



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT of NATURAL and CULTURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION of PARKS and RECREATION
BUREAU of TRAILS

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Handout for November 9, 2021 LOB meeting regarding HB 311

Summary of the Bureau of Trails activities on State owned Rail Trails

1. Who are the Bureau of Trails (BoT)?

- The Bureau was created in 1973, by HB 10, as the “Bureau of Off-Highway Vehicles” and charged with overseeing the snowmobile and trailbike activities of the time.
- In 1993, the name changed to “Bureau of Trails” to reflect the expanding role of the Bureau, including non-motorized trails.
- Statutory authority: RSA 215-A, RSA 215-C
- The Bureau consists of 14 full-time highly skilled staff:
 - ✓ 1 Bureau Chief
 - ✓ 3 office staff for administrative and grant management
 - ✓ 3 district field supervisors
 - ✓ 7 equipment operators

2. What does the Bureau of Trails do? (RSA 215-A:3)

- Coordinate with the DNCR Division of Forest and Lands, the NH Fish and Game Dept., and the NH Dept. of Transportation to manage and maintain off-highway recreational vehicle (OHRV) and snowmobile trails in NH including:
 - ✓ Administer state and federal funds for trails
 - ✓ Act as liaison between landowners and trail users
 - ✓ Work with organized clubs in the support of the OHRV and snowmobile sport
 - ✓ Coordinate efforts to obtain easements and ROW for trails, and/or acquire property
 - ✓ We also are authorized to participate in studies on the effects of OHRV and snowmobile operations to the environment, like erosion and other potential damage
 - ✓ Provide planning, development, and maintenance for the **Statewide Trail System**
 - ✓ Promote the proper use of trails throughout the state, and protect their integrity for future generations
 - ✓ Encourage the use of trails for educational purposes through the use of signs, published material and trail adoption programs
 - ✓ Coordinate the development of the New Hampshire Heritage Trail designated in RSA 216-A:11
 - ✓ Assist communities with their trail programs
 - ✓ Support research and information gathering activities on the economic benefits of trails and improved environmental design of trails
 - ✓ Coordinate the efforts of motorized and non-motorized trail interests in the state
 - ✓ Maintain a list of recognized OHRV/snowmobile clubs
 - ✓ Recommend statutory/rule changes relating to OHRV, snowmobiles and rail trails when necessary
 - ✓ Receive all requests for OHRV/snowmobile highway road crossings and connectors

3. What is the “**Statewide Trail System?**” (RSA 216-F)
 - BoT is responsible for developing and administering a statewide trail system on state and federal lands, and assisting organizations, municipalities and trail clubs (both motorized and non-motorized) with trail-related activities on both public and private lands
 - BoT responsibilities do not include the NH Hiking Trails Network, but we do assist in helping non-motorized trails in maintenance and management on occasion
 - Included in the Bureau's management of the statewide trail system are:
 - ✓ 1000+ miles of wheeled OHRV trails
 - ✓ 7400+ miles of snowmobile trails
 - ✓ 300+ miles of state owned rail-trails

4. State Rail Trails
 - There are 19 state-owned rail trails in NH with 300+ miles of trails
 - Of these 300 miles, approximately 61 miles allow summer OHRV use
 - BoT partners with the NHDOT Bureau of Rail and Transit for management of these rail trails
 - ✓ The majority of maintenance is done by the BoT
 - ✓ The majority of land management (easement, encroachments, leases, etc.) is done by the Bureau of Rail and Transit
 - Trails with OHRV use allowed year round: Ammonoosuc, Sugar River and Rockingham Recreation Trail (Freemont branch)
 - Trails with OHRV use allowed year round, except mud season: Warren, Hillsborough, Greenville and the east portion of Presidential Rail Trail
 - Trails with OHRV use allowed with snow cover: Presidential, Profile, Cotton Valley and the Rockingham Recreation Trail (Freemont)
 - All state-owned rail trails that BoT maintains allow snowmobile use

5. How is the Bureau of Trails funded?
 - The BoT is funded *SOLELY* by OHRV/snowmobile registrations, and gas taxes on these motorized vehicles
 - ✓ All trail programs (insurance, maintenance, brochures, equipment, staff, etc.) are paid from these fees
 - The bureau does NOT receive general funds or State Parks tollbooth fees
 - The Bureau manages the Grant-in-Aid (GIA) Program, which comes from OHRV registrations, snowmobile registrations and road toll taxes (state gas tax).
 - The Bureau also manages the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), which come from federal gas taxes from fuel purchased for recreational vehicles

6. The Bureau of Trails published a Best Management Practices (BMP) manual for trail maintenance and construction activities, as required by RSA 216-F:6
 - Available free online, this manual is focused on erosion control and water quality protection. Hard copies provided.

7. Bureau of Trails information regarding fugitive dust:
 - BoT dust control efforts typically consists of applying calcium chloride or wood chips as needed for problem locations. Pavement can be used to control dust, but creates conflicts for other user groups like equestrian, mushers and snowmobilers.
 - Several OHRV clubs add calcium chloride to the rail trails to assist in controlling dust, examples include:
 - ✓ Presidential OHRV Club on the Presidential Rail Trail
 - 2021: No calcium chloride - very wet season
 - 2020: 50 bags spread
 - 2019: 100 bags spread over the season

- ✓ Ammonoosuc ATV club on the Ammonoosuc Rail Trail
 - Approximately 100 bags/year on average
- ✓ Mount Moosilauke ATV Club on the Warren Rail Trail
 - Approximately 50 bags/year on average
- Most rail trails are “capped” with compacted/crushed stone, or in some cases, pavement.
 - ✓ The Presidential Rail Trail from the Route 2 parking lot East to the Pike Industries gravel pit was paved this year to reduce dust near residential areas
 - ✓ Some dust can emanate from compacted/crushed stone when applied and capped, but that dust is not generated from the underlying soil

8. Bureau of Trails problems we encounter:

- Staff limitations
- User conflicts

9. Bureau of Trails opportunities:

- Continue to work on trail etiquette publications and signage. See our website regarding trail etiquette at: <https://www.nhstateparks.org/about-us/trails-bureau/trail-etiquette>
- Continue working closely with DOT Bureau of Rail and Transit on the State NH Rail Trail Plan
- Continue working with the White Mountain National Forest through a cooperative agreement to address snowmobile bridge maintenance in the National Forest

10. Bureau of Trails recent accomplishments

- We have successfully acquired, administered and closed a Federal Northern Borders grant to work on the Ammonoosuc Rail Trail east extension
- We have successfully acquired, administered and closed a Federal Lands Access Program grant for maintenance to the Pondicherry National Refuge section of the Presidential Rail Trail

11. Bureau of Trail future goals

- Create a non-motorized coordinator position within the BoT to work with the Bureau of Rail and Transit on rail trails, and to work with other non-motorized user groups on recreational trails