

Meeting of the Sunrise Trail Coalition
Cherryfield Academy
1: p.m., Wednesday, January 24th, 2007

In Attendance: See attached list with contact information

Sally started the meeting with a “Thank you” to all the people who worked on the newsletter, especially Jim Fisher for all the hard work he put into the newsletter and mailing list.

Bill Ceckler moved that the minutes be accepted as submitted. All in favor.

Treasurer’s Report: Eleody reported that there was not much change to report since the last meeting; there are no new members to report this month. There are currently 38 members. Many of the members come from snowmobile and ATV clubs. There is a membership form in the newsletter, so hopefully we’ll get some response from that.

Prior to mailing the newsletter, we had \$1,095 in membership; and a balance of just over \$2000 including the \$1000 Kodak grant money. At least half of the membership dues will go for the newsletter.

Newsletters are being mailed first class so that they’ll come back to us by return mail if the person is no longer at the address; that way we can clean up the address list.

We want to recognize David Whitney for sponsoring the first newsletter. We want to continue having sponsors finance the newsletter, so if you know people who might want to sponsor an upcoming issue please let us know so we can contact them.

Report from MDOT: Dan Stewart reported that DOT is nearing an agreement with DOC for DOC to officially take over the planning, construction, and management of the trail. Once the agreement is signed, DOC will work on creating an RFP to get an estimate of value for the rail; and work on permitting for trail construction. MDOT is working with rail salvage folk to get estimates of value for the rails. They are trying to make sure that funding will be in place for trail construction. It is possible that an RFP will go out within two months. (A loud round of applause!) In that case, the work can commence in 2007 while the earliest possible date for a trail opening along the entire corridor could be Spring 2008.

Dan stressed that there will need to be a period for folks to respond to the RFP, so we won’t know until May (at least) if there will be any proposals that would generate enough funds from the salvage to for trail construction. In the event that the RFP does not come back positive, other funding options would need to be explored.

Report from MDOT: David Rodrigues reported that there is now a DOC engineer starting work on this project. The biggest problem associated with rail salvage and

trail construction is disposal the rail ties: there are currently no facilities in Maine that can adequately dispose of the ties.

DOC has received applications for the regional manager's position. Interviews will take place in the next couple of weeks. They hope to have someone on board within 2 months. There is a possibility of having office space for the regional manager in Cherryfield. Once the position is filled, that person will become the primary contact for this project with local towns (planning boards and select boards). David reminded us that the new position would cover all trails downeast.

Jim Fisher reported that in the meantime, he and Judy East have talked about HCPC and WCCOG keeping towns apprised of what is happening with this project. Jim (HCPC) and Jeremy (WCCOG) will make sure that the newsletter finds its way to town offices.

Lucy Witt with the Cherryfield Planning Board mentioned that this kind of outreach to towns would be welcome, as towns would like to have as much advanced notice as possible to start planning for public restrooms, municipal parking and potential impacts on land-use planning.

Sally suggested a short presentation for Select Boards to let them know what's going on. David responded that this is the kind of thing the regional manager can do once he comes on board; but that until we hear back from the RFP and know whether or not we have funding for the project, it might be premature to go out to Selectmen.

Scott Ramsey (DOC) added that this is an 87-mile trail, and with \$30,000 construction costs, the project will need over \$2 million in the next two years to get off the ground. Amenities and surface materials will be in the RFP, but depending on how the cost estimates come back some part may need to cut from the initial construction schedule. Initially, the focus should be on getting the rails up and a trail on the ground and open; and then the other piece will fall into place.

Bill Ceckler moved that the Sunrise Coalition support MDOT and DOC in their efforts to get an RFP out so that we can get started on rail salvage and trail construction; that we keep towns informed and updated; and that once the RFP comes back, we should work closely with the towns.

Update on the Database: Jim Fisher reported that we have 771 records in the current contact database, but many don't have mailing addresses. The database he has created can be used to generate mailing labels, email lists, and membership reports.

At this point, someone will need to go through the database and update records; as well as ensure that it be kept up to date. Since Eleody is receiving new membership and will be receiving any copies of the newsletter that come back, she offered to handle that function.

Update on the Box Car: Julie reported that they had just gone to look at the box car. There is not much to update; there are now about \$4,000 available from the NPS Challenge Grant and the Kodak grant for exterior improvements.

Bill Cherry reported that he had looked into repainting the boxcar. The exterior is currently deeply pitted; and the people he spoke with questioned how long an exterior paint job would last. Several ideas were suggested for ways to temporarily stop the rust; and paint the boxcar.

There was some discussion of whether the boxcar should remain its present location or be aligned with the old depot. Representatives from the snowmobile clubs suggested that moving the box car from its current location would enhance visibility at the intersection of the roadway for snowmobilers and thus improve safety.

It was suggested that we look into using the \$4,000 to have the exterior power washed, treated and painted.

Grants Report: We received \$3000 from the NPS Challenge Grant. We have applied to Maine Community Foundation \$5000 as the STC one-quarter share of funding for an MDOT feasibility study on a trailhead in Ellsworth.

Jim Fisher reported that he has put in a letter of intent to DART as a complement to a \$19,000 mapping grant. The grant request is for \$1600 to produce a geocaching brochure along the Blackwoods Scenic Byway Corridor that would complement the trail effort.

Trailhead Update: Dan Stewart reported that 15 locations have been identified where the state currently owns sidings along the corridor that are wide enough to be used as trailhead parking areas. Since these areas are already owned by the state, they would just need gravel (and potentially grading) to serve as trailheads. How many of the trailheads will be initially funded for construction will need to be determined based on input from the towns and the availability of funding. The 15 locations identified by MDOT are in Ellsworth, Franklin, Sullivan at Donnell Pond, Steuben at Unionville Road, Cherryfield, Harrington at the Webb District Road, Columbia Falls at Centreville Road, Whitneyville, Machias, East Machias at Factory Road, East Machias at Rocky Lake Unit, Marion at Ridge Road, Dennysville, and Ayers Junction.

Other Business: Arthur Tenan, from Cherryfield, was on hand to report that he is in the planning stages of developing a recreational tourism business in Cherryfield that will be anchored by the Sunrise Trail! We look forward to hearing more about this project as it develops.

Representative from the Sunrise Snowmobilers in Calais were on hand. They expressed concern about the fact that the proposed trail currently ends as Ayers Junction, rather than extending all the way to Calais. They mentioned that even if the proposed trail were to extend another 3 miles or so into Charlotte, it would increase the safety and usability of the trail's eastern end. Snowmobilers would then be able to

tie into the Sunrise Snowmobilers' existing trail network; and bicycle users would be able to directly access the Charlotte Road rather than having to negotiate with traffic on 214.

Dan Stewart (MDOT) and Scott Ramsey (DOC) thanked them for the suggestion and asked that the Snowmobile Club go to the towns and get letters of support to send to Dan Stewart for this idea. They agreed to look into the possibility of extending the proposed trail as far as Charlotte but said they would need evidence of local support.

All the newsletters were folded, addressed and turned over to Eleody who took them to be stamped by her office crew, after which she would mail them.

Meeting adjourned at 3:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Jeremy Gabrielson (1/26/2007).