



Non-Motorized Advisory Workgroup (NAW)

Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual - TEAMS

Date: April 6, 2023

Time: 10 a.m. - Noon

Welcome – Roll Call

PRESENT FOR THE NON-MOTORIZED ADVISORY WORKGROUP (NAW)

- Andrea LaFontaine, Chairperson
- Kenny Wawsczyk, Vice Chair
- John Bollman
- Neal Glazebrook
- Jason Aric Jones
- Stephanie Swanberg
- Brent Bolin
- Bob Hendrickson
- Lori Hauswirth

PRESENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR) STAFF

Tim Novak, Annalisa Centofanti, Lee Maynard, Scott Slavin, Greg Kinser, Blake Gingrich, Ron Yesney, Paige Perry, Nicole Hunt, Sage Hegdal, Jeff Kakuk, Christopher Stark, Rob Katona, Jason Fleming, , Peter Costa, Matt Torreano, Mike Terrell, Steve Krzesicki

Meeting minutes

ACTION ITEMS

Meeting called to order at 10:00 a.m. by committee Chair, Andrea LaFontaine.

Motion was made by John Bollman to approve the Feb. 2 draft meeting minutes as is and seconded by Neal Glazebrook. With all in favor, motion carried.

Motion was made by John Bollman to approve the April 6 agenda as is and seconded by Kenny Wawsczyk. With all in favor, motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Frye resident of Gwinn in Marquette County Michigan and has concerns about mountain bikes being removed from the Thunder Valley Trails through a Land Use Order of the Director.

Wendy Frye resident of Gwinn in Marquette County Michigan and has concerns about mountain bikes being removed from the Thunder Valley Trails through a Land Use Order of the Director. Wendy is in support of forming a committee to help maintain and monitor the Thunder Valley Trail System and would like to be involved.

Wendell Kurr resident of Gwinn in Marquette County Michigan and has concerns about mountain bikes being removed from the Thunder Valley Trails through a Land Use Order of the Director.

Jenny Cook horse trail representative promoting natural resource opportunities to recreate and advocate for horse trail safety.

Karen Bahrman equestrian advocate concerned with a low number of trails available for equestrian use in the Upper Peninsula. Also, expressed trail user issues, conflicts, and safety concerns for the equestrians.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

NON-MOTORIZED GRANT COORDINATOR

Lee Maynard introduced herself as the new Non-motorized Grant Coordinator for the Trails Section. Lee has an educational background in parks and recreation and prior experience with community trail systems in northern Michigan.

LAND USE ORDER OF THE DIRECTOR (LUOD) E-BIKES

Nicole Hunt, DNR, spoke about a proposed Land Use Order of the Director in development to expand the DNR policy to allow e-bikes on natural surface trails. e-bike use continues to increase, and the Department is evaluating whether to extend the use of different classes of e-bikes on natural surface trails. The LUOD is proposing that Class I (peddle assist and can reach a top speed of 20mph) can be used anywhere a traditional bicycle can be operated. Class II (throttle assist and reaches a max speed of 20mph) can be used anywhere a pedal bicycle is allowed for individuals with a mobility impairment and will need to obtain a DNR approval/permit prior to operating the Class II e-bike on any trails. At this time there will be no option to allow the use of Class III e-bikes.

Andrea LaFontaine asked how does Michigan compare to other states, is this a trend? Nicole Hunt said there are a number of states that are expanding use of different classes of e-bikes. Some states are engaging in an evaluation period.

Jason Aric Jones requested the due process as this proposal is a big change for natural surface trails. Jason would like to ensure that the public has an opportunity to better understand the ask. Jason would like to see the draft presented and discussed with the newly formed DNR e-bike Subcommittee, followed by NAW and the Michigan Trails Advisory Council (MTAC), and lastly presented to the Natural Resource Commission (NRC).

Kenny Wawsczyk asked if this change will include State Forest lands? Nicole Hunt said that this specific LUOD draft will only pertain to state managed Parks and Recreation (PRD) lands, but PRD is having same conversations with other divisions (Forest Resource Division (FRD); Wildlife Division (WLD)).

Bob Hendrickson asked how this will be enforced and regulated. Nicole said this will be regulated the way it is currently, the DNR will continue to enforce in the same manner. Class II users will need to have the DNR Use Permit in hand.

Neal Glazebrook commented that this has not been brought forth to the DNR E-bike Subcommittee and would like the opportunity to review the draft. Neal also would like the process to involve NAW and MTAC, followed by the NRC to make sure everyone's voices are heard. Neal also mentioned the educational part of this is important.

Lori Hauswirth is on the DNR E-bike Subcommittee. Lori is an advocate for reaching out to friend and steward groups who maintain nonmotorized surface trails. Lori feels due diligence has not been done and there is a need to recognize a lot of differences exist amongst trails across the state. Lori said conducting a trial period to determine if this will be successful is critical and should be part of the implementation plan. Additionally, public awareness and education is a big a part of being successful.

Jason Fleming, DNR, said this LUOD is not being rushed through. The Department is taking into consideration public comment. The Department would like to have something in place for this year's riding season, not necessarily for Spring. Jason is concerned with the process by adding additional layers in the timing, not knowing how often each committee meets. Just to move this draft through the NRC will take two months. Jason said he can provide the LUOD draft to the E-bike Subcommittee and NAW members today.

Stephanie Swanberg mentioned from her public perspective there will be a difference of opinions when e-bike policy changes are presented and feels once implemented that the education piece is very important. Stephanie also added how will this change trail usage like yielding. A slow rollout seems to be ideal rather than a blanket roll out, perhaps pilot the change in some selected areas to gauge any potential issues and receive public feedback.

Brent Bolin is in support of a pilot program. Brent mentioned this change will be difficult to enforce as there is no one point of access for trails, there are many locations people can jump on a trail. Brent said he is worried this policy change will not be communicated effectively. What is the communication plan? The overall strategy should be to make trails safe for everyone.

Nicole Hunt, DNR, said the discussion shared today is appreciated and the DNR takes your thoughts and ideas to gauge whether or not we are thinking conceptually of how we roll this out. We are looking for a solid rounded draft and intend to make it inclusive. No target date is set for this policy change/LUOD to be presented to the NRC.

John Bollman added that committee members have made some valid points today in regard to gathering public input. However, the NAW and MTAC schedules are not aligned with the NRC schedule. One consideration is to create a resolution to ask the DNR to hold a public hearing and reach out to interest groups prior to submitting a formal draft to the NRC.

MOTION

Jason Aric Jones made a motion that in the interest of supporting due process and due diligence regarding a LUOD to change e-bike access to natural surface nonmotorized trails on PRD State Land, the NAW asks that any proposed LUOD regarding e-bike access first goes to the DNR E-bike Subcommittee by email for review and, subsequently, the subcommittee passes along to their recommendation to NAW for review and public comment at a forthcoming NAW meeting. After the NAW approval, the comments would be sent up to MTAC for a full recommendation of implementation.

Neal Glazebrook seconded; vote taken. **Motion carries with majority votes.**

Vote taken:

Andrea LaFontaine - No
Kenny Wawsczyk - Yes
Neal Glazebrook - Yes
Jason Aric Jones - Yes
Lori Hauswirth - Yes
Brent Bolin - Yes
Bob Hendrickson - Yes
Stephanie Swanberg - Yes
John Bollman - No

*Next step is to email the draft LUOD to the DNR E-bike subcommittee for review.

Nicole Hunt added for clarification that the NRC does not approve the LUOD they only review the draft for public comment. It is the DNR Director that approves the final LUOD.

LUOD EQUINE TRAILS

Nicole Hunt, DNR, reviewed the DNR draft LUOD, to restrict bicycle use on two identified trails in the Upper Peninsula:

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1. Cedar River North, except for the south loop adjacent to the state forest campground
2. Thunder Valley

Nicole said the Equine Trails Subcommittee (ETS) has identified several trails where there has been noted conflict between equestrians and bicyclist. Internal discussions between PRD and FRD has occurred, and they have reviewed the list that was prepared by ETS, which resulted in two trails (identified above) where staff felt there was a conflict and could support potentially restricting (prohibiting) bicycle use.

Lori Hauswirth wants to hear from U.P. trails staff regarding the two trails of any reported conflicts and stewardship taking place for either of these systems.

Rob Katona, DNR Trails Specialist from the U.P. has not heard of any conflicts on either trail. Rob mentioned when the trails were reviewed with FRD, because these trails are located on state forest land, that this would be a good fit due to low mountain bike use. Both trail systems are low use overall. Thunder Valley is designed for equestrian use.

Lori feels this LUOD is misdirected on the pretense of conflict and should not be determined from one user group out of all the user groups. Lori also has received feedback of no conflicts on the trail systems identified in the proposed LUOD.

Jason Aric Jones mentioned Thunder Valley is similar to the situation that is going on at Proud Lake right now. Thunder Valley was created for mountain bikers and equestrians. Jason is opposed to this LUOD as he feels one user group should not determine where other user groups are allowed or not allowed by pushing political gestures.

Nicole Hunt added there has been no implemented change. This LUOD has not gone to the Director, it is going through the process of being vetted.

Bob Hendrickson noticed on the DNR website that mountain bikes are listed as prohibited on the Thunder Valley Trail.

MOTION

Jason Aric Jones made a motion asking NAW to not be in support of this LUOD draft pertaining to certain trail closures for bikes for the benefit of the equestrians as these trails were intended to be multi-use trails.

No second. **Motion is not carried.**

PROPOSAL TRAILWAYS/WLD POLLINATOR TRAILWAY ENHANCEMENT

John Bollman shared a written document with information regarding wildlife and pollinator trail enhancements to encourage recognition of these benefits and how we can improve habitat along these trails. In consideration of the meeting time, John will bring back this topic another time.

UPDATES

PURE MI TOWNS/TRAILS – GOVERNORS CONFERENCE

Tim Novak, DNR, stated next week he will be in Grand Rapids for the Governor’s Conference on Tourism. Tim said there will be five awards given out:

1. City of St. Ignace – Pure Michigan Trail Town
2. City of Chelsea – Pure Michigan Trail Town
3. Paint Creek Trail – Pure Michigan Trail
4. Cass River Water Trail – Pure Michigan Water Trail

WATER TRAIL DESIGNATION PROCESS

John Bollman is seeking clarity of who is the designated water trail coordinator and how to apply for a water trail. Tim Novak said there is a water trail application process with a checklist. Tim can provide the information to John.

TRAIL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

No new updates.

2023 MEETING SCHEDULE

DNR staff announced there is a Trail Summit meeting in the works for this fall. This is an opportunity to bring user groups together and build networks between them. We do not have exact dates yet, possibly looking to pair with the MTAC fall meeting. More details coming soon.

July 12 will be virtual. October 12 -TBD.

ROUND ROBIN/CLOSING COMMENTS

MOTION

Jason Aric Jones made a motion for Thunder Valley Trails. Pertaining to the LUOD pertaining to trail closures for equestrians, NAW recommends that if Thunder Valley Trails are closed to mountain bike use, that there should be compensation elsewhere in the region building mountain bike trail to offset the loss of closing the Thunder Valley multi-use trails to mountain bike use.

Neal Glazebrook seconded. **Motion is not carried.**

Jason asked to table this motion put forth to restate in simpler terms (below).

John Bollman understands Jason’s point but needs further discussion around trail compensation. Need more of thoughtful process on how trails are administered.

Lori Hauswirth what happens with the LUOD if no action is taken or on record from the NAW committee. Greg Kinser, DNR, said he understands Nicole Hunt’s intent is to make the language in the draft inclusive to all user’s feedback.

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Matt Torreano, DNR Lands and Easement Analyst, stated there is a process around real estate transactions and LUOD drafts. The process steps involve internal reviews, which has to be vetted by staff and divisions. Next the draft will pass to the division management groups for review and they will choose to advance the draft. The DNR Director has the authority over real estate transactions and LUOD's. The DNR utilizes the NRC meetings as a way to place draft LUOD's in public overview.

MOTION

Jason Aric Jones made a motion to take a vote today, April 6, from NAW members **in support** of the current LUOD for Thunder Valley and Cedar River North, except for the south loop adjacent to the state forest campground, designated equestrian use only, prohibiting bicycles.

Not seconded. **Motion not carried.**

Ron Yesney, DNR, asked to table the discussion of the LUOD draft for equestrian trails until the next NAW meeting. Ron can provide previous meeting minutes that he can share with the NAW members for review to gain a better understanding of how this LUOD started.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 12:11 p.m.