's one week and 37 ATV's another week, and there were no violations found. He added that the Sheriff has also been active on the trail - even stopping the MDOC for having trucks on the trail. Sally added that when she has been out on the trail, she has met the wardens and has had a good experience.

Bill asked about abutting landowner issues. J. McBrine has received several complaints. Charlie has put up several signs, but there are still kids zooming along. Charlie reported that the wardens have been working with Mr. Bragg and other landowners. Mr. McBrine said that while the Maine Supreme Court ruled that wardens could stop ATV's, the legislature decided that ATVs could only be legally stopped if there was a violation. Wayde Carter elaborated that violations could include imprudent speed, operating without lights or a muffler, or reckless operation. Mr. McBrine added that the number of safety checks may go down, but he feels that the wardens can still handle the problems.

Kathleen asked how pedestrians should complain. Wayde Carter replied that they can get the plate number of the ATV or snowmobile and call the Maine Warden Service if they are willing to testify. Sally said that the plates are hard to read.

Someone asked if there have been any issues on the roads. Wayde Carter said that if there are problems, it is probably due to speed, and towns can close the roads again.

Sally asked about the status of negotiations with Bangor Hydro at Schoodic Bog. She wondered whether the trail should be separated at this location. John said that he spoke with Alan Stearns, but the Bangor Hydro project is at least a year away from completion.

Scott and Dan added that the goal of the Down East Sunrise Trail is to fix the rail corridor so the trail will stay there for now. Sally added that uses could be separated later if wanted. She added that some groups would like to see the rail and trail removed from the bog due to environmental concerns. Charlie reported that lots of steps are being taken to protect the bog. He added that the trail will be built over top of the ties and rails for 1,000 feet. This will entail adding some gravel and construction material and surfacing the top. Bill asked whether the beaver dam could be removed, but Charlie replied that it is on private property and landowner permission would be required. MDOC felt removing the beaver would also only be a temporary solution. Charlie said that MDOC may have to add culverts for water flow in the bog.

3. Parking lots

ACTION ITEM- Bill reported that he and Charlie were going to speak with Cherryfield Foods to see if they would grant permission for people to park at the boxcar on a temporary basis.

Charlie added that he has spoken with some landowners, one of whom said that informal parking now has not been an issue. Kathleen said that this probably depends on the day. Dan asked whether it is clear what the state owns. Charlie replied that he is reasonably sure in some areas, but firming this up is critical. Sally said that if a kiosk is constructed, it needs to be on state property and located with the parking. Charlie said that he has put up sign posts for maps and trail information.

ACTION ITEM - Determine who owns what in the Machias and Franklin areas in particular.

4. Trail Rules

Kathleen asked about trail rules and how to proceed. Scott said that state laws and Bureau of Parks and Lands rules for parks will apply. He added that otherwise, ethics apply (i.e. who yields to whom).

Wayde Carter asked if the trail will be open to hunting, and Scott replied that it will be open generally, but if an abutting landowner posts his/her land, hunting will not be allowed. He added that firearms possession will be allowed, but that loaded guns cannot be carried on an ATV. Anyone will still be allowed to carry their weapons through sections of trail that are closed to hunting. Permission will not be given along the trail corridor for construction of tree stands. Shooting down the rail corridor is prohibited.

5. Kiosks

Bill spoke with Betsy Fitzgerald who contacted the Correctional Center. They have agreed to provide labor. Bill asked whether the Sunrise Trail Coalition should seek donations of building materials from EBS and other building supply companies for the estimated \$1,500 worth of materials it will take to construct one of the East Coast Greenway kiosks. Sally added that the Coalition has also received grant money for trailhead improvements.

Dan Stewart said that while it is nice that the Sunrise Trail Coalition wants to donate to kiosk construction, it is important to Commissioner Cole that the kiosks look good with good maps. He said that the DEST Project will fund the construction of kiosks.

Sally asked about advertising on state kiosks, and Dan replied that the MDOC policy on advertising would be followed. Scott said that there isn't such a policy. He said that they generally don't allow businesses to post signs on the trails and MDOC has a nice design for a kiosk that is used at state parks. John said that the state has allowed use of kiosks in certain situations, such as the Friends of Fort Knox kiosk that was built with MDOC approval. Scott added that he prefers that the Sunrise Trail Coalition deal with the costs, advertising, etc. Skip said that he sent out the MDOC designs for kiosks and Bill said that he received them.

Dan reiterated that MDOT wants nice, well built, kiosks with information on rail history and the map. He said that the MDOT Office of Communications will write it.

Sally wondered how soon the decision could be made about design of the kiosks. Dave provided the East Coast Greenway kiosk designs to Scott. He said that these kiosks are in use on the Kennebec Valley Rail Trail and in the South Portland Greenbelt. Sally said that Rick Scribner who was going to chair the sign committee has gotten busy and hasn't had time to convene the committee. The size of the kiosk needs to be decided.

Dan said that MDOT will pay for the materials. Skip said that MDOC has 3 or 4 kiosks already built that are waiting for placement. Scott recommended thinking through the messages on the kiosk carefully and creating a memorandum of understanding (MOU) among all partners. He then recommended that Charlie work on getting approval for the location of the first kiosk.

Sally and Stephanie volunteered to write up an MOU defining who does what on the kiosks.

Dan said that he does not want MDOT to be part of the MOU because it would then require legal review at the Department. It was suggested that it simply be recorded what the final agreement is. John Picher is the person from MDOC to work with the Sunrise Trail Coalition on the MOU. Dan will research who best to receive the invoice from for trail sign materials. Scott said that the materials need to be purchased from a vendor for the state. Charlie can purchase the materials and give the receipts to MDOT.

Gail Peters asked that MDOC and the Sunrise Trail Coalition work with the town on siting the Machias kiosk(s) because the town has completed a landscape revitalization plan for the area.

Agreed that kiosks are needed first at Ayers Junction and Machias. Should have photo of DOT and DOC Commissioners.

John questioned whether the state has had any say in whether the Down East Sunrise Trail is part of the East Coast Greenway. Dan said that being part of the Greenway does not raise any expectations. Dave added that the official route for the East Coast Greenway is on roads. Sally said that the designation will help bring tourists to the area. John cautioned that we don't want to bring people to the area with expectations that the trail will be just for bicycles. Dave recommended that people familiarize themselves with the East Coast Greenway by visiting www.greenway.org. Scott recommended a formal presentation by the Greenway, and Dave suggested at the Annual Meeting. Carol added that greenway groups always describe the trails for their users to avoid creating false expectations.

6. Law Enforcement Equipment

J. McBride indicated that he has applied for grants from Polaris Industries and the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund for ATVs for rescue equipment to be housed at East Machias. It will be a side-by-side ATV and a rescue trailer that is capable of carrying two victims and medical personnel. Dan thanked law enforcement for making sure that rescue operations will work well. Gary said that he is worried that side-by-side equipment will be too wide for the trail. He said that the gates to the side trails for groomers are closed in summer so the entrance to the side trails will be narrower. Sally recommended giving the rescue folks a key. Gail said that a combination lock might also be used. Charlie said that bolt cutters might also be an option.

7. Historic Preservation Grant

Kathleen reported that the historic preservation grant was not received for Station 98. She added that everyone is working on Station 98, but \$200K is needed. The internal walls are being taken out. Kathleen said that a ramp will be needed to the boxcar if it is to be used before the Station is completed because the platform at Station 98 won't be built until the last step in the restoration process.

8. Newsletter

Bill said that an e-mail update should be sent out to the larger distribution list. Dave added that the Sunrise Trail Coalition website needs to be updated soon.

ACTION ITEM: Bill said that he would contact Jim Fisher. Sally added that the trail status needs to be updated. Charlie said that he expects that 32 miles of it will be open soon.

Sandy asked about an official opening of the trail – whether it could be combined with the annual meeting. Dan suggested that this needs to be coordinated with MDOC, and that the Governor should be involved. Sally suggested it might be an opportunity to announce what's open and that the rest of the trail is officially closed. She added that special invitations could be issued to bike shop owners, to tourism officials, and to legislators.

ACTION ITEM: Dan suggested that people should write thank you letters to the commissioner for the trail because there has been a lot of negative comment recently regarding the trail surface. Gary added that Thibodeau should be thanked, as well, since they have worked hard to try to find a solution to trail surface problems.

ACTION ITEM: A "Save the Date" e-mail about the annual meeting should be sent as soon as possible to the mailing list. The event may entail an East Coast Greenway presentation, the official opening of the trail, and a potluck meeting in Machias. Sending a newsletter was also discussed. Articles are due October 5th.

ACTION ITEM: Bill will check with Dave Whitney over possibly providing a grill for hot dogs.

9. Treasurer's Report

Dave reported that the July Treasurer's report was revised. Bill asked how many members the Sunrise Trail Coalition has, and Dave said that he is still working on figuring this out but it is more than 100. Polly asked if membership reminders had been sent out. Sally said that anyone who joins on or after November 1st will have their dues credited to 2010. Dues are often collected at the Annual meeting for the following year. Publishing a list of members in the newsletter was suggested.

Total as of 6/30/2009	\$15,564.39
Expenses for Trail day tent, Maine Grind meeting room and PO Box rental	\$818.00
Total as of 8/26/2009	\$14,746.39
Grants amounts (restricted) included in Total	6,688.21

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie M. Clement
Secretary