

Sunrise Trail Coalition

Meeting Minutes 7/22/08, 1:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Down East RC&D Offices, Cherryfield

Present: John Ashmore, Pam Ashmore, Bill Ceckler, Polly Ceckler, Stephanie Clement, Charlie Corliss, Gary Edwards, Jim Fisher, Jef Fitzgerald, Jeremy Gabrielson, Sally Jacobs, Jay Johnson, Sandy Johnson, Tim Tunney

1. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: To approve the May 2008 Board minutes.
MADE BY: Jim Fisher
SECOND: Bill Ceckler
VOTE: Unanimous

2. Treasurer's Report

No report. Jeremy will contact Eleody regarding getting an updated membership database so that Jim can print labels for the newsletters.

3. MDOC/MDOT Update – Charlie Corliss

Charlie said that 15 miles of rail have been removed. Metal culverts that were rusted or broken have been replaced on 8 miles. The stone box culverts have not yet been touched. These are historic resources, and the state would like to save them, but may have to replace them. The railroad ties are being picked up and stored, but will not be disposed until the disposal method has been set. The rails are also being stored and graded. Seven or eight truckloads of the rails have already been shipped out.

There has been at least one bridge issue. Originally it was thought that only a few ties needed to be replaced, but upon further examination, it appears that the bridge must be completely redesigned and replaced. The bridge crew is expected to begin work in a few weeks on the Whitneyville Bridge.

The gravel pad being laid by the construction crew is not meeting the requirements. The Maine Department of Conservation (MDOC) is meeting with the consultants on this issue. Charlie invited Bill and Sally to test the surface on bicycles; they rode it and thought it was good. The MDOC engineer did not think that the surface was hard enough so the pad will be re-done.

In response to complaints that turtles nesting on the trail will be disturbed, MDOC has ordered signs alerting people using the trail that they are entering "sensitive nesting habitat". Other complaints have been coming in. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection has inspected the site, and the Land Use Regulations Commission is not needed because this area is out of their territory.

Charlie said that the construction company has removed the ties along the causeway in Machias because this is such a visible area. He added that fires have been a concern along the tracks. The contractors are closely watching the issue because torches being used to cut the bolts on the rails have accidentally started up to 4-5 small fires a day.

Charlie recommended against an official opening of the trail until more has been completed.

Jeremy asked if MDOC has a plan regarding the crowds at the Machias Blueberry Festival. Charlie said that the trail will remain closed and there are no plans to arrest trespassers. Sally asked whether the Sunrise Trail Coalition should post people at the trail and hand out information. She added that the Coalition would need to develop a brochure and a fact sheet about the trail. She will speak with Kathleen Shannon to get the details of the festival.

4. Map-making

Jim said that he has high resolution aerial maps for the entire trail. Jeremy reported that he has been funded by the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) to complete four bicycle/pedestrian plans. He is starting with Machias. The idea is to integrate Downtown Improvement grant applications, Safe Routes to Schools applications, and other grant sources to make a comprehensive plan that will work for bicyclists. Jeremy invited participation from the Sunrise Trail Coalition to work on this project. Jeremy added that the Down East Sunrise Trail is listed in the part of MDOT's 6-year plan that will be funded. The trail from Ellsworth to Washington Junction is in the section of the 6-year plan that will be done if funding becomes available. Jim said that the 6-year plan will be published for public review soon.

5. National Trails Day

Sally reported that National Trails Day went fine, but that the American Hiking Society protested it and took it off of their website because it was not a non-motorized trail and event.

6. Update on the Boxcar

Sally reported that the front side is painted and wonderful. The inside is being used for storage presently. Betsy, Judy, and Kathleen wrote a transportation enhancements grant to complete work on the boxcar. Charlie added that the boxcar has been moved. The rails and switch were left for historical purposes. Sally will talk with Marilyn to find out whether the other side will be completed.

7. Newsletter

Several people have different lists of names associated with the Sunrise Trail Coalition. These lists need to be combined. Jim Fisher created the database. Sally said that David Rodrigues is checking to see whether Charlie can be tasked with maintaining the database/ mailing list. Jim said that Eleody has many returned newsletters where the addresses need to be updated or eliminated.

8. Report from Management Meeting Earlier that Morning

Sally reminded the board that Charlie's job description is divided among the DownEast Sunrise Trail and the snowmobile/ATV clubs. There is no set percentage of time for each, so right now, Charlie is dedicating much of his time to the DownEast Sunrise Trail, but later in the year, his duties may shift.

A management committee meeting needs to be set for the DownEast Sunrise Trail. This is a state committee with Charlie in charge, but the Sunrise Trail Coalition will assist wherever needed. Charlie will send out the invitations for the first meeting, which will be September 24th, most likely at 6:00 p.m. The Management Committee will include representatives from towns, sheriffs, wardens, police, counties, emergency personnel, MDOC, forest service, and trail users (including Sunrise Trail Coalition, ATVs, snowmobile clubs, equestrians, etc.). The first meeting will be geared toward introductions and seeing who's responsible for what sections and what funding they can dedicate

toward the maintenance of the trail. The question of whether the trail will be maintained as a unit or broken down into sections will also be covered. Municipal grants from MDOC to towns can be used to hire groomers. Clubs are also eligible for funding.

Jim recommended that the larger Steering Committee have a smaller management committee that meets monthly. Jeremy remarked that emergency response will be complex on the trail. Sally said that Dave Rodrigues reports that the management committees for other trails meet only occasionally each year because everything seems to flow smoothly. Jim and Jeremy offered to take Sunrise Trail issues to the local emergency planning committees, where there is usually a good turn-out of emergency service providers.

Sandy pointed out that the management committee needs to focus on signage and Rules of the Road quickly if some of the trail will open this fall. Charlie said that there have been 3 complaints within the first two days after construction regarding dirt bike usage and noisy ATVs. Charlie will work with MDOC's public affairs division to get an article into the local newspapers emphasizing that the trail is officially closed. All entrances to the trail are posted with signs saying that it is a construction zone with access for authorized personnel only. John reminded the Committee that the original trail management plan did set up recommendations for rules on the trail. These should be affirmed by the Management committee and expanded. Charlie will bring examples of signs to the first Management Committee meeting.

9. Sunrise Trail Coalition Meetings

The Sunrise Trail Coalition needs a financial structure, annual budget, fundraising plan, etc. Tim brought this up when the organization was asked to join the Machias Chamber, but the policies and organizational structure for making financial decisions were not well established. The Coalition has a workplan, but needs a budget accordingly and a fundraising strategy. August 27th was selected as a meeting for the Executive Committee with Tim, Charlie, and Eleody. Stephanie said that she would check with Ron Beard to see if he is available to facilitate the meeting. The Annual Meeting will be in October. Details will be discussed at the August Executive Committee meeting. Someone suggested that the meeting could be held actually on the trail.

10. Miscellaneous

Jim asked about the lawsuit proposed by Mr. Henderson, who does not want the trail crossing his property. Charlie said that the injunction to force the rail removal to stop was dismissed, but the lawsuit is still pending. Sally added that MDOT lawyers found an agreement with the previous owner that fencing would not be needed if a siding was provided.

John reminded the group that he no longer represents the Acadia Area ATV club, but does represent ATV interests generally. He said that he works with HAM radio clubs, and they would be happy to help keep track of bicyclists, runners, etc. if needed during organized events, like marathons, races, etc. The benefit of HAM radio is that it does not go through a repeater and could be a good safety item. HAM radio clubs often staff events for donations because they need practice. Ellsworth has a club.

Jim Fisher announced that the Preliminary Design Report for the Acadia Gateway Center in Trenton is complete, and MDOT will hold a public hearing on it on August 5th. He said that work on the Strategic Transportation and Recreation (STAR) Center in Ellsworth has slowed. Dan

Stewart has taken over coordination for MDOT and both he and Jim (who is completing the feasibility study) are very busy.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie M. Clement