



Non-Motorized Advisory Workgroup (NAW)

Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting

Date: October 21, 2021

10 a.m. – Noon

Welcome – Roll Call

PRESENT FOR THE NON-MOTORIZED ADVISORY WORKGROUP (NAW):

- Andrea LaFontaine, Chairperson
- John Morrison
- Mary Bohling (absent)
- Jim DuFresne
- Kenny Wawsczyk
- Kristen Wiltfang
- Jason Aric Jones
- Lori Hauswirth

PRESENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR) STAFF

1. Kristen Bennett, Annalisa Centofanti, Michael Morrison, Dakota Hewlett, Rob Katona, Nikki Van Bloem, Jill Sell, Greg Kinser, Paige Perry

Others: Emily Shinevar (MSP), Jenny Cook, Kristie Walls

Meeting minutes

ACTION ITEMS

Meeting called to order at 10:01 a.m. by Andrea LaFontaine.

Motion was made to approve the August 5, 2021 draft minutes as is. Kristen Wiltfang & Jim DuFresne approved, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Motion was made to approve the October 21, 2021 agenda as is. John Morrison and Kenny Wawsczyk approved, with all in favor. Motion carried.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

PURE MICHIGAN TRAIL TOWNS / WATER TRAIL DESIGNATION

Michael Morrison, DNR

Michael Morrison reported that a new application form will be posted on the Pure Michigan web page. Next year all applications will be due Nov. 1st. Dec. 1 extensions will be allowed to those agencies this year that want to apply. One Pure Michigan trail town will be announced at the Governor's conference in November, which is the City of Trenton. Mike stated he is working with 3-4 other applicants for next year. The water trail application is in review and should be updated and posted in the coming weeks. Nikki Van Bloem asked if there will be a press release or notification sent about the new applications. Mike said he has a list of people he will be sending a direct email to. Mike also said an announcement will be made at the Governor's conference. Nikki asked to make sure the Air Line Trail is on the list. Jim DuFresne asked if the North Country Trail (NCT) had its own trail town program, is the program gone, and is Fife Lake recognized as a Pure Michigan designation. Mike said they will have to apply to be designated as a Pure Michigan Trail/Trail Town. Kenny Wawsczyk said the NCT does not have the resources to continue with their own program and it is at a standstill with discussions going on as whether or not to keep it. Mike is willing to connect with Fife Lake to see what they need in order to apply. Jenny Cook asked to consider equestrian trails for Pure Michigan designations. Kenny mentioned he recently had an equestrian group reach out to NCT.

SIDE PATH TRAILS (equine)

Andrea LaFontaine

Andrea LaFontaine commented that she recently had an inquiry from west Michigan, Kent County, for a best practice in design or specs for what a separated and/or parallel equestrian trail should look like. Andrea asked the DNR if there is a design or specs already in place. Nikki Van Bloem said she does not know of any particular design guides that the DNR possesses. Proud Lake State Recreation Area has a current situation where bikers and equestrians are using the same trail, and a recent project has started to separate those trails within the state recreation area. There have been some instances where staff has reviewed locations to provide a separate and/or parallel bridle path on some of the linear trails, however most often there is not enough "side space". The DNR is working to provide user groups with separate trails where possible. Andrea said maybe knowing what doesn't work will be helpful. Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf mentioned there is not a design the equestrian group knows of. In loop trails it is not a good idea to have the trails close together, as that can spook horses easily. It is always a good idea to keep the trails as far away from each user group as possible. Greg Kinser said he echoes Nikki comments regarding a separation and design standard. Greg said he would consider from a design perspective those as

unique individual parallel trails. Nikki provided the following link to the *Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trails, Trailheads, and Campgrounds* (a.k.a. the brown book), from the US Forest Service: <https://www.fs.fed.us/t-d/pubs/htmlpubs/html07232816/toc.htm>

Additionally, consideration should be given to parking spaces, manure, and available area around horse zones. Also, trails should not intersect at unsafe locations, for example not at the top of a hill where there's an incline with limited sight distance. Amy remarked that sustainability is a consideration for an equestrian trail design system.

Lori Hauswirth provided this link: <https://www.americantrails.org/resources/equestrian-design-guidebook-for-trails-trailheads-and-campgrounds>

Kristen Wiltfang mentioned there is a rail trail in northeastern Oakland County, part of the Polly Ann Trail, where there is an existing paved shared use path, and adjacent to it a parallel equestrian path was constructed. Kristen noticed that stormwater drainage and encroaching vegetation growing into the equestrian pathway can be difficult to maintain. The analysis of topography plays into a design and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Jim DuFresne asked if it is the DNR's policy to pursue separate trails, as opposed to share the same trail. Nikki replied saying in State Parks staff have tried to recognize and separate trails for equestrian and mountain bike user groups. We do understand ideal experiences for those trail users is to be with their own folks. We consider the user experience and safety standpoint. Dakota Hewlett, DNR, said that the DNR does not have a policy or written guidance for trail separation standards, but we understand best practices and it really depends on the trail use, features, location, and other criteria. Jim DuFresne asked if there are no trail signs posted, then which trail users gives way. Dakota said it is the goal of the DNR to have horseback riders on separate trails and not using well established trails. Kristen Bennett, DNR, mentioned it is a case-by-case basis with the ability to manage, maintain, capacity, and the land it is supporting. To say trail separation is ideal will have limitations that are not desirable for all user groups. There will be diversity across the system and striving for best practices in each area. Greg Kinser added when talking about best practices, which can mean a lot of things and will look different for each situation depending on intended use. Jenny Cook said she is trying to understand where and why horses are not allowed. There are only 18 State Parks that allow horses and many of them have friends groups that maintain the trails. Jenny has found out each State Park is unique, and the State Park Manager decides what they want to manage. Horseback riders have a lot of challenges out there. When we find a park manager that wants to welcome and work with us, we start with education and signage.

RTP 2022 PROJECT LIST (see attached document)

Dakota Hewlett, DNR

Dakota Hewlett gave an overview of the Recreation Trails Program (RTP) projects from a list he provided. Dakota mentioned approximately 30% are non-motorized projects (does not include ebikes). There are some great non-motorized projects such as the Tyoga Pathway and Laughing White Fish River Bridge. Some RTP funds are being used to match Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) projects, like the phase II of the Air Line Trail. Kenny Wawsczyk asked if the \$400K

NCT bridge estimate is \$283K, is there a reason your list is \$100K more? Dakota will take a look at that, although he was being conservative on the cost. Funds that are not used can go back into the balance and used for future projects.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES /ARP FUNDING

Kristen Bennett, DNR

Kristen Bennett said she sent out an email to get more stakeholder input. Legislature has not taken up the \$250M American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act funding yet, however it is anticipated to be very soon now that overall state budget is complete. This is still an "ideal" list, and the ARP funding is not in place yet. For trails, because this is a state park infrastructure opportunity, the DNR is focusing on projects inside State Parks or special regional connections. Land outside of state parks is getting more scrutiny because of how this funding became an opportunity. Kristen has asked stakeholders to reach out. There will be limited ARP funding for trails. Trails projects on the list come in around \$40M and Kristen does not anticipate that amount to increase. Jason Jones has been working with state parks to create Work Item Proposals (WIP). Jason said it is important to recognize this is a paradigm shift and the local state park managers are understanding. There will be a focus on renovating these natural surface single track legacy trails. Stakeholder groups, along with local managers did not know the availability of funds were out there. Jason has instructed his affiliate groups to get the WIP's in and if not funded now, the WIP is in the system. Kenny Wawczyk asked if Kristen can share the list since the NCT goes through many state parks. Kristen said she will send Kenny the list. Andrea LaFontaine said she was at a meeting yesterday with the DNR Director, which he shared that the legislature feels confident the ARP money will be pushed through soon. Andrea added there are trail groups that the Michigan Trails & Greenway Alliance (MTGA) has worked with, and the trail groups have been sending in trail projects that are shovel ready to be considered for funds to MTGA. Talk to your local, county, and state officials if you have projects for consideration.

FY 2022 STATE BUDGET

Kristen Bennett, DNR

Kristen Bennett said on Sept. 30 the State budget passed. Some highlights relating to trails, land, and conservation funds increased by \$7M. Snowmobile permanent easement funds received an additional \$1.5M for land purchases in Upper Peninsula. ORV trails fund received a \$1M increase because of increased use. MISORVA received \$1.15M to allocate for purchase of snow and ORV equipment that the grant program will not cover. As with MISORVA funds granted, there are ways to get money from talking with legislatures and senators. Other than those items the approved budget is a basic DNR budget. Dakota Hewlett mentioned internal DNR funds went down \$800 from last year. We continue to receive a small amount of general fund dollars for non-motorized trails. \$200K will be used primarily for internal grants for maintenance. Some federal highway programs were not authorized from the last budget bill and shifted some things around. We are waiting for the next federal transportation bill to be introduced, which will delay RTP budgets.

Jason Jones asked if the Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund timetable is still Nov. for the scoring? Kristen Bennett said the applications that went in this year will be discussed in early Dec. and awarding is typically Feb- April or springtime.

UPDATES

MATAG

John Morrison

Andrea LaFontaine said John Morrison did a fantastic job managing the conference in a hybrid virtual way. John Morrison said the conference took place on Aug. 17 and was an all-day virtual conference. There were 9 break-out sessions with a special speaker, Jill Martindale about the bike race on the Iditarod Trail. The technology came off really well. We had good sponsorship from the DNR, MTGA, and MParks with their help pulling this together. Next year, the future of MATAG will be a topic of discussion since many people at the federal level that help make this conference happen will be retiring. Dakota Hewlett added his thank you to John Morrison for all he did to make this happen. Jenny Cook asked to please include horseback riders in future conferences. Nikki Van Bloem, DNR, mentioned initially equestrian sessions were planned into the conference, but because of the hybrid virtual fashion, quite a few topics were cut, equestrian being one of them.

TRAILS WEEK

Dakota Hewlett, DNR

Dakota Hewlett reported on the DNR 2022 Trails Week Challenge, saying this is the second year for it to be virtual. Participation was down from the previous year. Over 80K miles were logged last year and this year 27K miles were logged by various users. The week did raise some money for trail projects by way of donations. Over 200 photos were submitted. Dakota said he is not sure why the participation was low this year, may be people are virtually spent. Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf added it was a rainy week. Kristen Wiltfang said she worked with the social media staff at Oakland County on a few posts for Instagram and Facebook and can share the statistics among those platforms. Jenny Cook mentioned that Bob Wilson is talking about having a trails summit at the Capital next year during trails week and this will be a good time to continue the challenge.

RIBBON CUTTINGS

Andrea LaFontaine/Dakota Hewlett

Andrea LaFontaine encouraged anyone to share information about recent or upcoming ribbon cuttings. Dakota Hewlett recently said a ribbon cutting was held at the Gaylord Gateway Trail Head. Dakota urged everyone to check it out and the trail head serves winter use as well (snowmobilers). There is a gas fire pit and nice bathrooms. A ribbon cutting for the Iron Belle Trail (IBT) on Belle Isle for phase I is being reschedule to next spring.

Kristen Wiltfang reported that the Paint Creek Trail had a ribbon cutting in Sept. to celebrate the resurfacing and opening of a bridge. The Air Line Trail project had a ribbon cutting last Wed, Oct. 13, and about 40 people were in attendance to help dedicate the new trail head and celebrate phase 1 of the trail. Kristen encourages all to reach out to local business that are in proximity to trails and see if they want to sponsor a trailhead.

NAW TERMS

Dakota Hewlett/Kristen Bennett, DNR

Dakota mentioned that this coming January everyone's term will end at the same time/same year. We would like to see the terms staggered. The goal is to have 4-year term. Right now, we can offer a 1-year, and 2-4 year term extensions in order to stagger.

Jim DuFresne -will not be extending
John Morrison will extend for 1 yr.
Kenny Wawsczyk will extend for 4 yr.
Kristen Wiltfang will extend for 1 yr.
Jason Aric Jones will extend for 2 yr.
Andrea LaFontaine will extend for 3 yr.
Lori Hauswirth will extend for 2 yr.
Mary Bohling will extend for 1 yr.

Jim DuFresne asked to please consider bringing in someone from the private sector for his replacement.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

John Morrison

John Morrison said a capital campaign has been launched for a couple big projects in west Michigan to connect the City Riverside Trail to Riverside Park which will connect the city of Grand Rapids to the White Pine Trail (WPT), and this will be an expensive project due to complications. The same campaign will involve 7-8 miles of WPT to Kent County line up to Howard City to get a paved trail. An RFP will go out in Nov. Trail between Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids have momentum on getting committee to work together with the municipalities and drive project forward, this has been a long time coming.

Jim DuFresne

Jim DuFresne mentioned Mi Trail Maps has a Facebook page and when the DNR put out a press release showing the dropping of a bridge over the Lower Tahquamenon Falls, the story had over 30K views and over 150 comments over 2 days. It was interesting that the comments boiled down to universally accessible areas for natural areas and how they get changed dramatically, there were some heated discussions.

Kenny Wawsczyk

Kenny Wawsczyk reported the NCT this past year was able to hire two seed youth conservation crews out of Traverse City. The crews were sent to work in the Upper Peninsula in Ontonagon County. They worked on a big reroute that will bring the NCT through the heart of the Porkies and in Barraga County, a 15-mile road walk will be eliminated. Overall, this was a good experience. NCT worked recently with Forest Resource Division (FRD) staff on two different trail reroutes. One

in Jordan Valley and one in the eastern Upper Peninsula, because of a future timber harvest. Kenny is looking forward to working more with FRD.

Kristen Wiltfang

Kristen Wiltfang said Oakland County has hired its first sustainability officer. We will pull her into the trail work for ideas about sustainability efforts that can be applied to trails. The Oakland County Planning office reviews rezoning cases on the boundary between communities and a topic continues to come up for developers wanting an easement to connect a new development to an existing trail. Trails that have been developed using DNR funds or Trust Fund grants, may be creating a potential conversion when an easement is granted on encumbered trail property. Maybe a declaration of notice being added to the trail property deed will be a good topic for discussion at one of our future NAW meetings. Another issue on trails within trail towns is that more local communities are being approached by e-scooter companies, and it is not apparent how e-scooters are classified and if they are allowed on linear trails. E-scooters could be another topic for a future NAW meeting.

Jason Aric Jones

Jason Aric Jones said he has been spending a lot of time with affiliates to get WIPS submitted, and they are making good progress. Jason expect the WIP's to be in compliance with the new master trail plan. Jason attended a meeting this last week at the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge put on by the Keweenaw Outdoor Recreation Coalition (KORC). KORC is a coalition of motorized and nonmotorized people coming together to preserve the land that is at risk where the land is for sale by a forest company. This is a large grass roots effort to put together from all trail users to see this land preserved. KORC is discussing preservation with the DNR. Jason has created a resolution for the Keweenaw land and presented it to MTAC, which the resolution passed (see attached.) <https://www.keweenawoutdoorrecreation.org/>

Lori Hauswirth

Lori Hauswirth reported all ski trail organizations are out prepping trails now in order to get ready for the season. Lori said it is expected to still see the higher use on trails this year and is looking at making investments to improve the trails. Lori is hoping some ARP funds will be available for the trail improvements. Some projects going on that are locally funded include developing a bike park in Marquette and installing a bridge across the Carp River for year-round recreation. The bike park will be expanding parking at South Huron Marquette. The local community raised \$35K to construct the bridge. Lori mentioned she is on the Michigan Mountain Bike Associate board and wants to highlight the nationwide campaign for "Trails Are Common Ground", she would love to see more organizations getting involved. Lori added a thought, because of the increased trails use, maybe the DNR can do some type of video to highlight friends groups as a way to educate people on getting involved.

Andrea LaFontaine

Andrea LaFontaine said end of the year is crazy. MTGA will hold their annual membership meeting is Oct 28 at 6:30 via Zoom. You do not have to be member to participate. Will provide an

organizational update and have a keynote speaker (Tara Frost/Gazelle Sports), present some awards, and the election of three new board members. Registration is free.

PUBLIC COMMENT – NONE

Motion was made to move public comment to beginning of the agenda. John Morrison and Kristen Wiltfang approved, with all in favor. Motion carried.

CLOSING/ROUND ROBIN

Meeting adjourned 11:45 a.m.

Recreation Trails Program 2022 Project List

| County | MDOT Region | Implementation | Phase | eBikes Allowed | Trail Name | Project Name | Project Description | Funding Plan | Obligation Request | Trail Uses | Project Intention (M, NM, D) |
|-----------|-------------|-----------------|-------|----------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Alpena | North | MDOT CONSULTANT | CON | Yes | Northeast State Trail/Rogers City | Swan River Bridge | Construction of bridge over the Swan River on NEST/Rogers City Spur | 100% RTP | TBD - Engineering Underway | Snowmobile, Bike, Hike | M |
| Alger | Superior | MDOT CONSULTANT | PE | No | Tyoga Pathway | Tyoga Pathway Bridges | Design to replace 1 bridge, renovate 1 bridge, perform trail improvements | 100% RTP | \$ 150,000.00 | Hike, Ski, Bike | NM |
| Alger | Superior | MDOT CONSULTANT | CON | No | North Country Trail/IBT | Laughing Whitefish River Bridge | Replace hiking bridge over Laughing Whitefish River | 100% RTP | \$ 400,000.00 | Hike | NM |
| Oakland | Metro | MDOT CONSULTANT | CON | No | Bald Mountain SRA Bike/Hike | Bald Mtn Connector Bridge | Construct 40' bridge connectign Paint Creek Trail to Bald Mountain trails | 100% RTP | \$ 300,000.00 | Bike, Hike | NM |
| Oakland | Metro | MDOT CONSULTANT | PE | No | Proud Lake SRA | Proud Lake Trail Improvements | Design of mountain bike trail improvements and boardwalk after use seperated from existing equestrian trail | 100% RTP | \$ 50,000.00 | Bike, Hike | NM |
| Marquette | Superior | MDOT CONSULTANT | PE | No | Little Presque Isle Trails | LPI/Harlow Bridges | Replace Song bird trail and Harlow Creek bridges | 100% RTP | \$ 200,000.00 | Hike, Bike | NM |
| Osceola | Grand | MDOT CONSULTANT | CON | Yes | White Pine Trail | White Pine Tustin Culverts | Install box culvert or bridge at triple culvert location north of Tustin and just North of Cleveland Road (Cleveland Rd culverts) | 100% RTP | \$ 850,000.00 | Snowmobile, Bike, Hike | D |
| Missaukee | North | MDOT CONSULTANT | CON | No | Missaukee ORV/Snow Trails | Misaukee Bridges | Replace two failing bridges on LP5/Miss-Kal route | 100% RTP | \$ 700,000.00 | ORV, Snowmobile | M |
| Marquette | Superior | MDOT CONSULTANT | PE | Yes | Clowry Grade | Clowry mltiple bridges | Design for bridge rehab/replacement on up to 5 separate sites on UP8/C Route | 100% RTP | \$ 400,000.00 | ORV, Snowmobile | M |
| Oakland | Metro | TAP Match | CON | Yes | Airline Trail | Airline Phase 2 TAP Match | Construction of Phase 2 of Michigan Airline Trail | RTP match to TAP | \$ 150,000.00 | Bike, Hike | D |
| Kalamazoo | Southwes | TAP Match | CON | Yes | KRVT/Great Lake to Lake | GLTL Route 1 Fort Custer | Construction of 1.6 mile nonmotorized AASHTO trail to separate trail from road | RTP match to TAP | \$ 450,000.00 | Bike, Hike | D |
| Statewide | | | | | Statewide | RTP Administration | | | \$ 174,000.00 | | |

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|---------------|------------------------|
| FY2022 Budget | \$ 2,496,819.00 |
| Motorized | \$ 1,100,000.00 |
| Nonmotorized | \$ 1,100,000.00 |
| Diversified | \$ 1,450,000.00 |
| Total | \$ 3,824,000.00 |