



Town of Warner, New Hampshire
Mink Hills Recreation Study Committee
January 11, 2023
MINUTES
Full Committee Meeting
Sugar River Bank, 7:00 pm

Attending: Sarah Allen, Rebecca Courser, Gerald Courser, Andy Duncan, Christine Frost, David Minton, Peter Bates, and Nancy Martin. From the public: Linda Hartman and Arlon Chaffee. Guest speaker: Sgt. Kevin Bronson, District 4, Region 4, NH Fish and Game.

Committee Chair Sarah Allen began by describing for Kevin our charge from the Select Board to study Mink Hills (MH) history, environmental and existing recreational activities, and to create a plan that finds a balance among them. Currently the group is drafting a final report with recommendations for public feedback.

Kevin voiced his impressions of the MH. Compared to other places in the State, the MH has fewer people and activities that have a significant impact on the place. He used Clough State Park as an example. He attributed this to the ease of access to Clough State Park, compared to the MH that are harder to access. MH is a vast expanse of variable terrain with unique character and there are fewer Off Highway Recreational Vehicles (OHRVs). In Henniker, at the southern end of MH, there is easier MH access for OHRVs from Liberty Hill and Colby Hill that may connect to Bradford. "Mudder's Day" in May is a popular event. Kevin reported that he has had no OHRV complaints from Warner since ATV activity was limited in the MH. OHRV activity is hard to police and control. Gates can be placed on private property to prevent OHRV activity but are often a target of vandalism. Access is a function of parking places, types of roads, and maintenance. Army Corps of Engineers use seasonal workers for maintenance. Franklin Falls, for example, has sustainable multi-use trails due to Army Corps seasonal workers. Army Corps facilities provide trails for bicycles. Hopkinton's Boundtree ATV Club uses volunteers to maintain and patrol their trails, many of which are on private land. Volunteers have no power to arrest violators. Another Club is the Contoocook Valley ATV Club. Conservation Officers do not do trail maintenance. NH Fish & Game does Search and Rescue and responds to complaints about trespassers (usually hikers) on posted properties, OHRVs, lost hikers and hunters.

A question was raised about wildlife management for 4 MH towns. Is there data about moose, deer, turkeys, and bear? That data is available by town and hunting district, but would be difficult to collect and organize specifically for the MH. Trapping is highly regulated and requires written permission from the landowner. Trapping is not allowed in state forests. There have been few calls about trapping in the Chandler Reservation where it is still allowed. Now most trapping is "trouble trapping", largely used for beaver control.

Kevin Bronson's recommendations for the MH:

- Encourage and provide recreational opportunities
- Seek the balance between recreation but prevent overuse

The question was raised about limiting factors to prevent overuse

- Use and location of parking (eg, Boundtree ATV's large Pine St. parking lot for trailers gets overloaded)
- Consider what makes a place a destination eg. Franconia Notch (easy access via I-93)
- Volunteer stewards in mud season
- Steward program eg. White Mtn . Stewards are big in the OHRV world but have no arrest powers.

Operation Land Share: F & G contract program to keep land open for recreation by paying for and providing signage to landowners. Contact Mark Beauchesne.

Conservation easements typically allow some kinds of recreation on conserved properties.

Sgt. Kevin Bronson will be available to answer additional questions and provide future assistance. He left his contact information. Kevin.Bronson@wildlife.nh.gov

MHRSC took up committee business.

-November meeting minutes reviewed: Christine made edits. Motion to adopt-Rebecca; seconded-Peter. Unanimously Approved.

-December 14 meeting minutes reviewed. Edits were made to sections on communication and repair and maintenance of existing trail network were raised. The Cunningham Pond road is under water much of the year. Explore the concept of closing the road and/or building a boardwalk to cross the water. Christine made the edits. Motion to approve-Andy; seconded-Sarah. Unanimously Approved.

Christine immediately uploaded approved November and December minutes to the Town website.

Recommendations Subcommittee: Christine will send draft Recommendations to the full committee.

Report Subcommittee: Draft report outline was sent to full committee. Andy asked if we should have an "Issues" chapter following all the facts, but before the chapter on Recommendations?

Andy made the motion that the Full Committee make Arlon Chaffee a regular member. The motion will go before the Select Board next Tuesday since it requires approval by the BOS.

At 8:30 pm we decided to adjourn. Next meeting of the report subcommittee is Jan. 24 on Zoom. Discussion on whether to have next Full Committee meet at the bank or the library to take advantage of available technology to look at maps Vincent has been working on. Group decided we would hold the next Full Committee meeting on Feb. 8th at 7:00 at the library.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Martin, Mink Hills Recreational Study Committee

