

70-Mile Trail Oversight Committee Meeting

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

6 PM, Long Lake Conservation Center

In Attendance: Frank Turnock*, Laurie Westerlund*, Robin Baker*, Katie Fernholz**, Len Hardy*, Brian Napstad*, Mark Jacobs*, Maynard Ahonen*, Harlan Kingsley*, T.J. Gustin*, Larry Moses, Bob Moore, Alice Olmschenk, Daniel Olmschenk, Gilbert Eigsby, Don Haller

* = *Committee Member* **=*project coordinator*

MINUTES

6:10 PM – Call to Order

Approval of Meeting Agenda (Motion by L. Hardy, Second by R. Baker, Approved)

Approval of 10/6/09 Meeting Minutes (Motion by L. Hardy, Second by F. Turnock, Approved)

Review of Old Business

- Distribution of draft Progress Report for committee member review. It will be sent to the printer before the end of the week and hopefully mailed out before the end of the month. Each progress report is mailed to a list of about 200 area businesses, township clerks and other project contacts. The progress report will also then be posted at the website and announced via email to the project contact list. This edition highlights the progress that has been made on the Phase I routes, the tour that was held with the DNR and Senator Saxhaug in September, and the next steps for Phase II. A copy of the latest map for the Lawler Loops is also reproduced on page 3 of the progress report.
- Reminder that the project did receive grants from the Polaris and Yamaha Foundations. These funds are to support the development of signs and maps for the trail system and for youth safety classes and education. Only a small portion of the grant funds have been used to date for some markers along the trail. Map and sign development will continue over the winter.

Construction Planning Sub-Committee Update/Legislative Sub-Committee Update

- A grant application for \$232,500 has been submitted to the DNR and the Parks and Trails Legacy Grant Program to support the next stages of the project. The application includes letters of support from local communities within the project area, including Palisade, McGrath, and Remer. Aitkin County is also working with the DNR to renew the current project contract. A bonding request is not being pursued this year because it would require a 50% local match that isn't feasible. Comments about the project from the DNR and the legislature have been very positive and the September tour was well received with participants commenting on the quality of the trail planning, design and construction.

- Solana Forest Loop: Work done this fall has resulted in about 4 or 5 miles being laid, but have a few more days worth of work left, including culvert and crossing areas. There have been some delays due to the need to get some final permit approvals that have been postponed and are needed in order to finish construction. The trail is 30-40% complete and some spring and summer work will still be needed. May do some hauling and staging of materials during the winter.
- Lawler Loops: The routes are fairly complete. Signs and maps are needed. The route has been submitted for grant-in-aid funding support.
- Moose River Connector: The route is fairly complete with the work done by a contractor from Aitkin.

Phase II Update

- Hill City: Routes have been explored and it may be time to go out in the field and GPS them so

that they can be put on a map and presented to the township and other stakeholders for feedback. The best route appears to be one that corresponds in part with an established snowmobile route. Will need to provide funding for trail maintenance and address local concerns about safety at road crossings and intersections. The Aitkin County Land Department staff can assist with the field review and GPS mapping. There may be ways to connect the Blind Land Trail to the Soo Line, but would require County Board resolution to allow use of roads.

- Itasca Update: The County is working with the Highway Department to find a possible route in the right-of-way area by the Swan River Bridge. Goodland is supportive of the project. Itasca County has also approved the Blandin UPM trail and it has been sponsored by one of the clubs.
- Big Sandy Connection: There was a meeting with the private landowner's real estate manager to determine if a trail across the private ownership might be possible. The landowner has leases in other parts of Minnesota and would require the easement to be in the County's name. There are existing roads on the property that could connect with the Soo Line. Other landowners in the area have expressed a willingness to support the trail. Split rail fences may be necessary along the trail route to prevent trespass. The county would need to allow ATVs on the shoulder of County Road 63.

Trail System Name Selection

- Motion to select the name "Northwoods Regional ATV Trail System" (Motion by H. Kingsley, Second by T. J. Gustin, Unanimously Approved)
- The name will be updated at the website, announced via email and in a December news release. The progress reports in 2010 will use the new name.
- The trail system also needs a logo. The project coordinator will develop some ideas for the committee to consider.

Schedule Next Committee Meeting

The next meeting will be Tuesday, February 9th at 6pm in Hill City (exact location to be determined).

Agenda for the Next Meeting to Include:

- Maps for Phase II
- Review of Northwoods Regional ATV Trail System logos
- Discussion of trail maps and printing services

Public Comments

R. Baker: It is important to have maps developed so we can review and discuss the trail routes.

D. Olmschenk: Thanks to the committee for all of your hard work.

L. Moses: Will these trail system routes be grant-in-aid trails?

M. Jacobs: Yes, the applications have been submitted.

7:50 PM Adjourn