

New England National Scenic Trail

Trail Stewardship Council

Amherst MA

January 11, 2010

Mike Gildesgame presented the results of the January 7th MA-CT Executive Committees meeting, including budget information, creation of a trail vision statement, discussion of GIS/mapping issues, and others. Full minutes can be found on the website, www.newenglandnst.org. Please contact Mike regarding any questions or comments about the meeting notes.

Today's meeting agenda included a review and prioritization of the Trail Committee action items. Each of the four committees met for about an hour followed by a general discussion by all attendees. The following action items were identified for highest priority for each committee. These are a refinement of the action items identified at the last meeting.

In order to begin implementing these priorities, committees should consider meeting before the March 23rd meeting to identify specific tasks and individuals who will carry them out. By March 23rd, we hope to have identified a coordinator or main point of contact for each Committee who also will serve on the Executive Committee. If you are interested in serving in this role, please let Mike Gildesgame know. By that time, we'd also like to begin identifying specific spring and summer events for each committee.

Trail Protection (TP)

1. Clarify the location of the trail vis-à-vis landowner property lines, updating existing information and collecting new information for towns that do not have electronic records. Sources of information are FRCOG, PVPC, DCR, perhaps Oliver, the MA GIS program, and other sources.
2. Working with OCC, notify landowners that the trail goes through or adjacent to their lands and develop and implement outreach strategies, including a range of protection options from handshakes to easements.

Outreach and Community Connections (OCC)

1. Working with TP, meet with landowners about trail protection items noted above, and
 - Develop and mail a letter of introduction to landowners and town boards
 - Develop trail fact sheets, brochures, maps, etc. highlighting the trail and reference economic benefits of the trail
 - Create/update the power point presentation for the website and for meetings
2. Create hikes and other events for town boards and landowners
3. Develop ongoing relations with local/regional media

Trail Use and Management

1. Complete the trail relocation from Mt. Lincoln in Pelham to DCR/Quabbin property and up to Wendell State Forest where it rejoins the existing trail
2. Develop/adopt and implement a system to track volunteer work hours on the trail
3. Outreach and recruit new trail maintainers in identified sections
4. Work with OCC so maintainers can form liaison with land owners

Executive Committee

1. Develop annual work plan and budget priorities based on committee recommendations
2. Develop operating procedures for the TSC

1/11/10 Attendees

Steve Bernath

Ray Gerard

Lawrence Tucker

Paul Montero

Robert Curley

Dave Hershops

Michael Zlogar

Lin Pickle

Sam Richardson

Sue & Harry Sharbaugh

Dan Call

Beth Giannini

Norm Eggert

Kevin Weir

Chip Pray

Mark Noonan

Rick Wallis

Ann Marie Visconti

Diane Merritt

Bill Burgart

Frank Bequaert

Mike Gildesgame

New England National Scenic Trail
Massachusetts Trail Stewardship Council Meeting
November 30, 2009
Amherst

The Massachusetts Trail Stewardship Council (TSC) met to discuss the structure and function of the committees recommended by the Feasibility Study and reviewed at the previous TSC meeting on October 14, 2009. Twenty people attended the meeting.

The originally recommended committees were:

- Executive
- Advocacy and Outreach
- Community Connections
- Trail Protection
- Trail Management and Maintenance
- Trail Use

ITEM #1 ► The group reviewed the functions of each committee and discussed areas of overlapping responsibility. It was agreed that some consolidation of the committees was in order. Recognizing that some additional modifications might be needed in the future, it was agreed that for now, the committees of the Stewardship Council should be as follows. For each committee, priorities and other key actions were identified:

1. Outreach and Community Connections

Top Priorities:

- Talk to landowners and others to clarify what this trail is and how it's related to the MMM
- Meet with landowners face to face, take a hike with them, etc. for landowner education about the trail and to establish good working relationships
- Develop connections to media outlets for ongoing news feeds
- Work with towns to connect with businesses, chambers of commerce, and local attractions for trail users
- Work with other local/regional groups on common issues (e.g., watershed associations)
- Develop brochures, newsletters, one-pagers for towns, selectmen, conservation commissions clarifying benefits of the trail, where it runs, etc.
- Update the website and develop an on-line mapping and trail information capability

Additional Actions:

- Work with each committee to identify their outreach needs
- Develop consistent messaging and PR pieces for landowners, municipalities, and others

2. Trail Protection

Top Priorities:

- Update list of landowners along the trail; GPS property lines and update older trail GPS data
- Develop and implement strategies for outreach to landowners
- Notify landowners about the trail (see Outreach above)
- Get formal permissions for the trail segments which cross private lands
 - Identify options from handshakes to Conservation Easements or Restrictions
 - Involve land trusts

Additional Actions:

- Identify owner concerns and recommendations
- Investigate setting up a legal fund to protect against financial liability in case suits are filed against landowners
- Identify multi-town issues; coordinate with land trusts and RPAs.

3. Trail Use and Management

Top Priorities:

- Inventory maintenance needs along the trail, coordinate with CT maintainers
- Prioritize maintenance needs in MA and identify funding needs
- Clarify if and where additional maintainers are needed
- Identify the range of uses that might be desired in addition to hiking
- Identify trail use conflicts and user conflicts
 - Seasonal uses
 - Trail design depends on use
 - Signage to identify approved or not approved uses on various sections
- Develop outreach to hikers (with Outreach & Community Connections)
- Develop a guide book for the whole trail in addition to the website, working with CFPA

Additional Actions:

- Identify existing and recommend additional shelters, parking, sanitary facilities, potable water locations, etc.
- Identify safety and user protection issues
- Identify route changes and relocations as needed
- Develop links with local parks, trails, attractions (with Outreach & Community Connections)

4. Executive

Top Priorities:

- Develop a Trail Vision Statement
- Develop an annual work plan
- Consider the need for operating procedures for the Executive Committee and the TSC
- Develop policies and procedures for
 - Planning trail relocation
 - Addressing trail use and user conflicts
 - Dealing with suits to landowners
 - Receiving donations or membership fees
- Include coordinators/chairs of each committee on the Executive
- Based on committee input, identify budget priorities and find out timing of funding
- Organize TSC meetings
- Coordinate with CFPA and NPS

It was noted that several of the Top Priority actions would take place at the same time. Everyone will receive the Management Blueprint from the Feasibility Study, and the full study will be available to the extent we have copies.

ITEM #2 ► The next item was to ask for volunteers to participate in each committee, and a preliminary list was compiled (see below). Other folks willing to participate on a committee should let Mike

Gildesgame know, and he'll add your name to the list (email: MGildesgame@outdoors.org). It was suggested that the committees meet in January to begin working on the details of each priority. Others unable to attend the 11/30 meeting also have indicated their interest in a committee. People should feel free to go to any meeting of interest to them, switch committees or serve on several. At the next meeting, committees should select a coordinator to work with the Executive and someone to take meeting notes.

ITEM #3 ▶ Several people volunteered to check the assessor's maps to update the landowners along the trail. They are shown in the table below. Others are encouraged to help out in one or more towns.

ITEM #4 ▶ The next meeting of the Committees has been scheduled for **Monday January 11, 2010 at 5:30** at the Bangs Center in Amherst. Two rooms have been reserved, and it is hoped that the committees can meet on their own for 1 to 1½ hours to discuss specific issues, and then the groups can convene for a more general discussion. Please email Mike Gildesgame if you plan to attend.

ITEM #5 ▶ The next meeting of the full Stewardship Council will be **Tuesday, March 23, 2010**, location to be announced. Again, please let Mike know if you plan to attend.

NENST Committees as of 12/1/09

COMMITTEE	MEMBERS	REVIEW ASSESSOR'S MAP
Outreach & Community Connections	Beth Giannini	
	Bill Burgart	
	Norm Eggert	
	Steve Bernath	
	Stuart Beckley	
	Janice Stone	
Trail Protection	Beth Giannini	
	Chris Curtis	
	Larry Tucker	
	Josh Surette	Leverett
	Pat Fletcher	
	Rick Wallace	
	Mark Noonan	
	Paul Montero	Royalston
	Norm Eggert	
Janice Stone		
Trail Use & Management	Mark Bidus	
	Mike Zlogar	
	Bruce Scofield	
	Paul Jahnige	
	Pat Fletcher	
Executive	Dan Call	
	Paul Jahnige	
	Gary Briere	
	Bob Curley	
	Chris Curtis	
	Rick Wallace	Holyoke

**New England National Scenic
Massachusetts Trail Stewardship Council**

Meeting notes 10-14-09

Hitchcock Center for the Environment, Amherst MA

The first organizing meeting of the Massachusetts Trail Stewardship Council (TSC) of the New England National Scenic Trail (NENST) was held on October 14, 2009 at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst, MA. The TSC was recommended as part of the "Trail Management Blueprint" in the 2006 trail feasibility study. The "Trail Management Blueprint" was subsequently recognized in the federal designation of the NENST in April 2009. The NENST joins 30 other national scenic and historic trails across the country, and will be participating in the Partnership for the National Trails System, a national coordinating group.

The meeting was attended by over 30 individuals and representatives of many of the 19 communities through which the trail passes in Massachusetts, as well as representatives of various current or potential user groups, landowners, land trusts, trail advocates and maintainers, regional planning agencies and state agencies. The purpose of the meeting, as noted by Mike Gildesgame, Southern New England Policy Manager for the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), who convened the meeting, was to begin engaging individuals and groups in the TSC, to hear the questions and issues they have, and to begin setting in place a number of TSC committees to address the issues. Along with its partner organization, the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association (CFPA), the AMC has the responsibility for the day-to-day management and maintenance of the trail and will rely on the TSC for guidance, recommendations and regular involvement in trail issues.

After everyone had a chance to introduce themselves, the roles and responsibilities of the TSC were discussed, including budget issues and funding sources. One of the handouts available at the meeting included four pages (53-56) of the feasibility study that described the TSC make up and duties. It was reiterated that the federal designation does not change private property rights and that no new regulations have been created affecting activities on private land.

The National Park Service (NPS) was represented at the meeting by Charlie Tracy, who has been involved in the feasibility study and planning for the NENST for several years in addition to working on other trail and river projects in New England. Charlie reported that funding for NENST activities is likely to be available from the NPS, although final numbers are not yet available, and the exact timing for availability of funds has not been set. Paul Jahnige, Director of Trails and Greenways for the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, also noted that his office has a trails grant program through which some portion of funds could be awarded. The feasibility study included a recommended budget of \$271,000, and it was suggested that this budget should be updated and priorities set for the next year (federal fiscal year 2011) to take advantage of the funds when they become available.

The NPS is a member of the TSC and will assist the AMC and CFPA in implementing the Trail Management Blueprint and coordinating the expenditure of federal funds.

There was a wide ranging discussion of many issues related to the trail, and the ideas were focused into a discussion of which committees were needed to make the TSC most efficient and address the issues of concern. The following list of Committees and responsibilities was derived from that discussion. The committees, their issues and how to deal with them should be considered preliminary and subject to change depending on how they work out. It was acknowledged that many of the issues overlap among

committees. It was suggested that we not have too many committees to start with, but that everyone should be on at least one.

Trail Protection

Includes all owners of land that the trail crosses or abuts have a number of common interests, and the TSC looks forward to having at least one landowner from each town represented on the Committee.

- Identify the groups that own or manage land crossed by the trail; update the database and contact information of landowners; establish regular landowner outreach
- Work with landowners on developing conservation easements and acquisition
- Encourage landowners to meet and discuss issues of common concern, and pass along recommendations to the Executive Committee
- Develop a vision for long-term stability of the trail, making sure it will be there in the future
- Viewshed protection: how can we approach this?
- Trail enhancement and relocation: how do we make the trail better (to be defined) including, as needed, moving it to a more appropriate location.
- Need to continually update the current route and changes, and have them reflected on a map or web-based application. Pat Fletcher of the AMC Berkshire Chapter, MM Trail Chair has been doing this all along and will continue.

Community Connections, probably including regional planning agencies

- Clarify the economic and other benefits and costs to landowners and towns of having the trail on or near their lands
- Develop municipal outreach and education efforts to address these issues
- The trail needs to be seen as a good neighbor: Art on the trail events/activities, "Trail Towns" linking municipal interests, work with schools, etc.
- Keep police and fire officials informed
- Promote connections and physical links between the trail and town forests, parks, trails, etc.
- Work with local watershed groups, recreation groups and others as appropriate
- Identify multi-town issues

Trail Use

We hope to engage all current and potential trail users.

- Develop signage in coordination with NPS, CFPA and state agencies, including blazing protocols, distance indicators and NENST logo design
- Develop ways to deal with user conflicts
- Recommend locations to put up shelters and sanitary facilities; identify good water sources and perhaps do some water quality testing
- Involve a full range of trail user groups and invite their participation
- Safety and protection for trail users: identify problems and recommend solutions
- Work with municipal, state and private landowners on access issues
- Track use levels and trail conditions; identify priority actions needed
- Develop an on-line mapping capability to keep track of current route and changes, eventually including local amenities and services available along each section

Trail Management and Maintenance

This is the existing Berkshire Chapter committee that maintains the trail in Massachusetts

- Making sure we have maintainers, now and in the future, and to address concerns they raise
- Discuss any maintainer issues

Outreach and Advocacy

- Work with each committee to clarify their needs
- Develop consistent messaging/PR materials
- Develop municipal, landowner outreach and other welcome letters and packets. It was recognized that there is a special need for regular outreach to owners about the meaning for them of the federal designation. Some owners may have concerns about the impact of the trail's new federal designation based on their understanding of the Appalachian Trail or other trails.
- Review current website and e-newsletter for updated contents or sections needed; maintain e-newsletter
- Perhaps review <http://www.viewsfromthetop.com/> or other websites for ideas on how to make our communication exciting and effective

Executive

- Work with landowners, maintainers and user groups to develop consistent trail relocation procedures
- Develop annual budgets and funding priorities based on committee input and trail needs
- Develop a conflict resolution process for land use, landowner, municipal or other issues that arise
- Develop and administer a small grants program for communities
- Set up regular meetings of MA and CT Steering Committees and Executive Committees.
- Develop/refine a vision statement for the trail

Everyone is requested to participate in at least one of the committees which probably will meet monthly or as needed, starting in December or January. Please indicate your interest in a committee by sending an email to Mgildesgame@outdoors.org. Also, send Mike any comments or questions about these minutes or issues.

The next meeting of the TSC is tentatively set for March 2010.