



# MICHIGAN TRAILS ADVISORY WORKGROUP (MTAC)

## Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting

Date: March 24, 2022

9-11 a.m.

## Welcome – Roll Call

### PRESENT FOR THE MICHIGAN TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL

- Bob Wilson, Chairperson
- Kenneth Hopper, Vice Chairperson (absent)
- Michael Maves
- Mark Losey
- Jessi Adler
- Jason Aric Jones
- Jenny Cook
- Richard Williamson (absent)
- Donald Kauppi
- ETS (vacant)
- Snow (vacant)

### PRESENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR) STAFF

- Kristen Bennett, Jessica Holley, Annalisa Centofanti, Ron Yesney, Dakota Hewlett, Greg Kinser, Nick Van Bloem, Rob Katona, Paige Perry, Scott Slavin, Jeff Kakuk, Matt Torreano, Roger Storm, Jacklin Blodgett, Ron Olson, Kristen Thrall (USFS), Emily Shinevar (MSP)

- OTHERS: Thomas Dunn, Karen Bahrman, Karen Middendorp, Karl Davenport, Robert Allen, Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf, Jim Maike, Bob Meyers, James Hunt, Don Britton, John Newman, Karin Reid Offield, Jon Beard, Kristen Wiltfang, Robert Allen, Jim Kelts

## Meeting minutes

Meeting called to order at 9 a.m.

Bob Wilson, MTAC Chairperson, expressed his excitement regarding the public's interest and enthusiasm for this meeting. Several public comment forms have been received, noting that mainly they are for the proposed changes to MTAC's Rules of Procedure (Resolution 1-2022). Bob mentioned the council may not cast a vote on the resolution today until full rounded discussions take place. Most likely, the vote will be held off until the next MTAC meeting.

Motion was made to approve the draft meeting minutes from November 3, 2021. Jenny Cook asked for a modification on page 5; Equine Trails Subcommittee update, to change the word "okay" to "understandable". Mark Losey and Jenny Cook are first and second to approve, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Motion was made to approve the March 24, 2022 agenda. Mike Maves and Jenny Cook are first and second to approve, with all in favor. Motion carried.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Bob Wilson asked that any public comments in reference to resolution 1-2022; Advisory Workgroup By-laws to be held off until the agenda item discussion.

Karen Reid Offield submitted a public comment form requesting a general introduction for herself. Ms. Karen Reid Offield identified herself as an equine professional and has been in the horse business her whole life. Karen is considering the vacant ETS position on MTAC.

James Maike's public comment is regarding MTAC workgroups. James Maike asked the MTAC Chair to consider an amendment which will designating the chair from each subcommittee or workgroup to sit on the MTAC council, necessary for improved collaboration. Bob Wilson, MTAC Chair, said he will take the recommendation.

Don Britton addressed the MTAC Chair and council stating the need for a representative from each subcommittee or workgroup to sit on the MTAC council. Bob will take this recommendation and discuss further under the agenda topic VIII; b. MTAC Rules of Procedure.

## BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

### **TRAIL CHAMPIONS**

Jon Beard is recognized by Bob Wilson as a Michigan Trail Champion (see attached write up and certificate).

Jon Beard expressed he is humbled and appreciates this recognition.

Motion to approved resolution 2-2022 (attached); Jason Jones and Mark Losey are first and second to approve, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Caryn Robinson is recognized by Jenny Cook as a Michigan Trail Champion ( see attached write up and certificate).

Motion to approve resolution 3-2022 (attached); Bob Wilson and Mark Losey are first and second to approve, with all in favor. Motion carried.

### **MTAC RULES OF PROCEDURE**

#### **RESOLUTION 1-2022; ADVISORY WORKGROUP BY-LAWS**

Bob Wilson indicated that a vote may not be taken depending on today's conversation. Kristen Bennett, DNR, explained the goal for this resolution is to bring clarity on how workgroups and subcommittees function. Workgroups and subcommittees fall under the umbrella of MTAC. Statues often have limited explanation of how groups are to perform and the MTAC Rules of Procedure is where clarification is outlined. The changes proposed to Article 5, Section 2 are to put into writing the common practice for how each workgroup or subcommittee will choose their chair and vice chair, as it stands now MTAC council members makes those decisions. Section 3 proposed changes are about making sure the workgroups and subcommittees periodically gains fresh perspectives and achieve new ideas through setting term limits of 4 years. The same terms will be applied to all workgroups and subcommittees in order to achieve consistency, noting both MTAC and ETS statues reflect their terms are already set at 4 years. In addition, the proposal aims to standardize an option serve an additional 4-year term, allowing another option to reapply after a total of 8 years served and a said break in time. The last proposed change will clarify how a vacancy is filled, defining the process (see attached workflow). The current process is not defined for the workgroups, therefore streamlining a process will improve the time it takes to fill a vacancy.

Mark Losey agrees with consistency across all groups. He likes the idea of fresh concepts and new ideas from people by turn over in setting term limitations. Although, at times, it may be difficult to gain new interest. Mark stated he is in support for the proposed changes in resolution 1-2022.

Jason Aric Jones agrees setting term limits are good to gain diversity and new energy. Jason believes the MTAC statue is askew relative to trail user base in MI. Jason pointed out there are specific groups represented on MTAC and the Nonmotorized Advisory Workgroup (NAW) appears to be a catch all for nonmotorized user groups. Jason is suggesting a restructure of MTAC user representation.

Jessi Adler echoes Jason's comment about the inequities of the NAW being underrepresented. Jessi stated when she first joined MTAC, she assumed she would be automatically added to the ORVAW workgroup. Jessi had an understanding from previous roles on other committees, that a subcommittee is made up from the main committee members of the parent group. We should consider the person that is leading each subcommittee should automatically be on MTAC or vice versa, providing direct representation in all the groups.

Jenny Cook would like to see more continuity for equestrians represented on the NAW group. Jenny asked to give each workgroup and subcommittee time to discuss proposed changes when they are directed towards each workgroup and subcommittee prior to presenting it to the MTAC council.

Mike Maves agrees with the comments from the other council members and likes the proposed concept of continuity. Mike feels there is a disconnect between MTAC the workgroups and subcommittees, detecting missing context.

#### Public Comment

Karen Middendorp echoes the comments from the council members, identifying the need for all the workgroups and subcommittees to work together. It is very important that each user group is represented by 1 or 2 people from each committee on MTAC.

Don Britton brought attention to the MTAC Chair that 5 of the Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup (SAW) members terms will expire in 2023. Don asked if the SAW member terms can be changed to stagger so 5 people will not expire in the same year. Don also added there is still a snowmobile representative vacancy on MTAC, due to a resignation. Don echoed previous comments adding he would like to see at least one member from a workgroup or subcommittee sit on MTAC.

Bob Meyers would like to see connectivity between the chair of each workgroup or subcommittee bringing ideas and discussions from each workgroup or subcommittee into MTAC. Bob cautioned on the term limits, considering it takes time to learn and understand the processes to be effective.

James Hunt agreed with previous statements and added a wider spectrum is achieved with involving a person from each workgroup or subcommittee.

Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf agrees at least one person from each workgroup or subcommittee should have a seat on MTAC.

Bob Wilson concluded if there was a blank legislative slate today of how MTAC is to be created, there will be a quite a few changes proposed to make it more holistic and to encompass all the user groups in the State. After this conversation today, the hopes are to have a clear direction of what we can do with the rules and what we can do in statue.

Jason Aric Jones expressed over the past years, that NAW groups primary focus has been linear trails and that mind set needs to change to include the various other groups, such as mountain biking, water trails, horse trails, and others.

Karen Middendorp mentioned if there is an MTAC statue change, to consider establishing a separate statue for every workgroup.

Bob Wilson cautions that any changes or statues created are consistent with the Departments mission. We will gather our thoughts as the statue prescribes and make recommendations moving forward in partner with the Department for them to carry forward.

Jessi Adler added that equal representation amongst all groups is important in whatever form or fashion that takes. Jessie cautioned that MTAC is Governor appointed versus workgroups are DNR appointed. In knowing that the Governor appointed positions are a politically based process and for better or worse there is a lot that goes into those appointments, it seems for the purpose of what we want to accomplish it is more appropriate for the DNR to appoint to the workgroups or subcommittees. This is a better route to take to ensure it is needs based and not politically based in order to get someone who is good for the board.

Bob Wilson, hearing no other comments, declared there will not be a vote taken today on this resolution. A summary will be developed and shared with members of the council, workgroups, and subcommittees for accuracy. Next steps will be to work with the Department and create a legislative proposal to alter the MTAC statue.

#### **MTAC ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Bob Wilson and ETS has contacted the DNR and requested an Attorney General opinion regarding advocacy and legislative issues, whether acting as a workgroup and/or subcommittee or acting independently is acceptable. Bob can see a potential collision between one user group and another. Bob would like to reach consistency across all the workgroups and subcommittees, working together behind the Department advocating for specific legislation. The council will provide updates on this request from the Department when received.

#### **TRAILS SAFE PASSING PLAN**

Jenny Cook developed a trails safe passing plan for all trail users providing information on horses. Contact Jenny Cook for a copy of the presentation.

#### **CLEARING HOUSE EVENTS**

Bob Wilson mentioned the council discussed at the November 2021 meeting of developing a master calendar of events related to trail use in Michigan. The council is suggesting that the Department work with user groups to compile events. Bob said this topic will be reintroduced to the new State Trail Coordinator.

### **RTP SPECIAL COMMITTEE**

Dakota Hewlett, DNR, explained one of the Department's main funding sources for nonmotorized trail maintenance and development is the Federal Recreation Trail Program (RTP). A requirement of this program is to host once annually an advisory board meeting identifying and discussing the projects that will receive funding by RTP. The Department is transitioning the advisory board meeting role to MTAC. More information about the meeting will be released before the June MTAC meeting. A list of projects will be sent to MTAC prior to the board meeting. Dakota expressed the Department is not looking for any changes to the list.

Karen Middendorp reiterated the need to have one person from each workgroup and subcommittee sitting at the MTAC table.

Mark Losey asked if RTP projects align with the trails master plan that was recently adopted. Bob Wilson stated the RTP projects are aligned with the master trail plan.

## UPDATES

### SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

#### **EQUINE TRAIL SUBCOMMITTEE (ETS)**

Jenny Cooked provided a written report (contact DNR or Jenny Cook for a copy).

Bob Wilson asked Jenny if the goals of the proposed bill to amend the Right to Ride legislation can be accomplished through administrative work through the Department in order to avoid the legislative process. Jenny said ETS members have been working with the Department and have not seen a lot of movement.

Jason Aric Jones reviewed the proposed legislation and the specific list of trails identified for equestrian use only, suggesting there most likely will not be a lot of objections for those trails targeted. However, Jason feels the proposed legislation as it reads is somewhat different than the goals stated. Jason pointed out the proposed language calls for a level of unfettered access for horses on state lands, while at same time prohibiting bikes from those same lands. This is not a good equation for bicyclists. Jason is not in support of this proposed draft legislation.

#### **NON-MOTORIZED ADVISORY WORKGROUP (NAW)**

Ken Hopper provided a written report (see attached).

#### **SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY WORKGROUP (SAW)**

None

### **OFF-ROAD VEHICLE ADVISORY WORKGROUP (ORVAW)**

Jessi Adler provided an update for ORVAW. The new alpha signage is in place for the Upper Peninsula and handbooks have been updated with instructions for the new signage. Silver Lake Sand Dunes has requested with the DNR traffic flow changes to avoid congestion. Proposed changes were made to improve the ORV grant process. Silver Lake Association (SLA) is looking for onsite education programs targeting youth riders. SLA is in support for the seasonal equestrian shoreline trail ride in the fall. A new trail has been proposed for the Silver Lake Sand Dunes area, routing through State Game Area, Mears, and Hart area.

### **ALLEGAN STATE GAME AREA PROPOSAL**

Robert Allen provided written reports regarding the proposal (see attached). The Wildlife Division has decided to organize an internal focus group looking at single-track trails in State Game Areas. Wildlife has assured Robert that by May there should be some sort of decision for single-track trails in Allegan State Game Area, along with a view of single-track trails on other State Game Area lands.

### **TRAIL SNOW GROOMING AGREEMENT – EASTERN UPPER PENINSULA**

Ron Yesney, DNR, said early in the winter there was an issue with over 100 miles of snowmobile trails in the Straits area that was not being groomed or managed due to the loss of a club sponsor. Through the work of Robbie Shields, Forest Resource Division, and the DNR, they were able to secure new leadership. The end result was to reopen the trail system keeping trails groomed, brushed, and signed. Don Britton added the sponsor club has new management yet again and has received a new groomer.

### **TRAILS MOBILE DONATION**

Kristen Bennett, DNR, reported the mobile donation page is going well, receiving a small amount of donations. Kristen said the DNR has not fully publicized the page and purposely planned a soft roll out for review in order to receive feedback. Marketing signage is in approval process and can be expected to show up on trailheads this coming summer. The donations page official roll-out will be planned on National Trails Day, June 7.

Bob Wilson expressed that this is a great vehicle for trail users to connect personal dollars into trails used by the public. This idea is a result of MTAC's specially created nonmotorized funding workgroup, led by Ken Hopper.

Karl Davenport questioned why motorized trails are excluded. Bob Wilson explained there is an emphasis placed on nonmotorized, being they do not have a dedicated direct funding source. Kristen Bennett added that motorized trails are not excluded and there will be the ability for motorized users to donate through the page.

### **TRAIL SUMMIT**

Bob Wilson said discussions started about a year ago about hosting a summit in Lansing coinciding with Trails Week in September. The focus is to bring in members of the legislature together with trail user groups to provide an update of trail systems in Michigan. This has now morphed into a discussion of hosting a gathering similar to what was held in February 2020 at the RAM Center in Roscommon, bringing all the advisory user groups together and talk holistically about trails. Kristen Bennett added the new State Trail Coordinator will take over the details and planning with more information to come.

### **DNR REGIONAL STAFF REPORTS**

Written reports are provided to council members.

### **2022 MEETINGS**

June 25; Sept. 22; Dec. 7 – Locations are TBD

### **CLOSING/ROUND ROBIN**

Bob Wilson recognized Kristen Bennett and the amazing job she provided as the State Trail Coordinator. Bob said MTAC will honor Kristen at the June meeting.

Nikki Van Bloem added that some topics brought forward to the DNR from the workgroups and subcommittees are applicable to all user groups. The time required to review and discuss these topics does not fit into an MTAC meeting timeframe. Therefore, there will be one-off meetings scheduled to address these matters.

Don Britton voiced concerns that a snowmobile representative for MTAC has not been present at the past couple meetings and asked if the Director has any authority to remove for this cause. Bob Wilson said he will check on this.

Jacklin Blodgett, DNR, expressed thanks to Kristen Bennett for her service as State Trail Coordinator role, which will end on April 16. Kristen has done a great job. Jacklin said the Department is in the process of interviewing for a State Trail Coordinator.

Kristen Bennett said her love and passion for trails has not diminished, and she will continue to work in the background making this program better.

Meeting adjourned at 10:57 a.m.

# MTAC Resolution 1 -2022

## **Resolution to Amend the Rules of Procedure for Michigan Department of Natural Resources Michigan Trails Advisory Council and Advisory (MTAC) Workgroups**

**WHEREAS**, the MTAC Committee has conducted a comprehensive review of the Rules of Procedures to determine whether any existing provisions should be updated or revised.

**WHEREAS**, the MTAC Committee has indicated below the issues it considered and the changes it recommends; (update procedures to add process and timing for subcommittee vacancies)

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the MTAC Committee hereby approves the revision of Article 5 of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Rules of Procedure for the Michigan Trails Advisory Council and advisory workgroups as shown below  
**AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the revised version be published and submitted to the advisory workgroups

### Original

#### ARTICLE V – ADVISORY WORKGROUPS AND SUBCOMMITTEES

##### Section 1: Rules of Procedure

Articles I and II of the Rules of Procedure for the Michigan Trails Advisory Council shall apply to all advisory workgroups and subcommittees of the Council.

##### Section 2: Chairperson and Other Officers

The chairperson and other officers of advisory workgroups shall be appointed by the chairperson of the Council.

The Chairperson and other Officers of the Equine Trailways Subcommittee shall be appointed by the members of the subcommittee.

##### Section 3: Vacancy

A vacancy on a advisory workgroup or subcommittee occurring other than by expiration of a term shall be filled by the same manner as the original appointment for the balance of the unexpired term. A vacancy shall not affect the power of the remaining members to exercise the duties of advisory workgroup or subcommittee.

##### Section 4: Reports and Plans

The advisory workgroups and subcommittees shall provide meeting updates, reports, and plans to the Council to assist in performing the duties and responsibilities of the Council

##### Section 5: Duties of the Members

Members of the advisory workgroups and subcommittees shall refer all legal, legislative, and media contacts to the DNR. The advisory workgroups and subcommittees shall make recommendations to the Council and the DNR on the implementation of Public Act 451 of 1994 Part 721 Michigan Trailways, MCL 324.72101-324.72115.

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Revised

## ARTICLE V – ADVISORY WORKGROUPS AND SUBCOMMITTEES

### Section 1: Rules of Procedure

Articles I and II of the Rules of Procedure for the Michigan Trails Advisory Council shall apply to all advisory workgroups and subcommittees of the Council.

### Section 2: Chairperson and Other Officers

The chairperson, vice chairperson and other officers of advisory workgroups shall be appointed by the members of the subcommittee or workgroup.

### Section 3: Terms and Process

A term on the advisory workgroup or subcommittee will be four (4) years unless prohibited by statute. No more than two (2) consecutive terms will be permitted by any member. If a break of two years is achieved, then a former member can reapply for a role.

Unless prohibited by statute, the department will advertise via digital and other means any vacancy for a subcommittee or workgroup. The department will have an application and all that apply will be considered. A team consisting of PRD staff responsible for the subcommittee or workgroup, State Trail Coordinator, the members of the subcommittee or workgroup and the MTAC Chairperson (or representative of MTAC assigned) will review and choose the person to fill the role.

Any variation of process that is currently occurring on a subcommittee or workgroup will be resolved as vacancies occur.

### Section 4: Vacancy

A vacancy on the advisory workgroup or subcommittee occurring other than by expiration of a term shall be filled by the same manner as the original appointment for the balance of the unexpired term. A vacancy shall not affect the power of the remaining members to exercise the duties of the advisory workgroup or subcommittee.

### Section 5: Reports and Plans

The advisory workgroups and subcommittees shall provide meeting updates, reports, and plans to the Council to assist in performing the duties and responsibilities of the Council

### Section 6: Duties of the Members

Members of the advisory workgroups and subcommittees shall refer all legal, legislative, and media contacts to the DNR. The advisory workgroups and subcommittees shall make recommendations to the Council and the DNR on the implementation of Public Act 451 of 1994 Part 721 Michigan Trailways, MCL 324.72101-324.72115.

# Trail Champion- Jon Beard

## Jon Beard of Public Sector Consultants

Jon was one of the principal figures in helping to establish the process and the substance of the multiple years effort to design and produce the most recent DNR's master trail plan. Jon is an advocate and user of trails in Michigan and is a selfless and tireless worker who understands the importance of Michigan's trail system.

An outdoor enthusiast from an early age, Jon combines his passion for Michigan's natural resources and good public policy with his work in the firm's environment and energy practice. His time spent canoeing Michigan's rivers, hiking its trails, and exploring its woods gives Jon a real-world perspective on natural resource management. His love for adventure also feeds his penchant for pragmatism, thoroughness, and order when it comes to work. After all, you don't complete multiday treks in remote wilderness without the ability to plan and execute.

Jon specializes in natural resource and environmental issues, including water quality, land use, and watershed and resource management. He conducts research and analysis and writes reports on a wide range of environmental issues. Jon also serves as the trust manager and secretary for the multimillion-dollar Great Lakes Fishery Trust, which is managed and staffed by PSC. In this role, he oversees project staff and provides fiscal management and strategic direction to the organization. Additionally, he works with local, state, and federal entities, universities, and nonprofit organizations to develop and administer projects that advance the mission of the GLFT.

Over the years, Jon has worked for several organizations—including a university-based policy research center; a trade association based in Washington, D.C.; and an environmental engineering and risk management company—which has helped him understand the multiple and differing views that shape public policy.

# Trail Champion – Caryn Robinson

## Caryn Robinson – Equine Trails

Caryn Robinson of Pontiac Lake Horsemen's Association is nominated for her continued support of Michigan equine trails.

On July 24, 2021, a tornado ripped through the Pontiac Lake Recreation Area. It closed many areas of the trails and both the equestrian and modern campgrounds. Many large growth trees were lost and there were areas where trees fell on top of each other in huge piles of tangled debris. In the campground, the vault toilet, hand water pump, and pavilion were damaged in addition to the vast mature tree loss sustained in this area. Caryn Robinson, President of Pontiac Lake Horseman's Association, went to work immediately supporting the park staff by contacting the DNR for available emergency funding, creating a public fundraiser, organizing a large work bee in addition to multiple smaller ones, and helping to find a contractor so the momentous job of clearing the trails and campground could be finalized. On August 7 2021, the equestrian trails west of Teggerdine were opened for riding by volunteers and park rangers. At first, it seemed impossible that the east side trails and campground would be repaired and cleaned up by the end of 2021, but in early November, word went out that the east side equestrian trails were also now opened, cleared and ready for riding. And the campground will be ready to open again in the Spring of 2022 right on schedule. Caryn took on much of the responsibilities for this clean up, allowing for park staff to concentrate on the other areas needing attention after the storm's devastation. In doing so, public access to the equestrian trails and camps saw much less of a disruption than without her tireless efforts. Caryn has also been a devoted, passionate, and involved equestrian trail advocate for many years and has stepped up wherever needed and in many roles throughout the years. For these efforts we recognize Caryn Robinson as a Michigan Trails Champion.

# ALLEGAN STATE GAME AREA PROPOSAL

Robert Allen

## INTRODUCTION

Trails coursing over loam topsoils and sandy parent soils can pose a significant problem. There are a multitude of variables that lead to trail surface soil breakdown and sandy soil exposure. Exposed sand can lead to diminished quality of trail experience and safety concerns, along with progressive environmental degradation. A review of variables that lead to the breakdown of trail surface (topsoil), and a mitigation plan to prevent trail erosion and sand exposure, is prudent when addressing existing trail problems and when building new trails. Doing so, allows land stewards to focus on creating an environmentally sustainable trail before considering activity based trail design features that may be unsustainable. This approach is applicable when addressing bicycle trails that course through the oak forest sand plains of Southwest Michigan.

## METHODS

### Bicycle Trail Design

One of the benefits of natural path -single track trails is the use of topography to protect trail integrity and the environment. By nature, natural path-single trails meander about the terrain with the goal of minimal impact on plant life and protection of the soil. These goals are also important when creating a quality trail (the flow) and decreasing the cost of maintaining the trail. A narrow trail allows greater vegetation growth and more biomass around the trail. Plant root growth and fall decaying biomass support trail surface topsoil which decreases the risk of erosion and trail widening. A narrow trail also results in less canopy disruption, which can excessively dry the trail surface leading to topsoil/loam layer breakdown. Creating wide radius turns increases the length of turn, decreasing the travel speed, which decreases shredding of trail surface soils. Creating concave turns into hills (as opposed to convex) creates less erosion by creating greater soil compaction at slower speeds. When creating trails over hills it is important to create a course that is less than 5-8% grade. Using switch backs to climb hills allows a slower ascent and less grade. When building trails in oak-sand plains it is important to avoid savannas and grasslands due to the fragile topsoil loam surface layers. Skirting these areas creates a more pleasing experience visually, and leads to less surface erosion. Lastly, when building trails in sand base soil, mechanical equipment should be minimized/avoided. The use of heavy equipment disrupts the natural Topsoil/ loam layer, surely leading to sand exposure and erosion. Hand tools allow removal of tree woody debris, trimming of bushes (without losing root structure), and gentle raking, while preserving trail topsoil loam layer.

### Bicycle Trail Management and Maintenance

The key to a sustainable trail in oak forest-sand plain lands, is not only dependent on design, but is also dependent on management and maintenance of trail surface.

### Trail Management

Success of trails through oak forest- sand plains, is dependent on education of trail users and a fostering of “trail user Stewardship”. It is important to educate about natural land, trail preservation, and land uses. Ultimately, this task is the responsibility of the communities and organizations that use the trails.

Protection of trails starts with education and recommendation of “best bike” and “best bicycling behaviors”. High pressure, aggressive tread, narrow tires increase surface force creating a trail surface permeating force that leads to erosion of the trail over time. Educating bicyclists to use the widest tire, with the least aggressive tread, at the lowest pressure would be a “best bike” practice. Recommending and promoting fat tire bikes on these trails is another means of facilitating bicyclists behaviors when selecting a bike. Fat tire bicycles, with tires 2-3 inches wider and less aggressive tread than traditional mountain bikes, and tubeless tires that allow lower tire pressures, are ideal for oak forest- sand plains trails. In addition, fat tire bikes have inherent slower speed (compared to mtb and gb) and lower gearing.

Bicyclist behaviors, such as shredding, square pedaling, hard braking, reckless passing can damage trail surfaces. Educating bicyclists to avoid high-speed and excessive acceleration, and the use of proper gearing, while recommending a reasonable trail speed, would protect trail surface. Posting “slow speed and low gear” signs in areas that are vulnerable would further help mitigate the problem.

Once the trail surface begins to break-down, it is important to employ more aggressive management efforts. Rerouting or widening of degrading trails can be necessary to avoid more severe, costly damage to the trail and surrounding environment. Temporary structural “bridging” is appropriate when a trail section is degraded to the point it is an immediate environmental or trail safety risk. Permanent structural bridging is an option, but because of cost and other impacts should be avoided. Permanent bridging could imply poor trail design or terrain that is not appropriate for the proposed trail activity.

Sometimes the number of users overwhelms a trail resulting in surface destruction. During certain extreme weather conditions (wet and dry periods) this can be compounded. Although closing or restricting numbers of users of trails in the warm weather months is not common, it is done in the winter/spring months to protect trail surface for snow biking. In oak forest-sand plains, to protect the delicate trail surface, this approach may be appropriate. Increasing trail mileage to address over utilization of trails is another means of dealing with overuse damage. In the future, technology may help management and increase resources for trail development and maintenance. Devices like Apple Airtags (already being mounted on bikes), may be the future trail license that allows better management of utilization through data collection and information feedback.

#### Trail Maintenance

Topsoil/loam preservation is key to protecting trail surface. This can be enhanced by adding organic material to the trail tire track. Over time, treaded tires will create a 12 inch cupping of the surface as compaction and breakdown of the topsoil occurs. Often, leaves and organic matter are blown off the trail. Although, in clay silt soils this can be tolerated, this is not the case in loam-sand soil. Organic matter can also be removed via mowing of trails. Often, large non-mulching mowers are used which removes organic matter. The solution to this is to use the smallest mulching mower with a skirt and directional discharge, allowing mulched leaf

## ALLEGAN STATE GAME AREA PROPOSAL

Robert Allen

placement in the tire track. In the fall season, local municipalities pick up, shred and discard tons of mulched leaves, another source of surface organic matter. In open areas, the planting of deciduous trees and/or shrubs, and surface cover grasses can also help strengthen loam areas. Sometimes large deadfalls or heavy equipment trail crossing can permeate the topsoil surface. A timely response to these minor infractions will prevent bigger surface problems from evolving. Along with monitoring for these occurrences, actual monitoring of loam depth can be important. Extreme wind, rain, snow and arid conditions can diminish loam depth requiring intervention to maintain trail surface.

Armaments are also used as means of maintaining a trail surface. These are additives (lime or crushed limestone) or structural material such as rubber lattice, pavers or concrete chunks.

### DISCUSSION- Allegan State Game Area Trails

The ASGA exists in an oak forest-sand plain consisting of topsoil/loam surface with a sand parent base. The topography is flat to rolling hills with the occasional steep hill gully formation. Most of the established trails run through the forest lands coursing through smaller areas of oak savannas and grasslands. Presently the established trails lack design and measures to protect soil surfaces. The ASGA trail width averages 8-12 feet, resulting in unnecessary vegetation and forest canopy clearing. Straight hill climbs of greater than 5-8 percent grade, trails coursing through grassland and savannas, and directional changes that are acute, are at risk of creating sand pits and hill erosion.

What protects the established trails from being in worse condition evolves around several factors. The trails have not been over-utilized at this time. That said, utilization is increasing and given the population growth around the ASGA will continue to increase. The flat rolling forest hills are less likely to cause destruction of the loam surface. Where steep grades exist, improvements are being made to address erosion. The biomass from the oak trees, which decay on the trail, are highly protective of the loam surface. Oak leaves are very resilient to shredding and decomposition, protecting the surface loam layer from destructive tire forces.

### CONCLUSION:

The existing trails in the ASGA would benefit from the described management and maintenance described above. Not only does this process mitigate the environmental risks of using the trails, but it improves the safety and the efficiency of management and maintenance. The new community trail loops proposed in the "Trail Runs Through It" project would benefit from the trail design recommendations described above.

There are bicycle trails in SW Michigan that were developed without specifically mitigating the risks of building trails in oak forest-sand plains. Today the results of this are evident and pose significant challenges. Hopefully, by presenting a soil first approach to trail design and management, these problems can be avoided.

ASGA DNR WILDLIFE MEETING

Present: Mark Mills, Don Poppe, Rob Allen

1. The DNR Bicycle Trail Focus Group will be meeting to evaluate and determine the future of bicycle trails in state game areas. Concerns are; sustainability of trails (Yankee Springs), department management capabilities-staffing resources
2. Leasing of land for trail was explained. It is a “process”, that creates oversight within local dnr unit. The county has a history of leasing. At this time there is not a clear understanding position on leasing biking trails through Allegan County, along with other trail commitments. That said, lease options should be a “slow go” forward until the DNR focus group works through their process.
3. The DNR is open to looking at bike trails, with an understanding of resource limitations and their objective of wildlife management.

Let me know if anything else should be included.

Thanks again for your efforts.

Rob

# ALLEGAN STATE GAME AREA PROPOSAL

Robert Allen

1. -Learn more about the Wildlife Division DNR department's internal bike trails focus group. *The focus group will develop a position on bicycle trails in state game areas by May, 2022. Previously, concern was expressed over trail sustainability (Yankee Springs). This was minimized as one of the issues. Other issues include, RP Act, departments charge, Hunting biking, etc.*
2. -Review sustainable trails in oak forest sand-plains.. "Soils first", natural path single track. *Presented parts of proposal*
  - a. Topsoil/loam - enhancement and replenish.
- 3.review ASGA Trails and use of techniques.
  - a.ASGA- will flag proposed changes, written description of changes, monitoring and management plan.....mitigation plan. *Agreed to continue working in a limited area. Will move a hill section off the existing trail and create a more sustainable course*
4. Review my meetings with MEMBA, Allegan County Park Rec.
  - a. MEMBA - updated
  - b. Allegan County- Long term support for county trails maintenance.

Ken Hopper

NAW Update-MTAC Meeting March 24, 2022

Welcomed new NAW Committee Member, Neal Glazebrook – trail advocate from Livingston County, and Event/ Tour Director for LMB.

NAW Member Lori Hauswirth requested that ETS give an update on the draft legislation they were working on at the 3/17 NAW meeting. Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf from ETS gave an overview, with support from Karen Brahman on the attached documents). NAW members were able to ask questions and offer ways to support ETS in the efforts. This gave NAW members the opportunity to hear directly from the individuals working on these initiatives.