

**New England National Scenic Trail
Connecticut Trail Stewardship Council
Hill-Stead Museum
October 13, 2009
Meeting Notes**

Welcome & Introductions: Eric Hammerling, CFPA Executive Director
AMC & NPS staff present. Over 20 towns and partners represented

Description/ Role of the Trail Stewardship Council

Basics of the TSC:

- was established thru the legislation that designated the trail
- designed to be an advisory group to the triumvirate of CFPA, AMC, & NPS. (see Blueprint for Management)
- towns have designated representatives
- CFPA & AMC continue to be trail maintainers on the ground.
- NPS will provide funding and technical assistance

Budget/Funding

(Pg. 56 of the Blueprint for Management)

- Northeast region of the NPS have been advocating for immediate funding for the Trail.
- NPS believes there will be some funding this year for the trail. NPS is on a Continuing Resolution w/ the budget (subject to federal fiscal calendar)
- Challenge Cost Share (CCS) program- distributed by formula for trail projects- has to be matched one to one w/ other funds or in-kind labor
- it's possible to serve on the TSC or represent their group and still receive grant funding.
- CCS funding can be used for: trailwork, education, land protection, etc.
- HR 1912 (pending federal legislation)- would provide tax incentives for private landowners who put their land into conservation easement.

Brainstorming on Subcommittees

The need for six committees was determined. They are as follows:

- Administrative committee
- Community Connections/ Relations committee
- Trail Management & Maintenance committee
- Trail Use committee
- Landowner & Trail Protection committee
- Advocacy committee

Meetings for subcommittees will be set up in the coming weeks.

TSC will meet 2x a year. Next meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 2010.

The New England National Scenic Trail Stewardship Council
Wednesday March 24, 2010
Connecticut Forest & Park Association Meeting Room
6:00pm- 8:00pm
Meeting Notes

1. **Welcome & Introductions**
2. **Overview of Council**
3. **Committees & Updates**

a. National Park Service Update (Charles Tracy, NPS Project Manager)

- NPS has approved cooperative agreements with AMC and CFPA to support the New England Trail in FY10. Each organization will receive approximately \$60,000 this year for a range of trail management and development activities including mapping and GIS development, volunteer training, trail events, and community outreach.
- NPS is exploring ways to provide financial assistance to CFPA for its trail land protection efforts. Generally this would be a cost share program.
- Side note: The New England Trail is the National Park Service's newest national scenic trail, but the primary trail partners, CFPA & AMC, are both older than NPS.

b. Committee Reports & Priorities

Trail & Land Protection (Lynn Charest- Chair)

- The committee has met 4 times.
- The committee has discussed the best way to disseminate information out to landowners, corporations, land trusts & municipalities. Ideas discussed include a newsletter, sponsoring a landowner hike series, creating a website page & creating an informational brochure.
- The committee has hosted 2 meetings at CFPA: one for Town planners and one for land trusts along the trail. *See Trail Planner Meeting Notes & Land Trust Meeting Notes for more information on these meetings.*

Trail Use (Fred Mastelle- Chair)

- The committee has had some trouble finding a good consistent meeting time but has currently met 3 times.
- The *Blueprint for Management* was used to line out priorities. Some of those priorities are: to work with landowners & DEP to define allowed use on trail sections, to involve NEMBA in the discussion, to actively identify where illegal ATV damage is occurring, and to determine where equine use is permitted.

Trail Maintenance/Management (Paul Mei- Committee Spokesperson)

- A comprehensive Trail Survey is underway with CT Trail Managers. This Survey will help the committee identify all assets that exist on the Trail and what deficiencies exist. By doing this we hope to have a clear picture of the state of the trail in CT.
- Campsites- The committee is hoping to identify potential site locations through the Trail Manager Survey that is currently in circulation. There are legalities & location to consider. There is the possibility of using town open space for camp sites. Jim Mahoney has a site they are considering for a youth site on Berlin-owned property. Illegal camping is an issue we will have to address.
- Down the road there is the potential for creating pre-packaged trips & highlighting specific hiking segments for trail users.

Community Connections Committee (Cain)

- The committee has met 4 times
- Discussions have centered on how to best connect with adjacent towns and area businesses.
- We are identifying places to eat, lodging, chamber contacts & tourism outlets in each trail town.
- There is an online map project underway. This will allow trail users to access the trail and also identify area businesses like restaurants, gear shops, lodging, grocery stores, etc.

-Executive Committee (Janet Ainsworth- Committee Spokesperson)

- This committee will address financial, administrative matters, cross- state collaboration, assist with determining long term goals, governance issues.
- The committee has met once at Northeast Utilities. Reps present from DEP, AMC, CFPA, NPS, & adjacent communities. The next meeting is scheduled in MA in April.
- The committee did define a *Vision for the Trail Stewardship Council: The vision of the Stewardship Council is to protect, preserve and promote the New England National Scenic Trail as a premier long-distance trail, nationally significant for its ecological, recreational, cultural, scenic, and historic values.*
- The committee has discussed GIS database coordination between CFPA & AMC. Work is underway.
- The committee will keep an eye on the NU project in E. Granby & Suffield to determine what sort of impact it will have on the trail.

-Advocacy (Hammerling & Brooks)

- This committee has only met informally.
- The issues that this committee will likely work on: Hike the Hill event package and funding request and federal & state bills that may influence the trail
- State legislation that may effect the trail includes recreational liability being extended to municipalities & ATV legislation.

c. MA Trail Stewardship Council Update (Cain)

- MA Trails Stewardship Committee met March 23, 2010 in Amherst, MA.
- AMC is about to advertise for a part-time Trail Planner position. This person will be located near the trail and will begin work by summer.
- Trail will likely be re-aligned through the Quabbin Reservoir. MA Dept. of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) is firm on routing the trail thru that area. North of Quabbin is still a work in progress.
- MA TSC Committees have met and are beginning to undertake various trail issues. There is great opportunity to overlap and work together to create consistency across state lines.

4. **Current Issues & Happenings**

-Hike the Hill (Hammerling)

- Hike the Hill- Annual event sponsored by the Partnership for the National Trails System and the American Hiking Society. This event encourages trail leaders to meet with their congressional leadership to garner support for trail-friendly legislation and to ask for federal funding assistance.

Through the federal-side Land & Water Conservation Fund, the Ice Age Trail has a 10-million dollar request to protect their trail on private property in Wisconsin. They have an advanced trail & land protection program that we can emulate.

- “Complete America’s Great Trails Act” or HR 1912- this proposed legislation would give a landowner who donates an easement to a national scenic trail a tax credit for the value of their land donated.

-Logo & Trail Identity (Hammerling & Tracy)

- The NPS will be printing a standard NPS brochure for the trail.
- New England Trail logo- A CFPA volunteer did the logo design work pro bono. He referred to the family of national scenic trail logos to create a parallel feel with this logo. All the National Trails use the pregnant triangle as the shape for the logo. The logo will be made into plastic & metal signs which will be installed at major trail & road intersections along the NET.
- We had a great article published about the NET in *Pathways Across America*, a publication of the Partnership for the National Trails System.
- One e-newsletter has been circulated and we hope to do another in the Spring.
- We are working on improving the NET website. We have picked up two web addresses: www.newenglandtrail.org and www.newenglandnst.org

-Connecticut Trails Day (Hammerling)

- June 5 & 6 are the dates CT Trails Day Celebration. CT Trails Day is part of the National Trails Day program. 13 events are already scheduled on the NET in CT for that weekend. These range from short hikes to kayak trips to educational walks to strenuous hikes to trail maintenance events.
- Council members are encouraged to attend an event on CT Trails Day to represent the Council and be able to inform participants more fully about the Trail.
- A Trails Day booklet is being produced by CFPA and will be ready for distribution by the end of April. There will also be events posted on the CFPA webpage. There will be additional Trails Day events scheduled in MA on the same weekend.

5. **Other Issues/ Questions**

- What is the status of the trail in New Hampshire? *The trail can be followed from MA to the top of Mount Monadnock in New Hampshire. During the Feasibility Study New Hampshire was reluctant to sign on their support for the trail. The Current legislation language is still open for including New Hampshire if they decide to embrace the trail. NH towns expressed some concerns during the trail’s study phase and they opted out. AMC is working closely with land trusts & NH hiking clubs to keep the door open with NH and the potential of having the summit of Mt. Monadnock as the terminus for the New England Trail.*
- Will there ever be a single “Friends of the Trail” society? *So many organizations already in CT. The TSC will have the laser focus on the Trail. CFPA & AMC already fill that role and we don’t want to dilute the program.*
- Is the name New England Trail already in use? *There was a gentleman in Rhode Island who had proposed a regional trail in new england that was once being referred to as the new england route. This was before the official New England Trail designation.*
- What will be the official blaze color for the trail? *Currently the trail is blazed blue in Connecticut and white in Massachusetts. The blaze color changes at the border. It has been determined that the blaze color will remain as is.*

- Council Motion & Vote: New England Trail name

The CT Trail Stewardship Council officially endorsed the use of the name “New England Trail” for everyday trail reference. Although the trail’s official name is New England National Scenic Trail, it was agreed that hikers will naturally shorten the name to NET as is common trail parlance (AT, PCT, CDT, etc).