



Town of Warner, New Hampshire
Mink Hills Recreation Study Committee

December 14, 2022

MINUTES

Full Committee Meeting
Sugar River Bank, 7:00 pm

Attending: Rebecca Courser, Gerald Courser, Christine Frost, and Vincent Pagano (CNHRPC), David Minton, Peter Bates, Nancy Martin and Arlon Chaffee. As the committee chair Sarah Allen is ill, Rebecca agreed to run the meeting.

The subcommittee developing the Final Report won't meet in December, so members had nothing to report. Their next meeting is scheduled for Jan 3. The whole committee will meet again on Jan. 11th at 7:00 at Sugar River Bank.

Members of the Subcommittee on Recommendations, David Minton, Rebecca Courser, Gerald Courser and Christine Frost, began their presentation discussing:

1. Signage; Clear, simple language needs to be used on signs. Use bigger print. Current sign language seems repetitive. Should we include the RSA or does that make signs less effective? Existing signage on Cl. VI roads includes signs posted restricting traffic during mud season. They are not removed when mud season is over, so the public disregards them. Suggested to rotate signs as seasons change; consensus is that is too complicated, requiring more management. Multi-use signs on Henniker Rd. have picture icons encouraging hiking, biking and skiing. The signs are simple, clear and effective. Henniker OHRV club has signs we could use as a model. The No ATV sign at the end of Wiggin Trace has been removed and should be replaced as requested by Mink Hill Rd. homeowners. Other trail access points need better signage. The subcommittee will rewrite the first three recommendations on the draft sheet presented tonight. We could also investigate how Bradford manages their Cl. VI roads using volunteers, who evaluate road conditions once/year. Suggested use of Facebook so volunteers can communicate among themselves.

Publicizing trails and parking will increase public awareness and activity. Trail access points i.e., Blue Moon, Bean Rd. log landing, will require parking areas, that in turn will impact residents and landowners. Landowners' cooperation will have to be explored. We need to create more clarity about potential parking spots. Suggestion that it could be a net positive if we start with a few specific areas with signage.

2. Chandler Reservation: Maintains their own trails and signage. Some question about the benefits of brush hogging along trails as it makes trails wider. For example, it is difficult to find the trail head on Bean Rd. into Chandler. *Trail Finder* provides a better trail map that could be used on the website. Does the Chandler Reservation Board want a link to widely publicized *Trail Finder* maps on the website? The “Taking Action for Wildlife” group (TAFW) will be publicizing Chandler Reservation nature trail improvements. Request by some residents to cut view points along Chandler Reservation trails. Steve Hall has agreed to do that.

3. Relationships: Maintain excellent relationships, especially with landowners, established by Trail Snails Snowmobile Club. They maintain snowmobile trails in the Minks. Some trimming is done by hand. The hiking trail map on the website is poor. They can be the “Mink Hills Land Stewards.” Several local colleges, Colby-Sawyer, NEC and Magdalen College have student organizations that maintain hiking trails in the region. Local high schools have community services projects needed to graduate. This equals “leveraging people power.” Other important relationships- ASLPT, SPNHF, WCC, New England Mountain Biking Association (NEMBA.)

Communication:

- Raising public awareness: Will require comprehensive communication campaign. Materials should emphasize “multiple uses.”
- The MH Rec Committee is focused on the limited resources regarding Cl VI roads and existing network of trails already out there, and to ensure that “the treasure continues.”
- Recommendations should include a communications section that lumps many aspects of communication together i.e., wildlife education and impacts Recommendations to hear public opinion (pros and cons)
- There will be a public hearing on proposed draft of the Final Report and Committee Recommendations.
- Explore public opinion about Cl. A trail designation-Badger Lane. There will not be a Cl A or Cl B trail proposal at Town Meeting in March 2023.
- Discussion about biking, the needs of NEMBA and other cycling groups. Single track trails would have to be on private property. We have no control over what happens on private property. Cyclists may have a significant impact on landowners, wildlife corridors, lots of people, erosion. NEMBA manages bike trails and shuts down problems areas that arise.
- Andy has game cameras on Badger Lane that can provide usage data: traffic and game

Maintenance:

- Maintain Cl. VI roads for emergency access and forest resources.
- Discussion on benefit of brush hogging. Does it widen trail unnecessarily.

Repair:

- Cunningham Pond Rd. is under water most of the year. Explore the concept of closing road or building a boardwalk over the water to allow foot traffic and bicycles.
- Improve Cl VI roads to Pre-ATV use. Correct drainage issues, replace failed culverts i.e., Hoit Rd.

- In the spirit of multiple uses, ATV trails should not be expanded beyond their existing use, due to history of public desire to limit the erosion and noise they cause.

Next Full Meeting of the Report Subcommittee and the Recommendations subcommittee is January 11th at the Sugar River Bank at 7:00

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Martin".

Nancy Martin, Mink Hills Recreational Study Committee