



State of New Hampshire

GENERAL COURT

CONCORD

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 1, 2021

TO: Honorable Chris Sununu, Governor
Honorable Sherman Packard, Speaker of the House
Honorable Chuck Morse, President of the Senate
Honorable Paul C. Smith, House Clerk
Honorable Tammy L. Wright, Senate Clerk
Michael York, State Librarian

FROM: Representative Linda Gould, Chair

SUBJECT: Interim Report on Rail Trail Best Management Practices
RSA (HB 311, Chapter 94, Laws of 2021)

Pursuant to HB 311, Chapter 94 of 2021, enclosed please find the Interim Report of the study committee on rail trail best management practices.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this report, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Enclosures

cc: Members of the Committee

INTERIM REPORT
HB 311, Chapter 94, Laws of 2021

November 1, 2021

Establishing a committee to study rail trail best management practices.

Purpose of the study as stated in the legislation:

- Many former rail lines were abandoned years ago and appear to be nearly reclaimed by nature. Others have been repurposed as recreational trails which are used by residents and visitors for walking, bicycling, skiing, snowshoeing, as well as for snowmobiles and 4-wheel OHRVs.
- In some instances adjacent industrial activities, historic loading practices, leaks during material transfers or storage, and repair activities have contaminated soil with oil or hazardous materials. In addition, residual contamination can often be found along the length of the line, incidental to the maintenance and use of the railway itself.
- Redevelopment of former rail lines to recreational trails can be accomplished in a way that protects public health and the environment. It requires recognizing potential problems and implementing actions to safeguard nearby residents, workers, and trail users throughout the life of the project.

Charge of the study committee as stated in the legislation:

- Develop best management practices for repurposing former rail beds into rail trails and develop best management practices for maintaining rail trails to reduce or limit exposure of possible contamination to users.
- Seek input from state agencies including the department of environmental services, the department of transportation, and the department of natural and cultural resources, bureau of trails.
- Solicit advice and testimony from experts in areas of study including, but not limited to:
 - Residual contamination from railroad operations.
 - Contamination from other sources.
 - Identifying areas of contamination concern.
 - Establishing goals of best management practices.
 - Pre-and post-construction concerns.
 - Fugitive dust.
 - Impact on vegetation.
 - Impact on abutters.
 - Motorized vehicle impact.
 - Pedestrian impact.
 - Animal impact.

Process And Procedures:

- The committee was organized on October 12th by Rep. Linda Gould. In attendance were Representatives Suzanne Smith and Greg Hill as well as Senator Watters. Rep. Gould was elected chair and Rep. Hill was voted clerk.
- Other parties in attendance at the meeting were Bureau of Trails, Department of Transportation (DOT) and an OHRV Lobbyist.
- Other topics were brought up for consideration besides the charge listed in the legislation.
- The committee plans to meet on November 9 with a presentation by the Bureau of Trails and a meeting on December 14th with a presentation by the Department of Transportation