

Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee

June 5-6, 2017

DCNR Bur. Of Topographic & Geological Survey
3240 Schoolhouse Road, Middletown, PA 17057

Meeting Minutes

June 5, 2017

Trails Advisory Committee Members: Andy Hamilton, Jane Sheffield, Betsy Aiken, Kyle Buchter, James Foster, Janie French, John Daniel Glass, Jr., Carl Kelemen, Jim Laird, William Ritting, III, Henry Stroud, Gwen Wills, Jeremy Wimpey

DCNR Staff: Alex MacDonald, Mark Hansford, Mike Kmiecinski, Alyssa Wentz

The committee reviewed and discussed the 2017 trail grant applications. There were 92 trail applications requesting \$19M; 78 non-motorized trail projects, 13 motorized trail projects, 1 statewide trail education and training project.

June 6, 2017

Trails Advisory Committee Members: Andy Hamilton, Jane Sheffield, Betsy Aiken, James Foster, Janie French, Carl Kelemen, Larry Knutson, Jim Laird (via phone), William Ritting, III, Henry Stroud, Gwen Wills, Jeremy Wimpey

DCNR Staff: Alex MacDonald, Mike Kmiecinski, Alyssa Wentz, Thomas Ford

PennDOT Staff: Jackie Koons-Felion, Josh Haverstick

Andy Hamilton called the Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee (PTAC) meeting to order at 1:10pm on September 19, 2016. Attendees introduced themselves.

Wrap-up from June 5th (Alex MacDonald)

DCNR staff will send a short survey to the members on the grant review process.

DCNR Update (Thomas Ford)

Tom Ford provided an update on the impacts of state budget on DCNR and the Bureau of Recreation & Conservation (BRC). The Governor's budget proposal is tight and BRC will lose vacant positions. The House budget proposal will likely cause BRC to lose its vacant positions as well as 3 currently filled positions, which will impact the Trails Program directly. The Senate is currently working on its budget proposal. A DCNR press release summarizing the impacts of the House budget proposal was distributed to the members. Members requested additional information about the potential budget impacts. Members also asked if they could contact elected officials as the PA Trails Advisory Committee. DCNR will provide an official answer to that question.

Trails Update

Alex MacDonald provided an update on the Trails Program, covering the following:

- Summary of the BRC grant program
 - Members requested a breakdown of PRT, snowmobile and ATV funds
 - Members requested a matrix of DCNR Trail funding
- Issues with meeting Buy America requirements for purchasing equipment with PRT funding
 - Members asked if used equipment needed to comply. DCNR staff will look into this.
- Changes to Snowmobile and ATV funding requires more funding allocated to ATV projects, separate grant program with regulations and a semiannual grant approval process
- Status of completion of PA's Major Greenways
- Results of GIS analysis to quantify goal of every Pennsylvanian within 15 minutes of a trail.
 - It was suggested to repeat the analysis for different trail types, especially since trail use priorities vary throughout the state.
- Status of PA's Top 10 Trail Gaps

Input Stations

Members participated in a feedback session on the following topics:

- Diversity of Committee membership
- The future of sub-committees
- What should the Committee focus on?

Review ExplorePATrails.com

Alyssa Wentz provided an overview of the plans for ExplorePATrails.com and demonstrated a beta version of the mapping update currently in development.

Web Interface Update:

- Work has not yet started on the web interface update
- There will be user profiles
- It will be easier to submit photos, reviews and updates
- The interface will be mobile friendly

Beta Mapping Update:

- Mapping update will be released first
- Search functions have been improved
- Users can draw on and print a map
- Elevation profiles for trails are available
- The map display is larger
- Once mapping goes live, DCNR staff will forward to the Committee Members

Committee Member feedback:

- There are lots of small community trails open to the public, especially in SE PA. Those trails tend not to be in the data set for ExplorePATrails. Feedback from the public forums are telling us that those trails are very important to people.

- Can we add additional information to each trail page related to accessibility features? Like slope, surface, parking, etc. This information could be provided by the registered users. We would need to create additional attributes within the trail data set.
- Consider allowing users to track their accomplishments and display them as part of their profile. Possibly identify a “trail champion of the year.”
- There is an effort at the national level to have a trail data set. Look into the national standards that are currently being developed to ensure that our attributes are compatible.
- There is concern that no one knows about this resource. We should commit to getting the word out, like through search engine mobilization.
- This information is helpful for PennDOT since they are working to integrate trails, scenic byways and other resources into their transportation data.

New Business

- Larry Knutson asked if we should continue to hold public forums.
 - Possibly hold 2 more in 2017.
 - Janie French and Gwen Wills will work together to host one of the sessions in NC/NW Pennsylvania.
 - We need to ensure that we do something with the information that has been gathered from the forums.
 - We will need to explain what we heard and how we are responding to it.
 - We should evaluate this at our September meeting.
 - DCNR staff will resend information about the purpose and format of the public forums.

Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee
Tuesday, September 26, 2017
3:00 pm- 5:00 pm

Willow Room, Doubletree by Hilton
Reading, PA 19601

PTAC Attendees - Thomas Baxter, Eric Bruggeman, Andrew Hamilton, Jane Sheffield, Larry Knutson, Michael White, Kyle Buchter, Betsy Aiken, Carl Kelemen, Jim Laird, Bill Ritting, Gwen Wills, Henry Stroud, Dan Glass, Mike Kuhn

DCNR Attendees - Alex MacDonald, Diane Kripas, Jean Lynch, Leslie Sarvis, Paula Devore

Other Attendees – Jackie Koons-Felion, PennDOT

- Call to Order

Andy Hamilton called the Pennsylvania Trail Advisory Committee (PTAC) to order at 2:45 pm on Tuesday, September 26, 2017

PTAC members introduced themselves and who they represent.

- Discussion & Approval of June 5-6 Minutes

Andy Hamilton discussed the June 5-6, 2017 meeting minutes; Eric Bruggeman put forth a motion to approve, seconded by Betsy Aiken, motion passed.

Andy Hamilton put forth a motion to thank PRPS and the organizing committee for doing a great job with the PA Trails on behalf of PTAC the Committee agreed.

- Trails Update

Alex Mac Donald led a discussion on the status of the Round 23 applications to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). William Penn Foundation continues to be a good partner to help complete projects and provide matching fund opportunities. PTAC discussed having Brian Hare come to speak to the group about Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) PennDOT Connects in an effort to help coordinate projects between DCNR and PennDOT.

ExplorePATrails new mapping component is on the website. Mapping is functioning well, there is still some work to be done. The feedback option to help locate bugs or functionality irregularities is part of the site. Website users are encouraged to take the survey about the map.

Draft Snowmobile/ATV regulations were discussed, feedback by committee members is due by September 27, 2017. Matching funding requirements continue to be a concern. Application forms may need to be updated to discern where the funds are to be awarded, i.e. closed track.

-2017 Trail Annual Report Submissions

DCNR is officially accepting applications for the Trail Annual Report. Information is available online via google search "PA Trail of the Year." Submissions are due December 15th.

- Committee Reappointments and Vacancies

Eight Committee renewals will happen this coming year on the PTAC. Three positions will be available representing ATV, Snowmobiling, Walking. Applications are available via DCNR web-site. Due date for letters of interest is Nov. 17, 2017.

- PA Trails Month

PA Trails Month currently does not exist. The idea was brought up by Diane Kripas and is supported by the PTAC Executive Committee. September and October are favored due to the association with the PA Trail Summit and the weather that allows folks to get out and enjoy these amenities. DCNR Communication folks are supportive of this initiative. PTAC discussed the pros and cons of various months. Jane Sheffield put forth a motion to form a sub-committee to take on the task and make a recommendation to the full Committee of which month to explore the possibility of starting an official Trail Month to be officially approved by PTAC and supported by the Governor. Motion seconded by Carl Kelemen, motion passed.

- Trail of the Year

Trail of the Year has generated a great deal of interest and continues to call attention to varied trails throughout the Commonwealth. The process for selecting of the Trail of the Year may require some tweaking. Andy Hamilton offered to help review the selection process to be sure the process is fair and equitable.

- Public Trails Forum

Betsy Aiken and Larry Knutson gave a recap of the June 7th Murrysville meeting, many of the folks were local groups. One of the major items that arose was the need for an emergency fund. Another challenge that was prominent was communication with the various railroads. The third topic included the opportunity to collaborate with riverfront or riparian groups. Statewide promotion of Trails and associated economic impact is something that is helpful to promote and continue to develop and maintain Trails. Three Sub-Committee meetings were very well attended and participation feedback was good. Larry Knutson noted that there is still time to put out a notice and have additional Public Trail Forums for 2017 preferably on a week day evening which will draw municipal folks and elected officials. Andy Hamilton suggested the creation of a standard questionnaire that may be provided to stakeholders who may not be able to attend. Larry Knutson offered to help coordinate the efforts to development a questionnaire.

- Redefining Subcommittees

Andy Hamilton led an open conversation on the current subcommittees and structure.

Planning Subcommittee

Education Subcommittee

Communication Subcommittee

Stewardship Subcommittee

Outreach Subcommittee

Jane Sheffield suggested that the topics are related and perhaps Education and Communication may be consolidated. Leslie Sarvis mentioned that new PTAC members have yet to take a subcommittee position. She also noted that the subcommittee work is greatly advanced by having a DCNR designated liaison. Alex Mac Donald explained that PTAC should not be constrained by the current subcommittees or their structures. There seems to be a great deal of overlap and the grouping of topics may need to be revisited. The need for priority for each subcommittee was discussed; perhaps consider a top two task

to accomplish. DCNR liaisons and subcommittee members plan to get together in an effort to consolidate on how best to focus the top two tasks. Gwen Wills asked for advice from DCNR on the list of tasks that the subcommittees should be prioritize. Jane Sheffield put forth a motion to combine the Communication, Outreach, Education Committees and Trail Month into one subcommittee, seconded by Jim Laird, motion passed. Planning and Stewardship remain standing subcommittees.

Revised motion by Jane Sheffield to consolidate/create the following subcommittees, seconded by Betsy Aiken, motion passed.

Planning

Events (Trail of the Year and Trail of the Month)

Education and Communication

Outreach - Needs and Emerging Trends

A call will be set up by DCNR staff to provide top tasks for each subcommittee before folks select where they would like to participate.

- Other Business

Leslie Sarvis announced a DCNR fall grant round for ATVs and Snowmobiles opening in October and closing December 20th.

Alex Mac Donald mentioned November 17th is the closing date for Trail of the Year nominations.

Next meeting date will be suggested by DCNR and selected based on PTAC participation via a doodle poll.

Kyle Buchter has been working with a large land owner, upwards of 60,000 acres, to create an outdoor recreational destination opportunity which includes trails, camping, ATV and snowmobiling. Additional information will be provided for the next meeting. Grand National Cross Country (GNCC) International event that involves motorized off-road.

- Adjourn

Andy Hamilton called the meeting closed at 4:55 pm on Tuesday, September 26, 2017.

Submitted by: Tom Baxter