

MICHIGAN TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Meeting: Michigan Trails Advisory Council

Meeting Date: 09/11/2019 1:00 PM

Location: Northern Michigan University, 1401 Presque Isle Ave., Marquette

Committee Present

John Matonich
Steve Davis
Bill Manson
Thomas Dunn
Jason Rolling
Jessi Adler
Jenny Cook

Not Present

PJ McCaughn
Joe Kuchnicki

DNR Present

Jeff Kakuk
Paul Gaberdiel
Doug Rich
Rob Katona
Paul Yauk
Greg Kinser
Jessica Holley
Monica Weis
Annalisa Centofanti
Ron Yesney

Others Present

Lewis Shuler
James Hunt
Louise Klarr
Craig Woerpul
Dave Bishop
Don Helsel
Linda Schulz
Jim Kelts
Kevin Afla

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman John Matonich called the regular meeting of the Michigan Trails Advisory Council Meeting to order at 1pm, on Wednesday, September 11, at the Northern Michigan University in Marquette Michigan. A moment of silence was dedicated to the 9/11 victims and families.

- a) Committee members introduced themselves
- b) DNR staff introduced themselves, along with general public

II. BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- a) Motion approved for July 10 meeting minutes with modification. Jessi Adler remarked PJ McCaughn was present at the meeting, and not on the phone.
- b) Motion to allow taking agenda items out of order.
- c) Add item trail signage. Add item Bob Wilson statement "opt-in/opt-out". Approval of agenda items.
- d) Motion approved for September 11 agenda with additions.

III. ACTION ITEMS

TRAILS WEEK / STATEWIDE / SEPTEMBER 22-29

Ron Yesney

Don Britton will be receiving an award at the Michigan Trails Week Ceremony in Lansing. Don is chair of Iron Ore Trail and is a huge contributor in both the non-motorized and snowmobile world.

Ms. Cook acknowledged Paul Yauk, Nikki VanBloem, and herself will be receiving awards as well. Ms. Cook said she is glad the trails are being highlighted and she appreciates everyone's involvement in the system. Mr. Yauk thanked all the partners that are out there.

Paul Yauk

Mr. Yauk said the trails are recognized for five things: 1.) Public recreation in connecting public lands, 2.) MDOT/transportation, 3.) Health Benefits, 4.) Heritage in Trail-History, 5.) Economic impact.

Mr. Matonich said a piece of the IBT Trail has just been completed in his hometown (Bessemer), which is **recognized as one of the top ten most scenic hiking trails in the country** (Trails Magazine) and can concur with economic growth.

Bob Wilson Statement

The recreation passport opt-out legislation will likely commence with a hearing in the house transportation committee in early October. This important package of bills sponsored by representative Howell and Representative Warren will triple the amount of dollars available for local parks and trails. We have received numerous letters of support from conservation recreation and business groups all over Michigan and representative Howell anticipates that this legislation will likely receive even more support in the committee. In addition to this coordinated effort to support recreation passport opt out, this group effort also led to a coalescing of all the trail sector groups in Michigan to work towards a common policy goal. This is an exciting development because it shows the potential power of all trail groups working together in Michigan.

Next week, the Michigan house and the Michigan Senate will both independently adopt resolutions supporting Michigan trails week. Specifically, supporting all the motorized and non-motorized trail work being done in Michigan.

Wednesday, September 25, the Michigan Trails and greenways alliance will hold their annual award ceremony in the rotunda of the capitol, where 14 individuals and groups comprising all the different trail sectors in Michigan will be recognized.

In addition, if successfully passed in its current state, the DNR budget will include a specific amendment creating a water trails grant process with the waterways commission and the Department of Natural Resources

2020 Meeting Dates

Ms. Holley said she will work on developing meeting dates. Ms. Centofanti stated she will send out doodle poll. All committee member agreed to add a 4th meeting in 2020. John suggested a meeting in UP for one of the meetings, in conjunction with an NRC meeting. Ms. Centofanti to work with Ms. Nelson to figure coordinating dates. Ms. Cook commented it is nice to have 2-3 weeks in between sub-committee meetings in order to have notes available.

IV. UPDATES

TRAIL UPDATES

ETS - Jenny Cook

Ms. Cook said the group is keeping busy and enjoying the many trails in Michigan. They are close to half million dollars annually of what they are given back to park systems. A lot of events are going on, and focus is being placed on the 100-year anniversary celebrating state parks. They are appreciative of the

horse friendly campgrounds, which aids with safety. These campgrounds create a community feeling where they can depend on support from one another. EQ legislative day is on Sept 26, this event will showcase and promote the value of horses, talent in EQ groups, medical findings where horses are used for therapeutic reasons, and value of horses-all across the field. Working on signage with DNR for all trail riders. Work is in progress for the Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan.

Jenny Cooks' Statement

Michigan Equestrian Campgrounds 9-9-19

Horse owners are thankful for the horse friendly campgrounds throughout the state of Michigan. These destinations are an oasis of rest and refreshment offering both recreational and educational experiences on our beautiful public lands. Access to horse friendly areas provides enjoyment, freedom, training platforms, physical exercise and therapy for horses and horse owners.

Our Michigan Equestrian State Campgrounds are home base for Great Lakes Distance Riders, Competitive Mounted Orienteering, community benefit rides, fox hunts and many various trail associations events like Chili Cook Offs, Poker Runs, Halloween Events, cook outs and much more.

We show our appreciation of Michigan horse friendly public riding arenas, by the evidence of our usage, dedication and volunteerism. We donate time, energy, equipment and materials to design, improve and maintain campgrounds, staging areas, corrals, confidence courses, trails and more with a value of over \$500,000.00 annually. We are dedicated stewards of the campgrounds and trails because our horses are more than our hobby or occasional interest, they are our partners for healthy living. We have major investments of time, training, money and effort in our horses, tack, trucks, trailers, grooming tools, camping provisions, professional services, and equipment.

It is the best safety practice to have Equestrian Campgrounds separate from other campground users. There is a comfort in knowing we are a in like-minded community, where seasoned, knowledgeable people with valuable horse experience are available if needed.

Horses are herd animals, so it is natural and necessary for horses to be with other horses for protection and rest. It is essential for their survival and allows horses to be calm and confident. By the time we camp with our horses, we understand the calm, quiet disposition needed to conquer new frontiers. This is the best safety practice for horses, horse owners and other campers.

Out of the 103 State Parks, there are 38 State Park campgrounds in Michigan, horse riders have access to seven: Brighton, Highland, Ionia, Ortonville, Pontiac Lake, Waterloo and Yankee Springs. These campgrounds have been supported, developed and maintained by horse owning volunteers for the last 20 plus years. Without the horseman's contributions, our privileges would have ended, as has many areas in Michigan. The equestrian campgrounds only have pit toilets and a water source. There are no Michigan equestrian campgrounds with electricity, restrooms or shower houses. When camping with our horses, we may not leave our horses unattended, so we do not have access to showers. The state of Michigan would attract more usage and tourism if our equestrian campgrounds offered electricity, running water, rest rooms and shower houses for visitors at these campgrounds.

Funding for the proposed equestrian campground improvements would need to be procured. In recent years, Michigan's Department of Natural Resources budgets have not grown to match inflation or the economy. Therefore, we are in favor of the Opt-Out Recreation Passport HB 4486, 4775 and 4776 to increase Michigan State Parks and Trails funding to support increased equine trails infrastructures and Equestrian Campgrounds amenities.

Thank you for your interest and support of our Equestrian Campgrounds and horse friendly trails and areas in Michigan.

Non-Motorized

Paul Yauk

Paul said a lot of activities are taking place. There is a kick-off ride from South Haven to Port Huron next week, **Great Lake to Lake Ride**. Bob Wilson has been active with motorized and non-motorized with networking and staying in touch with officials. Steve Davis said there is still an emphasis placed on funding for non-motorized. Mr. Matonich said all the activity Bob Wilson has taken on is really raising awareness.

Snow

Bill Manson

Mr. Manson said there has not been any recent meetings since MTAC's last meeting. Projects connecting trails are in progress. The budget is on everyone's mind, last May supplemental were requested, but it has not gone anywhere because of the budget process. The audit of snow trail program started last April, and is placing a financial bind on permits, as there is not a contract in place to send out new permits. This can create a situation where a second mailing may be necessary, which will cost about \$5000.

ORV

Thomas Dunn

Mr. Dunn said there plans of action in place for the gaps in the cross-state connector for the UP. Hiawatha maps identified gaps in that area. In moving forward, they are working with US Forestry. A combined ORV and LAW division advisory group is being put together to form a committee to review handbooks, before a reprint and distribution. Hard work is being placed on a Pure Michigan marketing program. A signage handbook for both snow and ORV, needs to be uniform, and will be discussed between assigned Snow/ORV/DNR committee members. Oakland County Park is moving forward and will open in 2020 summer. New opportunity south of Jackson may open in the future. ORV trail permits are up about 7%, and ORV permits (road) is up 4%.

STAFF UPDATES

Paul Yauk

Mr. Yauk said you will be hearing a lot more on safety, education, and exposure. There are many new users across all the trails. Trails Plan kick-off meeting will be in October, and DNR will come back to MTAC for input. Plans to work closer together as a unit across all the advisory groups is upcoming. We have some great partners around the state, including grant sponsors, US Forest services, clubs - thank you! We are looking at getting grants out faster, we are rolling out the MAGG introduction. IBT progress: a lot has been completed this year.

Greg Kinser- NLP

Mr. Kinser said staff continues to work with grant sponsors processing reimbursements. Working on reroutes, and issues that arise. Routine grading occurring on routes, infrastructure work taking place, storm damage work that is in process. Recently, a trail extension in Gaylord in conjunction with the county was completed. Trail #7 up through Gaylord now has a limestone surface for non-motorized and

will be a showcase project for future endeavors. This trail has been getting a lot of usage, even before it was finished. Numerous groups are enjoying these trails, which can accommodate people with challenges. Cadillac pavilion is wrapping up enhancements. Alpena moving forward and is going out to bid in 2020. Approval of Old Mackinaw and Tin Cup EQ trails has been released. White Pine, Rogers Farm culvert going out to bid. Fundraising event took place for WP trail raising 15,000. Betsey has been subject to storm and water challenges, and currently have a flooded section which is being rerouted. There have been places this year that have flooded that have no history of flooding. EQ trails has tons of work going on, including Shore-to-Shore maps and documentation.

Ron Yesney -UP

Mr. Yesney provided updates on the trails for:

NAW; Mountain bike trails has received recent expansions in the Harlow area. Another expansion in Keweenaw county. EQ, some expansion work in Marquette county, connection to fairgrounds be done by Sept 20. A lot of events are occurring where DNR is involved in, such as running races, mountain bike races, where DNR permits use of the trails, but not all trail users approve of the use of their trails which creates animosity conflict. The events are economic drivers and DNR is working through this.

SNOW – Constructing bridges using Natural Resource trust funds used. A few grant sponsors issues, some have dropped out of program, and there is a need to fill in with new sponsors. Contracting with MTEC University to evaluate groomer break downs and provide recommendations.

ORV – Trail plan calls to create an interconnected trail system in the UP, we are making progress and working through the challenges. With the Rail Trails, we are working on infrastructure improvements, bridges, and culverts. Menomonie river bridge was gifted by snow club to DNR and both MI and WI are working together to improve. IBT has some cool stuff going on in the UP. Houghton County storm damage work is still in progress, most likely will be 4-5 years to take to complete.

Jeff Kakuk - WUP

Mr. Kakuk said the Menomonie Bridge project will be approximately 100-mile trail and is great for both states economies. The project will go out for bid this winter, and we are experiencing challenges with the permit process because 2 states are involved. This 100-mile stretch has 5 grant sponsors, and a lot of moving pieces to make all this work. Barraga to Arnheim rail grade is in process and will benefit the snow trails for next snow season. Keewanaw mountain bike trails has a proposal that is working through approvals, this will pull the trail off a section of county road in Copper Harbor.

Paul Gaberdiel - EUP

Mr. Gaberdiel reported there are various projects going on. Two bridges have been complete, Sunken Lake in Seney being one of them. Three bridges are in the engineering phase, and three are waiting for funds. Headquarters Lake EQ received signs this past summer. Future ORV route connections between Paradise to Munising, current connections are not the best right now and we are looking to get them off major roads. Brevort EQ campground is going through approval process.

John Morey- LAW

Mr. Morey reported there is an officer in every county now. A lot of young officers on board now due to attrition. The department is very busy with upcoming hunting seasons.

Doug Richard - DNR

Mr. Richard said the WUP has a unique opportunity where Gov Snyder left \$1M to help correctional facility folks. They are involved in assisting DNR maintaining and upkeep with trails. Some are working in Porcupine Mts assisting on infrastructure repairs. There will be 2 more groups starting in Baraga office soon.

Paul Holeva- US Forestry

Mr. Holeva said they overlap on the same projects as the trails program. There have been major improvements on the EQ trails. The current focus is on trail bridge improvements. Mr. Yauk stated there is a great partnership that has been formed with the US Forestry.

Mr. Matonich asked where are we at with adding miles to ORV trails? Mr. Holeva said all level 2 roads are open unless marked closed. 175 miles will be on level 3 or higher. This process is not complete, and meetings will be hosted in early 2020.

Jessica Holley

Email Received

Because these meeting invitations are going out to a broad audience, she received a message from Bill Sterat, with the Forest Resource Division. He was wondering if there was a need to cover any areas of discussion or if there was a need to send someone from US Forestry to represent. Ms. Holley said this is a great example of how well our partnerships with each division supports one another.

Mid-America Trails & Greenway Conference

Grand Rapids MI Aug 30-Sept 2, 2020

Jessica will keep the committee informed of updates.

Trail Signage

Jessi Adler

Ms. Adler said has been to a lot of state parks, and has seen many variations of signage, mostly hiking and biking. She asked who does this governance fall under, where does money come from and how can this be corrected. Mr. Yauk said we have started signage in some areas, most in park signs are up to the park ranger. Mr. Yauk concurred we need consistent signage on pathways. Mr. Kinser agreed they should be consistent within parks and out of the parks. Mr. Yauk said this is an opportunity for locals and partners to work with parks and assist with pointing out these concerns. Park Rangers often do a volunteer day where these can be identified.

Public Comment? - NONE

Next meeting date TBD

Chairman, John Matonich, adjourned the meeting at 2:35 pm.