

DRAFT Minutes subject to review and approval at the next Committee Meeting on May 19, 2009.

70-Mile Trail Oversight Committee Meeting

Monday, March 23, 2009

6 PM

Trailhead Building, Itasca County Fair Grounds, Grand Rapids, MN (1336 Fairgrounds Rd, Grand Rapids, MN 55744)

In Attendance: Robert Marcum*, Mark Jacobs*, Brian Napstad*, Len Hardy*, Robin Baker*, Andrew Brown*, Rusty Eichorn*, Harlan Kingsley*, Laurie Westerlund*, Rick Utech*, Frank Turnock *, Maynard Ahonen*, Warren Spawn*, Bob Moore, Paul Thiede, Larry Moses, Jeff Koehn, Terry Mejdrich, , Gilbert Eigsberg, Rick Barta, Joe Majerus, Les Ollils, Katie Fernholz**

* = Committee Member ** - project coordinator

MINUTES

6:00 PM – Call to Order

Approval of Meeting Agenda – addition of Trail Issues discussion with Jeff Koehn, MN DNR Enforcement (Motion by R. Utech, Second F. Turnock, Approved)

Approval of 12/1/08 Meeting Minutes
(Motion by L.Hardy, Second R.Baker, Approved)

Review of Old Business

- Distribution of Quarterly Progress Report: The report was distributed to a mailing list of approx. 200 local businesses, townships and elected officials. The report is posted at the project website and includes a contractors notice.
- Recent Media Coverage: The Aitkin Independent Age, Grand Rapids Herald and Brainerd Dispatch have all recently ran stories about the project.
- Polaris and Yamaha Foundation Grants: The project has received grants from the Polaris and Yamaha Foundations to support maps, signage and youth ATV safety courses. The successful Yamaha application included a letter of support from Farm Island Repair & Marine (FIRM).
- Public Comment received March 4, 2009 regarding public safety, need for cell phone coverage, and possible utilization of old fire tower in Solana State Forest. The comments from Mr. Don Dudley, Sturgeon Lake, Minnesota include:
 - o In the case of an emergency or accident there is only a limited area where a cell phone will work in Solana State Forest or the surrounding communities (Arthyde, Hwy 27, Denham and along the Soo Line South)
 - o The unused fire tower on Co. Hwy 2, east of 65 in Aitkin County could provide a cell tower site.
 - Having the paved road, height off the ground, phone lines and power right there or close by make it an ideal location
 - o Cell phone companies should be made aware of the high number of motorized

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recreationalist in the area (snowmobiles and ATV riders) and the fact that many bring cell phones and expect them to work in the area or look to change cell companies to find one that does.

- Cell phone coverage is needed for public service and public safety, including medical response.
- The Oversight Committee should consider these recommendations and determine appropriate actions to be taken.
- The Oversight Committee agrees with the concern about safety and the need for better cell phone service in the area of the trail. It would be helpful to make the cell phone companies aware of the recreation trail use in the area. It was noted that fire towers aren't generally engineered appropriately for use as cell towers and MN DOT is involved with decisions to establish towers. It is believed that Verizon is currently considering tower locations by Hwy 27 at 110th and at the Moose Lake Junction. The counties are currently implementing a program for supporting improved emergency communication and response capacity.

Construction Planning Sub-Committee Update

- The trail corridor has been sheared (35-40 miles prepped) and work was done with frozen ground conditions so soil impacts were minimized. Rock for specific areas was hauled in and stockpiled while the ground was frozen as well. The next step is to decide on methods for the crossings, including the use of geoblock, wood decking, or fabric and fill. Then the crossings can be put in and the contracts for shaping and moving fill put out. The sub-committee is looking at ordering geoblock to be used in some wetland crossings to test the material and minimize wetland impacts. The cost is about \$25,000 for enough material to cover 1,200 feet of trail (8' wide). The material would be distributed among the Phase I trail segments. The benefits would include minimized wetland impact, minimized maintenance, potentially minimized wetland mitigation requirements, and the opportunity to test innovative techniques. The material has been used successfully in trail development in Alaska. *Motion to recommend to the county board to move forward with purchase of geoblock materials and approval of quote as received.* (Motion by R. Utech, Second L. Hardy, Carried).
- The sub-committee is also looking at purchasing additional materials needed for the crossings, including geotextiles, wood and decking materials. *Motion to recommend to the county board to approve a not-to-exceed resolution for \$50,000 for purchasing of crossing materials.* (Motion by F. Turnock, Second L. Hardy, Carried)
- The motions related to construction expenditures will be taken to the Aitkin County board at their next meeting.
- It was also noted that the committee should review the project budget. It appears that approximately \$33,000 has been spent on trail construction (shearing and stockpiling) so far. An additional \$74,000 has been spent on the planning and environmental review process. Approximately \$135,000 of grant funding remains for completing Phase I and II of the project.
- The construction planning sub-committee estimates that by the end of April the project will be started with the wetland crossing, which will be completed by the end of May and then contracts for actual trail construction can start. There are plans for a training session for local contractors, with a meeting to be held in each county and a

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goal of having the contractors understand the project and the trail specs when they are preparing their bids. There may be opportunities to identify low-impact equipment that contractors could rent.

- Now that clearing has started, riders need to know to stay off of the routes. The counties will be posting “trail closed” and “trail under construction” signs. The DNR is doing weekly reports about trail closures and can include notice of staying away from the construction areas. The project website and next quarterly update will include information about the importance of staying off and not damaging the new routes. Information can be posted at local businesses and trailhead locations. Brian Napstad and Andrew Brown can prepare public notices for the local newspapers.

Phase II Update

- Sandy Lake: Next step is to approach the Workman Township Board and see if the Bear Country Road can be used as a trail route if the county provides for road maintenance and calcium chloride treatment. Need county engineer to estimate costs and look at opportunities to offset with grant-in-aid funds. Brian will move forward with this before the next meeting.
- Hill City: Too wet to review now, but looking at connection on existing roads.
- Jacobson to Warba: Few options outside of using county roads.
- Goodlen Spur: Problems with private property and wet ditches.
- The UPM Trail is moving forward and could tie in through designated Chippewa National Forest trail. Need to have a meeting with the Remer City Council.
- Some trail users complain about the need to trailer ATVs from their homes to the trailhead. In at least one other state, storage facilities are provided at trailheads where ATVs can be stored securely. It is possible that property near trailheads could be leased to a business to support the development of this kind of service.

Discussion of the role of Trail and Rider Clubs in Trail Maintenance

- Aitkin County is planning a spring meeting with the clubs to talk about the trail segments and who could maintain them. The Evergreen PAC has already sent a letter indicating their interest in maintaining the Lawler North and South Loops. McGrath will likely maintain the Solana Forest Loop. Clubs in Itasca County have selected specific sections of the county to be responsible for. The Aitkin County Alliance could have overall responsibility and create more stability in trail maintenance. There is a group in Isle that is also interested in joining the Alliance. The County serves as fiscal agent for grant-in-aid funding. Clubs do the maintenance and document time, equipment, and expenses for reimbursement.

Trail Issues Discussion – Jeff Koehn –MN DNR Enforcement: Concerns about trails, trapping and non-target animals

- There are concerns and conflicts between dogs and traps. Animal traps are not a danger to people, even children, and today’s equipment is not the menacing type seen in cartoons. Only one type, the Conibear #220, causes hazards for dogs but the timeframe for use is limited to a 9-day pine marten season and 2-week raccoon season. Trapping is a legal, legitimate practice and moving or tampering with traps is a crime (you are allowed to mess with the trap to release a dog). Trapping laws are in

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- place to minimize risks to dogs (e.g., don't use in water or culverts, size limits, etc), but there are still occasional problems. Trapper education is required for children and emphasizes laws, how to avoid non-target animals, and info on how to release/save dogs in traps. Trails create access and therefore will be used by others, including trappers. Conservation officers are game wardens tasked with trapping laws and state laws but can't enforce county ordinances.
- Response from Bob Marcum: Freeborn County has an ordinance that restricts trapping in public parks and areas where people congregate, not on the whole trail system or corridor. It is a reasonable level of protection and signs could be posted warning the public of traps being used in the area.

Trail Name Selections

The following names have been adopted by the committee:

Lawler Loop: North Lawler Loop, South Lawler Loop
Solana Loop: Solana Forest Loop

The following names remain under consideration by the committee:

Moose River Connector: Moose River Segment, MooSoo Trail
Itasca County Trail: PenWar Trail
Overall Trail System: The Aitkin-Itasca Timber Cruiser, Aitkin-Itasca ATV Trail System, Aitkin-Itasca Rails to Trails System, Great Northwood's ATV Trail System of Aitkin and Itasca Counties, Great Aitkin Itasca Trail System, Aitkin-Itasca Great River Heritage Trail, Headwaters ATV Trail

- The committee has set a goal of selecting the overall trail name this summer – so get your nominations in soon!

Schedule Next Committee Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 19th, 2009 at 6 pm at the Trailhead Building at the Itasca County Fairgrounds (1336 Fairgrounds Rd, Grand Rapids, MN 55744).

Agenda for Next Meeting:

Construction Sub-Committee Update
Phase II Update, including Sandy Lake Connector
Trail Name Selections for the other 2 trails under construction (Moose River and Itasca County)

Public Comments

P.Thiede: Crow Wing and Cass counties are also looking at trail projects and project could consider larger, regional options for the naming of the trail to include the efforts in these additional counties.

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J. Koehn: Poaching with traps is an enforceable violation and you can notify a conservation officer for action.

F. Turnock: Every Saturday in May there are ATV youth safety training session. Contact a club for more information.

L. Hardy: Classes are posted at the DNR website.

B. Napstad: Same rules of riding apply on frozen lake/ice riding.

7:55 PM Adjourn (Motion by L. Hardy, Second by R. Utech, Approved)

If you have questions about the project or meeting location, call: 612-414-8041

Driving Directions to Itasca County Fairgrounds, Trailhead Building:

Take Hwy 169 or Hwy 2 to North Pokegama Ave (stoplight at intersection of 169 and 2) in Grand Rapids

Go North 7 blocks on Pokegama Ave to 11th St. NW/Crystal Blvd

Turn Right onto 11st St NW/Crystal Blvd and go 3+ blocks to E 12th St

Turn Right onto E 12th St and take first left onto NE 3rd Ave/Fairgrounds Rd

Continue Straight off corner into the fairgrounds.

Trailhead Building is on the left and signs will be posted.

More information is available at:

<http://www.70miletrail.net>