



Town of Warner, New Hampshire
Mink Hills Recreation Study Committee
February 8, 2023
MINUTES
Full Committee Meeting
Sugar River Bank, 7:00 pm

Attending: Sarah Allen, Rebecca Courser, Gerald Courser, Andy Duncan, Peter Bates, Arlon Chaffee and Nancy Martin. From the public: Guest speaker: Tim Fleury, UNH Extension Field Specialist.

I. Committee Chair, Sarah Allen introduced Tim and his background in forestry practices with respect to the interests and perspectives of the MH Recreational Study Committee. Tim remarked that his professional objectives are to educate private and public landowners. He used the example of the Chandler Reservation to describe how forestry and recreation are compatible. It takes planning.

ATVs and OHRVs can be harmful to sensitive soils and wetlands. Class VI roads are often upgraded for logging, but you can't keep ATVs off them once logging is done. During tree harvesting, work areas are often shut down to avoid dangers to people in the woods. Signage is important. Class A trails do not prevent access to landowners' property. In spite of digital mapping people still get lost on trails that are mapped online. "Bandit trails" are trails made without landowners permission. Tim recommended Jim Ohler's *Trails for People and Wildlife* as a tool to locate trails that avoid areas sensitive for wildlife. Tim discussed how the Minks compare to other forests. Some areas have suffered from increasing numbers of 4 WD vehicles. How do we control traffic on Cl. VI roads? Around the Hopkinton Everett Dam, where the Army Corps of Engineers manage land in Henniker and Hopkinton there is heavy use. There is also heavy use in the North Country.

People are wondering if the recreational use is worth the trade off. There is a social contract but the users are not always local people. OHRVs subscribe to the mud culture. Activity can be limited with better signage. Class A trails are found in Epsom and at Star Lake Farm where town meeting changed the Cl VI roads to Cl A trails subject to gates and bars. Eliza Sanborn Trace in Warner is no longer a Cl VI road through a vote passed at Town Meeting. Roads need to be passable for emergency vehicles. We can't discontinue just a portion of Cunningham Pond Rd.

Loggers have to pay a bond to town. The BOS must be informed by the road agent of the need to repair a road. Sarah asked if we can do "spot maintenance rather than regular maintenance?" This committee needs to do further investigation to determine when a bond is required of the logger or the landowner. Tim Allen could answer this question. Tim Fleury will check on the legality of bond issues.

Mountain Bike Trails- The group asked, "Are they compatible with roads?" They are harmful to sensitive soils, wildlife ecology, wetlands, steep slopes and sensitive plants. Bikes

can start fires. Use on public roads is one thing. Bike trails on private land need to be at the permission of the landowner. “Guardrails” need to be established to protect wildlife. Thoughtful use is needed when making decisions about hiking, biking, and hunting. Roads could be closed for a few years to allow them to recover.

Tim recommended *Forest Products* and *A Hard Road to Travel* and examples like the Webb Forest in New London, where log landings and skids roads were turned into something else.

Tim reminded us again that he provides education not policy recommendations.

II. The group reviewed minutes from Jan II. Rebecca made a motion to approve the minutes with edits from January 11, 2023; Gerald seconded; Minutes Approved.

III. Progress from Report and Recommendations Subcommittees.

Vincent Pagano is editing and reworking the narrative from the Report Subcommittee. He will get office feedback from his CNHRPC colleagues in the “review phase” and will send the revised version to both the Report and Recommendation subcommittees.

Gaps to fill include: Outstanding Issues needs to be written last to provide a bridge between Facts and Recommendations. Recommendations will be the last chapter in the Report.

Appendices: The main message is in the body of the report. Everything else is in the appendices. Examples: Results from the public info session.

Maps: Which ones will be included in the report? Which ones will go in the appendices? What do we want them to show? 5 or 6 maps, story map, wildlife action plan, *Trails for People and Wildlife*, Historic properties, Road conditions map. Appendix should have explanations to go with the maps.

Report Committee will meet 2/20 to see the report with edits.

A discussion about Henniker Rd. followed with the need to balance protection and recreation.

Next Full Committee is scheduled for 3/22 at 7:00 in the library.

Rebecca made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Sarah. Motion approved at 8:50

Respectfully submitted,



Nancy Martin,

Mink Hills Recreational Study Committee