

Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Committee
MINUTES
April 27, 2011

Location: Teleconference Call-In

Time: 7pm to 8pm

Members Present:

Bill Boles: New England Mountain Bike Association

Benton Phelps: New England ATV Association

Becky Barnes: DCR Trails Coordinator

Becky Kalagher: Bay State Riders

Dean Zuppio: Snowmobiles Association of Massachusetts (SAM)

Dick O'Brien: The Trustees of Reservations

Dick Williamson: Rail Trails

Larry Tucker: SAM, Alternate

Amanda Lewis: Recreational Trails Program Coordinator

Guests:

Gary Briere: DCR, Chief of Recreation

Recreational Trails Program Update

- The 2011 RTP grant cycle recommendations for funding and for potential funding are currently undergoing the environmental review process as well as the approval process through the DCR Commissioner and up to the Governor. This will take several months to complete.
- There is no new information on the process of RTP re-authorization in the next transportation bill, except that the current bill will likely be extended through the end of the federal fiscal year (it is now extended through mid-March).
- There is no new information on the whether or not MassDOT will include RTP funds as a part of the overall rescission of federal transportation program funds in Massachusetts.
- The Education grants have been approved by the DCR Commissioner and are in the process of contracting – award letters, press, and contracts will all be coordinated for release of the information at the same time.

Conference Planning

- Amanda updated the group on workshop/conference planning for the next few months. The conference committee has held two meetings and determined that there will be a “trails skills workshop” run by MARTAB on Saturday, June 4th at the Doyle Conservation Center and continues to plan for a fall networking and trails system planning conference.

- June Workshop: A planning meeting for this event will take place next Friday, May 6th at the Doyle Conservation Center at 8:30am. All MARTAB members are invited to attend to provide additional feedback and planning thoughts. Amanda will send out an announcement for that workshop directly after the planning meeting. The workshop will focus on sustainable and accessible trail assessment and design. NEMBA has been asked to lead the workshop and finalize most planning details. The workshop will be held at the Doyle Center from about 9am-1pm and will include both an indoor learning session and outdoor hands-on training, using the Doyle Estate trail network and property as an area to discuss and also lay out new trails.
- Fall Conference: See proposed agenda which Dick O'Brien has submitted. This event will focus on trail development training, networking and Massachusetts trail system planning. More details will be worked out in the coming months.
- Rails Trails Conference: Amanda and Dick Williamson are discussing a possible rail trail development workshop/conference for Massachusetts and/or the New England region. There is definitely a need among rail trail advocates and this would be an appropriate use of education funds. Dick and Amanda will work on a strategy and approach to this conference, possibly to be held sometime spring or fall of 2012 and present something to MARTAB for approval and additional planning assistance.
- Just as a reminder, the International Snowmobile Congress is being held here in Massachusetts next summer, 2012. MARTAB has awarded an education grant to SAM to go towards a workshop at the event.
- DCR is planning for Trails School in the fall, another RTP Education Grant recipient. More details to come within the next month.

DCR Volunteer Policy Update

- Gary Briere discussed the current status of the DCR Volunteer Policy. The public comment phase was closed as of April 1st and DCR received approximately 90 comments. Gary gave a presentation to the Stewardship Council on April 1st, which was also attended by many groups and organizations with questions about the policy. The public comments will be posted online within a week.
- After reviewing the comments, DCR has elected to go back to the document and re-work areas in need of improvement, changes, or clearer language. Gary would like to attend another MARTAB meeting to discuss the updates to the policy when they are available, most likely at the July meeting. The next draft will not likely be completed until late June/early July, given the fact that DCR is now gearing up for the summer recreational season.

RTP Guidelines Discussion/Updates

- MARTAB discussed any changes or additions that should be made to the current grant guidelines, application process, and grant terms.

Equipment Purchases

- The life span of equipment was discussed – members expressed that the federal life span of five years is too short for some equipment purchased under RTP, but Amanda pointed out that the Mass RTP guidelines account for this and state that the reporting requirements for any piece of equipment will be for five years or longer, depending upon the size and cost of the equipment, as determined by MARTAB when the grant is awarded. In the award letter and within the Grant Agreement, language will be inserted on how long the life span of the equipment is expected to be in which the applicant will be required to report on the equipment to RTP.
- The grantee will also be required to use the equipment for its proposed and intended purpose for a specified number of years, depending on the size, cost and quality of the equipment and to be determined on a case by case basis. If the grantee group/organization dissolves or if the equipment is abandoned, sold or left unused, then the group will be required to donate the piece of equipment to another group or agency which will use the equipment towards the originally proposed project goals. Once the reporting time frame is over, the group will no longer be officially obligated to continue using the equipment for its original purpose, but is encouraged to do so as long as possible.
- If the equipment is found to be insufficient for the project goals, or if it needs to be sold for some other reason (it is lemon or has irreparable damage) then the grantees must contact Amanda and explain the situation. They must then take any profit from the sale and reinvest within the scope of the original grant. They will need to provide documentation of the sale and reinvestment to Amanda for the files.
- Amanda will check to see if the Grant Agreement can be referenced as a part of the state contract, so that it will have more legal backing in the case of a violation of the grant agreement
- If the grant agreement is worded correctly then MARTAB would effectively have a lien on the piece of equipment.

Resource for trail construction and facility guidance

- At the last review meeting, MARTAB discussed the possible need to provide a resource for potential grantees to look up typical and recommended trail and trail facility (including signs, kiosks, etc) designs and construction costs. This might help curb the sometimes outrageous costs that are proposed in the budget for some trail construction or trail enhancement projects. For example, a kiosk that costs \$4,0000 would not be approved in a any RTP project budget, and it would be helpful for potential applicants to be aware of common costs and common or recommended designs for certain elements of their project.
- Dick O'Brien will make an attempt at developing a document to cover this concern.

Youth Corps Projects – where do they fit in?

- MARTAB discussed the appropriate venue for youth corps for grant funding, as there seems to be confusion among applicants on whether youth corps is more of an educational opportunity and therefore qualifies for RTP education funds, or considered a regional trail project, qualifying the project for regular RTP funds. There were a couple of applicants in the education round this year that molded their application around education, thinking that was the appropriate venue for their youth corps activities, but the projects definitely appeared to be of a more regional trail project in nature, by MARTAB. It appears that these applicants view youth corps as educational programming and therefore thought it would be most appropriate to apply for educational grants. However, the work that the youth corps was performing was area-specific and seemed to be a better fit overall with the regular trail project grants and therefore were not selected for educational funding. Since youth corps is listed as a priority in the federal RTP guidelines, we want to be sure that these projects have a venue for funding that potential applicants are well aware of. To that end, Amanda will be changing the language in the grant announcement and/or on the website to encourage applications for youth corps in both grant categories.

Follow-up: Amanda will check on adding the grant agreement to the DCR state contract. Amanda will send out a copy of the Grant Agreement after updates are made to incorporate the changes suggested tonight. Amanda will make changes to website concerning youth corps. Dick O'Brien will write up a document on recommended trail and facility design and costs. Finally, Amanda will finalize the 2012 grant round materials and post them online, after which an official announcement of the 2012 grant round will be sent out to the listserv and posted on the appropriate websites.

DCR Funding Action Alert

- Bill Boles discussed the fact that the Mass DCR is grossly underfunded and this year's budget negotiations seems doomed to make things worse. NEMBA has begun outreach to its members to get them to contact their legislative leaders to change this. Bill urged MARTAB members to do the same, as individuals and within their organizations. The following is NEMBA's action alert:

Budget Cuts for the DCR are Hurting our State Parks

Contact your Legislators and Urge them to Increase DCR Funding

The Department of Conservation and Recreation's forest and parks system sees over 30 million visitors every year. These visitors enjoy thousands of miles of trails, camp and picnic grounds, beaches and skating rinks. Unfortunately, due to the State's economy the Governor's operating

budget proposal for the DCR would further decrease funding. Since Fiscal Year 2009 funding decreased by nearly 30%. 170 staff positions have been eliminated. The results are massive decreases in park supervision, resource protection, trailwork and public safety.

In 2010 seven State facilities were unstaffed due to these budgeting constraints. Unless additional funding is appropriated many more facilities will be closed this year. This will result in closed or shorter seasons at many campgrounds and popular beaches and a marked reduction in the DCR's ability to maintain trails. We will see the results of these cuts every time we visit a State Forest or Park.

On an inflation adjusted basis DCR funding is currently \$4.9 million below the lowest appropriation in the last 25 years and \$158 million below the agency's high water mark. Massachusetts spends less than half the national average per citizen on Forests and Parks. But, the Governor's budget was just a proposal, and further cuts are possible. The House Ways and Means Committee proposes cutting an additional \$2 million dollars.

We must do something to change this. NEMBA is asking Massachusetts residents to contact their state legislators and the Governor. Let them know that these cuts negatively affect the quality of life here in Massachusetts and urge them to increase funding for the DCR.

Go here <http://www.wheredoivotema.com/bal/myelectioninfo.php> to locate your elected representatives. Tell them how DCR budget cuts have negatively effected the outdoor experienced of you and your family. Ask them to increase funding for the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Send them an email today. And remember that phone calls have much more weight.

Every year more people recreate on State lands. Unfortunately the experience they have come to expect is in many cases no longer there.

Act now!

Late Breaking News: Amendment # 563 by Representatives Anne Gobi and Paul Donato would increase the house proposal by 1.3 million dollars. Far less than the DCR actually needs to operate but a small step in the right direction.