

Sunrise Trail Coalition

Meeting Minutes 7/22/09, 1:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Down East RC & D offices, Cherryfield, ME

Present: Bill Ceckler (Sunrise Trail Coalition), Polly Ceckler (Sunrise Trail Coalition), Stephanie Clement (Friends of Acadia), Charlie Corliss (Maine Department of Conservation), Jim Fisher (Hancock County Planning Commission), Betsy Fitzgerald (Town of Machias), Bailey Grant (Maine Warden Service), Courtney Hammond (Maine Forest Service), Janneke Heida, Jim Heida, Sally Jacobs (Sunrise Trail Coalition), Jay Johnson (Sunrise Trail Coalition), Sandy Johnson (Sunrise Trail Coalition), Scott Ramsey (Maine Department of Conservation), Rick Scribner (Sunrise Canoe and Kayak), Skip Varney (Maine Department of Conservation), Dave Wood (Sunrise Trail Coalition)

1. Introductions

2. Kiosks

Bill, Sally, Dave, and Julie Isbill met with Dan Stewart regarding the kiosks. Sally reported that the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) is willing to pay for them. Dan suggested that the Sunrise Trail Coalition find a local carpenter who is willing to construct the kiosk according to the East Coast Greenway plans. He suggested we send the bills to MDOT, and they will pay. Sally said that Dan is also checking about what can be on the kiosks if the state funds them. Sally said they discussed having a large map on one side, and a more detailed break-out map on the other side. Advertising may be an issue for the state, so alternative arrangements may have to be found. Jim urged caution when proceeding because state funding usually requires a competitive bidding process. He recommended checking in with Dan at every step along the process. Jim added that in his experience, the state has allowed listings for chambers of commerce, but not for individual businesses. Bill pointed out that the kiosks are good locations for selling ads, so this may be a good reason for the Sunrise Trail Coalition to fund/build the first one. Courtney recommended having inmates from the Down East Correctional Facility build the kiosks. Scott said that if they do the construction, materials are all that must be provided. Betsy will make contact with the correctional facility.

Charlie reported there are a couple of locations suitable for the kiosks in Machias. He recommended one behind EBS, near the end of the fence, to the west of the boxcar. Another would be across from the Dunkin Donuts. Scott said that he understood the kiosks would be at parking areas and major trail junctions. He added that advertising is handled by the trail friends group in Fort Kent. Sally asked if the Recreational Trails Fund would pay for kiosks, and Scott replied it would if the kiosk is educational. Dave recommended getting donors to fund kiosk installation and that some locations have side trails with smaller kiosks. Scott said that Van Buren has smaller kiosks with advertising. Scott recommended that there be no advertising on the trail except on kiosks.

Stephanie said that the Sunrise Trail Coalition, Department of Conservation (MDOC), and Department of Transportation (MDOT) should sign an agreement to establish a mutual understanding of what each agency/group will do. A sign committee (Rick, Gary, Stephanie, Betsy, Sally) was formed to start working out the details. Scott reported that he dropped off a post hole digger and a tractor with Charlie.

Rick asked about the artwork for the kiosks. Sally reported that Kevin Riley, the mapmaker for MDOT, is preparing the maps. One side of the kiosks would feature the map of the entire trail, and the other would be broken into sections pointing out where advertising businesses are, showing connections to snowmobile/ATV trails, etc.

Sally suggested starting with one kiosk as a model. Bill asked where it would be placed, and Betsy recommended having it across from Kilton Lane, near the farmers' market. Sally asked if MDOT owned that land. Charlie replied that MDOT owns some of it, and some of it is privately held. He added that where people unload their vehicles at the causeway is privately owned. He said that MDOT owns the siding. Betsy reported that the town is already picking up trash in this area. Bill recommended that the kiosk be where the parking is, and Scott suggested a lease or a management agreement with the landowners. Scott asked about East Machias where the Downeast Salmon Federation is willing to cooperate.

MOTION: To have Betsy contact the correctional facility in communication with the sign committee and to have this committee start to look for funding and donations for the kiosks.
MADE BY: Sally Jacobs
SECOND: Stephanie Clement
VOTE: Unanimous in favor.

Dave said that the kiosk plans are at "greenway.org" under "Explore the Greenway".

3. Discussion of complaints, trail rules, and how to proceed

Bill reported that he was contacted at 3:00 a.m. on July 4th by Jack Bragg of East Machias. The trail goes near Mr. Bragg's house, and he complained about ATV usage at night, dust, and speeding. Jim asked if there are any policies that the Sunrise Trail could support regarding enforcement. Betsy said that her office overlooks the trail, and she witnessed a speeding dirt bike that the Machias Police went after. Scott said that he has encouraged the Machias Police Department and the Washington County Sheriff's office to acquire ATV's to assist with trail enforcement. Skip offered to assist with the application process. Bailey added that there is a special grant that the police departments can apply for to give overtime for their patrols on the trail.

Jim asked about the recourse at night. Scott said that ATVs cannot operate recklessly. He added that most problems are caused by a few people. He added that speed limits can be posted, but they are not enforceable. Charlie will be putting up signs. He added that trail signs recommending "slow" can also be posted.

Scott said that posting slower speeds may also help reduce dust problems. He added that calcium chloride will also be used in some settled areas. Charlie is working on getting liquid calcium chloride.

Sally said that Kathy Mazuchelli has offered to come inform local law enforcement about the complicated series of grants that they have achieved to cover their trails. Bailey said that IF&W is up to speed on these grants, but the sheriffs and police departments might benefit. Only Ellsworth and Machias have police departments on the trail.

Rick said that IF&W has good safety programs that could be preventive. He wondered if there was any incentive to get youth to participate. Bailey said that anyone aged 10-16 must take a safety course in order to use an ATV off of their properties. He reported, however, that the Maine legislature just turned down a connection between receiving an OUI on a snowmobile and losing a driver's license. Sally said that ATV groups work on peer safety training. Bailey said that OUI checks can be conducted on the trail.

Jim said that he liked the idea of trailside vegetation to cut down on noise and dust. He wondered if a night-time curfew could be established. Scott said that it can be done, but it can't be enforced. Bailey added that IF&W only has authority to enforce state law, not local ordinances. Scott added that the enforceable state laws are powerful – things like drunken driving, unregistered vehicles, etc.

Bill asked what the Department of Conservation's experience has been with night driving on other trails. Scott said that this is an anomaly on this trail. Bailey added that there will be night use, but it usually thins at 10:00 p.m. He suggested that club peer pressure about etiquette is the best way to combat it. Scott said another way to catch an offender is through a planned check-point. He added that folks can call the Orono dispatch for the state police at 1-800-432-7381, but it will be very hard to catch the offender because by the time police responds, the offender will be gone. Bailey added that if someone is behaving in a reckless manner, it may be easier to get local law enforcement to respond. Scott concluded that signs are being posted on the trail quickly. He added that the trail should not have too many rules. Charlie added that he has been trying to reach Jack Bragg, the gentleman who originally complained to Bill.

4. Trail Surface

Bill reported that Sally, Tony, Dave, and Julie spoke with Dan Stewart regarding the trail surface and the idea of a trail surface committee. Scott said that MDOC is working on the surface issues. He added that some sections of the trail are unsatisfactory. He said the most important thing is getting the trails off and the culverts fixed to open the trail. He noted that MDOC is dissatisfied with the trail surface from Machias to Whitneyville.

Sally said that she recently rode the trail. She said that it is much better. She spoke with people every mile. She said that in some sections, the rip/rap rocks are coming through. She said that she is concerned about relying on ATV's to finish the trail by sweeping the larger rocks off.

Scott said that MDOC is actively watching the construction and is making modifications to the contract. He said that he witnessed bicycles sinking into the surface by a half inch on sections, and this is not acceptable either (too fine). He said that gravel management is a science, and MDOC is trying to achieve a happy medium.

Dave reported that he and Tony rode the Jay to Farmington trail. He said that the surface from West Farmington to the hospital was excellent, but south of there was not good. He wondered what the difference was.

Scott said that Fort Kent was resurfaced with crushed shale. He said that 1/2-inch minus gravel is not available here. He said that the Down East Sunrise Trail specification was changed to 1-inch minus gravel and that it will cost more to accomplish this specification. He added that the Farmington specification was 3/4-inch minus gravel. He also said that the rock is crushed and screened at the gravel pit. Sand is added on-site to make the mix uniform.

Bill requested more communication from the MDOC regarding surface treatments. Scott said that he would like a survey done to see what surfaces people like. He added that MDOC needs to make sure that the trail is completed. He does not want the state to run out of money before the trail is connected. He added that this trail is different than the Acadia National Park carriage roads because ATV's are included. Charlie added that the ATV treads are spreading, and he will try to get a sweeper onto the trail to get rid of the larger stones.

Sally said that the trail cannot be constructed such that certain user groups find it unusable and it is not a true multi-use trail. Scott said that it is a "Shared Use" trail and no user group will be favored over another. He added that the market on steel has fallen through, and that he is worried there may not be enough money to construct the whole trail.

Dave asked how the 1-inch minus gravel specification was determined. Scott said that MDOC looked at the gravel pits, put together test pads, heard user concerns, considered expenses, and thought about whether the volume of material needed could be obtained locally. Dave asked about the difference in cost between 1-inch minus gravel and 1/2-inch minus gravel. Scott said that it depends on the gravel pit. He added that he didn't think 1/2-inch minus gravel would hold up to ATV traffic. He said the trail would require more frequent and expensive resurfacing.

5. MDOC Update

Charlie said that the contractors continue to lay down surface materials, and they have less than 9 miles to go on the Dennysville end. He said that the funnel and the rails still need to be done on the Whitneyville Bridge. Rail removal has proceeded to Rt. 182 in Cherryfield. The contractors continue to work on ditching and culverts in Cherryfield and Columbia Falls. The ties are being picked up and stacked. Charlie said that some work may also be done in Washington Junction. Charlie has inspected the section between Unionville and Schoodic Bog. He said there are new beaver problems, washouts, and floods.

Bill asked when the Henderson lands would be crossed. Charlie said that he anticipated that the Steuben blockade would be crossed by approximately August 5th. Bill asked whether MDOC will send out press releases as sections of the trail are opened. Charlie said that this is MDOC's goal. Scott added that MDOC would prefer to wait until there can be a big splash of a trail opening, but recommended that the Sunrise Trail Coalition include on its website which sections are open. Charlie added that minor things keep some sections from being opened, and MDOC needs to sign off on these sections before trail use is sanctioned. He said he has been telling interested folks that it is O.K. to use the trail as long as they stay out of construction zones. Jay asked who will notify folks when a section is officially open for use, and Scott replied that Charlie is the contact.

Sally said that Jef Fitzgerald is very worried about the trail connection to Ellsworth. Charlie said that ditching work is now eating into the funds that were available for this use. Bill asked if the Sunrise Trail Coalition could have member present at each construction meeting, and Scott said that he is not sure it is allowed, but would check. He added that construction meetings happen monthly.

6. Treasurer's Report

The treasurer's report was distributed. Sally said that the parameters of the Rails to Trails grants need to be looked up to determine how they can be spent. Dave reported that the Sunrise Trail Coalition has a new address – P.O. Box 67 in Hallowell, ME 04347.

7. Minutes of the Last Meeting

No action was taken on the minutes of the last meeting. Stephanie asked everyone to send their changes to her.

8. Miscellaneous

Scott said that if a motorcycle is registered with the Maine Department of Transportation, it cannot also be re-registered as an off-road vehicle or an ATV. He cited Title 29 of the Maine Statutes. He added that dirt bikes with ATV stickers are allowed on the trail, but he reiterated that if they are registered for motor use, they are not allowed on the trails. Stephanie asked for the specific statutory reference for the minutes.

Charlie said that he is giving presentations coming up in Franklin, Pembroke/Robbinston, and Ellsworth.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie M. Clement
Secretary