



Non-Motorized Advisory Workgroup (NAW)

Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting

Date: Sept. 7, 2022

10 a.m. – Noon

Welcome – Roll Call

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

- Andrea LaFontaine, Chairperson
- John Morrison
- Mary Bohling
- Neal Glazebrook
- Kenny Wawsczyk, Vice Chair
- Kristen Wiltfang
- Jason Aric Jones
- Lori Hauswirth

PRESENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR) STAFF

Tim Novak, Annalisa Centofanti, Dakota Hewlett, Michael Morrison, Scott Slavin, Greg Kinser, Kim Kennedy, Peter Costa, Jill Sell, Rob Katona, Ron Yesney, Nick Van Bloem, Paige Perry, Jason Fleming

Others: Mark Losey, Jenny Cook, Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf, Ken Hopper

Meeting minutes

ACTION ITEMS

Meeting called to order at 10:04 a.m. by committee Vice Chair, Kenny Wawsczyk.

Motion was made by Andrea LaFontaine to approve the June 8 meeting minutes and seconded by Mary Bohling. Mary Bohling requested a few edits to the minutes that she will send to Annalisa Centofanti. Motion to approve minutes with suggested corrections with all in favor, motion carried.

Motion was made by Neal Glazebrook to approve the Sept. 7 agenda, and seconded by Andrea LaFontaine, with all in favor. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jenny Cook, Equine Trails Subcommittee (ETS) member presented 3 points about horses as they pertain to other user groups and how a trails safe passing plan is helpful for everyone. Jenny would like to hear feedback from other trail users' group.

1. Horses are prey animals
2. People with horses have more risks
3. Bikers automatically have characteristics that are like potential predators

Jason Aric Jones commented that this topic has been covered by Jenny Cook at every Michigan Trails Advisory Council (MTAC), NAW, and ETS meeting in the past year and suggested to Jenny not to add the topic to upcoming meetings. Jason feels the message has been received by others and no one is in dispute of the trails safe passing plan message. Jason also suggested to Jenny that bikers and equestrians work together in the current legislative Right to Ride draft which is identifying horse only trails.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

EBIKES

Jason Aric Jones stated there has been a lot of high-profile instances regarding Ebikes recently and is becoming more of an issue. Social media has been reporting conflicts with Ebike users on trails that do not allow Ebikes. Local law divisions are not enforcing the Ebike rules or policies. Jason is asking local DNR law divisions to take this seriously and enforce rules. Jason would like to see the DNR develop a program to educate staff internally on the policies.

Dakota Hewlett, DNR, shared he agrees a lot has changed since the state law was implemented several years ago. Dakota receives many questions pertaining to Ebike use on Michigan state trails, along with purchasing Ebikes that are classified as being allowed. It is getting harder to determine Ebikes on the market which will classify as being allowed.

Jason feels formalized training within the DNR Law division would go a long way and would like to see some funding appropriated to it. Dakota said the Department will continue discussions on this matter.

PENDING LEGISLATION MATTERS

TRAIL NAMING RIGHTS

Jason Aric Jones mentioned a house bill has been introduced recently (HB 6348) asking to amend PA 173 (1968); "An act naming certain state buildings". This amendment, if passed, will prohibit the naming of any new state building or properties after a business entity and renaming any state building or properties that have been named or designated after a business entity. Jason cited there are several trails in Michigan which reflect business entities names, such as the Fred Meijer Trail, the DTE Foundation Trail, and others which will be affected. This is an important house bill to follow and should be shared with stakeholder groups. Jason encourages everyone to look up House Bill 6348 for more information. Jason wonders if the business entities will continue to provide support and funding if they no longer can associate their name with the trail and what does this mean for the future of trails.

RIGHT-TO-RIDE PROPOSED EQUINE AMENDMENT

Jason Aric Jones said he has read the current proposed amendment draft to the Right-to-Ride Act from 2010. Jason pointed out part of the language, which is still being negotiated, will ban bikes on any trail open to equestrians. Jason stated this does not feel right and an action has been taken by mountain bike groups and others to object to this proposal. Jason said the draft reads any state trails currently open for equestrian use will ban bikes from using the same trails.

Dakota Hewlett, DNR, said the Department perspective is that this is just draft language. The DNR does not have an official stand at this point, we do not oppose or support. Until the draft is introduced, we will not take a stand. This legislation as drafted does give the Department a lot of options and does not see trails being closed to bikes because horses are allowed.

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf, Equine Trails Subcommittee Chair, commented that Jason is incorrect with this interpretation. Amy said only the trails that are currently posted equestrian trails, and not every trail horses are allowed on. Amy added the language in the draft will allow the DNR to decide which trails to post as equestrian trails only.

WATER AND PURE MICHIGAN HANDBOOKS

Dakota Hewlett provided an updated on the water trail and Pure Michigan designation program. Dakota is hoping to have the applications for Pure Michigan trails and towns open soon. Also, the handbooks will be updated for the programs. Tim Novak, DNR, said there is an Oct. 1 deadline to have handbooks ready to upload to the DNR/Pure Michigan web site. Applications are being extended to Dec. 1. The Governor's Tourism Conference, where the winners will be announced for trails and trail towns, will take place in April 2023.

DETROIT/WINDSOR MOU SIGNING (SEPT. 9)

Dakota Hewlett reported that he and Tim Novak, DNR State Trails Coordinator, will be attending a signing of a Memorandum of Understanding agreement between Michigan and Canada to connect trails on either side of the border, providing a bike/pedestrian path on the Gordy Howe International Bridge. The DNR is excited for this opportunity to connect the Iron Belle Trail with the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail in Ontario. There are not many international nonmotorized bridge connections between the U.S. and Canada.

TRAILS WEEK (SEPT. 18 – 24)

MOBILE CAUSE DONATIONS PAGE

Dakota Hewlett reported that the Michigan DNR trails week is set for Sept. 18 - 24. Dakota mentioned the Governor's proclamation is still in the works and will be released soon. The DNR web page has listed promotions for trails week. Mobile Cause will no longer be the main focus. The focus will be celebrating the people using trails in Michigan. The donation page will be available for anyone that wishes to donate. Dakota is interested to know if any of the stakeholder user groups will have events happening this same week, if so the DNR can push promotions.

UPDATES

MTAC RESOLUTION - RESTRUCTURE PROGRESS

Jason Aric Jones provided an update to the Michigan Trails Advisory Councils (MTAC) resolution to restructure MTAC. Jason said the July MTAC meeting, where the resolution was on the agenda, did not meet a quorum, so no vote was taken. The resolution is promoting a restructure of MTAC to be more inclusionary for representation of all the trail user groups.

MTAC RESOLUTION – NONMOTORIZED USE IN STATE GAME AREAS

Jason Aric Jones said the resolution regarding nonmotorized use in state game areas was brought forth by MTAC Chair, Bob Wilson. The resolution is asking the DNR Wildlife (WLD) and trail stakeholders to work together regarding nonmotorized use in state game areas in Michigan and to clear up any ambiguity and provide more clarity.

Jill Sell, DNR, mentioned that WLD has formed a workgroup internally that is formulating a recommendation to present to WLD management so external communications will be statewide and consistent. Jill said expect to hear more on this later this fall.

ARPA FUNDS

John Morrison requested clarity for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that he has been hearing so much about. John is wondering if the timelines for these funds will create problems with current elevated pricing, and project delays. John asked if there will be a potential for extensions, or will the funds be lost and diverted back to the Federal Government. Dakota responded saying the DNR has some of the same concerns. At this time, Dakota has not heard of any flexibility with timelines. Dakota said it has been difficult to estimate project costs when the pricing is all over the board. As the DNR moves through larger ARPA projects, if things go well, we

should be on track with projects. However, down the road, the DNR may have to adjust the project scope if timelines become an issue.

TRAIL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

John Morrison suggested to add trail plan implementation to the NAW agenda regularly to receive updates about the progress. Jill Sell, DNR, reported that each objective item has been labeled achievable in years, for example 1-3 or 3-5 years. Trails staff are assigned to a core team and objective leads have been designated to coordinate action for these goals. Progress update "check-ins" are scheduled internally to track progress. Jill said they are working to formulate a process to report implementation updates to the trails advisory workgroups.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

John Morrison said one of the big projects in his area is the way finding work for signage with Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Grand Region. The consultant is in place, and we are in the early stages to meet with stakeholders. We are making great progress and expecting the guide to be completed by early next year, before April. The next phase will be to determine costs involved to start fundraising. Aside from that there is a lot of amazing trail projects going on with connectivity.

Kenny Wawczyk highlighted a bridge project for the North Country Trail (NCT) in Hillsdale County. Kenny said the project teamed up with the National Park Service because the bridge was an old historic railroad bridge over a riverbed. The bridge will be semi replaced, leaving steel ties underneath, but noting working with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a cool process to go through. Next month the annual NCT celebration event will be held in Minnesota.

Kristen Wiltfang reported on Oakland County trail projects. Kristen said this has been the summer of resurfacing and construction projects in Oakland County. About 9 miles between the Huron Valley Trail, the Clinton River Trail, and the Michigan Airline Trail are being resurfaced or have new construction and are in the final stages of wrapping these projects up. Kristen said she is excited to get into the design work for Pontiac and Clinton River Trail and some resurfacing for the Polly Ann Trail in the northeast part of Oakland County.

2022 MEETING DATES

November 17 (10 a.m. – Noon)

ROUND ROBIN/CLOSING COMMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 11:36 a.m.