

Committee to Study Rail Trail Best Management Practices
February 14, 2022
Minutes

Rep. Gould called the meeting to order at 9:03 am.

Present: Reps. Linda Gould (Chair), Suzanne Smith (Clerk) and Greg Hill.
Absent: Sen. David Watters

Guests: Ellen Kolb and Boyd Smith (NH Rail Trail Coalition), Craig Rennie and Alexis Rudko (Bureau of Trails), Shelley Winters (NH Department of Transportation), Maryann Tilton (NH Department of Environmental Services)

Minutes: Rep. Gould made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 24 meeting. Rep. Hill seconded and all concurred.

Mr. Boyd Smith and Ms. Ellen Kolb of the NH Rail Trails Coalition provided information on their organization whose mission is to promote the development, maintenance, and active recreational use of trails constructed in New Hampshire's railroad corridors. They provided a link to Stone dust application BMPs which they have developed and BMPs that are already in place and being used by agencies including DNCR's Bureau of Trails and DES Wetlands Bureau as well as others.

There was some discussion about rail trails which allow OHRVs and those which do not. Mr. Rennie shared that no rail trails in MA allow OHRVs.

Their presentation included information about a DES workshop from 2018 which focused on fugitive dust. They also cited a Wisconsin study which goes into great detail about rail trail development and use. They will share this with the committee. Link follows.

https://embed.widencdn.net/pdf/plus/widnr/v14yww7wgx/FL_SCORP_2005-2010_FullDocument_PR-026.pdf?u=l52owe

With a lot of traffic on a rail trail, especially those which are open to motorized OHRVs as well as non-motorized methods (bikes, horses, strollers etc), dust can block sunlight and reduce a plant's ability to photosynthesize

Mr. Smith stated that in his research he found NH BMPs pertaining to rail trails. This information is found on the websites of various agencies.

Rails to Trails Conservancy, a national organization has done an economic analysis of the benefits of Rail trails (recreational). People are attracted to recreational rail trails and travel to explore them. Commercial activity adds economic benefit. Rental companies rent bikes, OHRVs and snowmobiles.

Ms. Kolb stated that some of the non motorized use are in support of the coexistence of motorized and non-motorized. Their Coalition tries to integrate all user groups.

Mr. Rennie commented that it isn't just OHRVs which create dust, but mountain bikers also. Leaf blowers are used to clear off rail trails which also kicks up dust.

Discussion among members and guests on how to fund implementation of any BMPs which we recommend. The committee learned that the federal recreational trails program provides grants/funding. Those grants have conditions.

Motorized user groups pay to register their vehicles and pay dues to clubs. They pay for some maintenance of trails that they use including signage. The Bureau of Trails also helps pay for maintenance. AND DNCR has a grant in aid program.

280 miles of recreational trails in NH do not allow OHRVs. It was noted that non-motorized user groups do not pay any fees to use the trails.

It was also said that we should work on what BMPs the committee will recommend before we talk about funding.

Maryann Tilton Assistant Wetlands Bureau Chief at DES reviewed Wetlands rules and BMPs for remediation of contaminated areas, remediation when removing gravel, protecting wetlands during stream crossings, and BMPs during the pre-development process to avoid and minimize impact to wetlands. She also talked about solid waste permitting when contaminated product needs to be removed from the site.

BMPs on preventing erosion and protecting water quality from sedimentation etcetera can all be found in the Bureau of Trails BMPs booklet.

DES makes sure any work done must adhere to water quality standards and ambient groundwater quality standards.

Air Resources division addresses fugitive dust, but Alteration of Terrain also looks at it.

All of the agencies work together

DES design and layout of trails

BOT construction and maintenance

DES stormwater maintenance

DOT also has a manual which may be helpful. to the committee.

Use of trails is regulated by DES only if it impacts water quality and impact on wetlands.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 14.

Rep. Hill made a motion to adjourn. Rep. Smith seconded and all concurred.

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Smith, Clerk