

DRAFT

MEMORANDUM

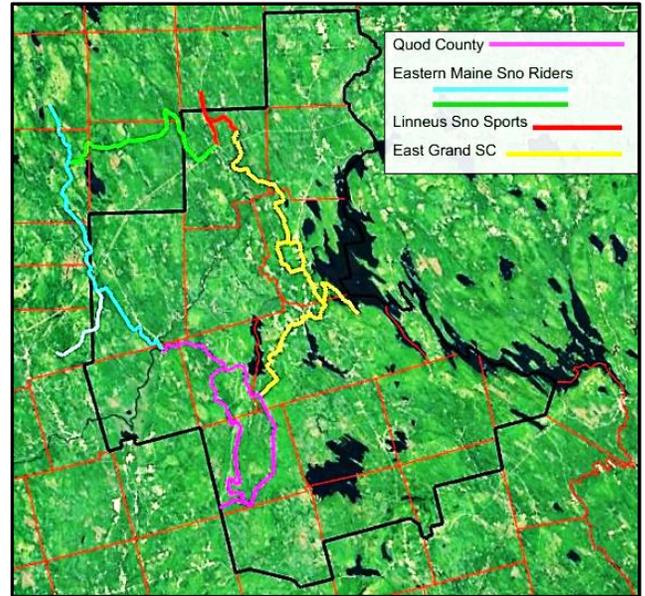
Date: November 25, 2019

To: Greater East Grand Region Planning Team

From: E. Cleaves

Re: Exploratory Meeting with Snowmobile Clubs – 11-21-19

A meeting was held on November 21, 2019 at the Weston Town Office to discuss Region-wide snowmobile trails and cost reimbursements under the State municipal grant program. Pre-meeting conversations with Joe Higgins (Director of the BPL Snowmobile Program) revealed Departmental involvement in the State Economic Planning effort. Joe says they understand the current program lacks funding and the long standing dependence on volunteers is coming undone.



Representatives from the four Clubs that groom and maintain trails in the Region were in attendance. The purposes of the meeting were to 1) Gather information about trails and Clubs, current capacity, gaps in infrastructure including lack of volunteers, equipment, trail connections, maintenance, new development and money; 2) Tee up recommendations for inclusion in the forthcoming GEGR economic plan, and 3) Seek to leverage trails for economic gain especially in communities where basic services for gas and food staples have entirely disappeared. Attached are detailed minutes of the meeting, an issues summary with draft recommendations.

A similar meeting for the same purposes for area ATV trails and Clubs is planned for later this winter or early spring. (See attached existing ATV trails and Club affiliation for GEGR). Overall plan recommendations for trail infrastructure and development will need to incorporate a multi-use concept wherever possible.



To spur discussion the concept of a Heritage “Loop” Trail was proposed for the Greater East Grand Region. The trail name, a take-off from the theme of “A Heritage Reclaimed” would be an 80+/- mile loop around the heart of the Region. It would require all four Clubs to participate while East Grand would take the lead. Current lack of gas and other services over long sections of the trail were discussed. The Danforth-Weston area would by default be the center for destination and services. Signage, marketing, safety and emergency services would need to be arranged.

The trail concept would be multi-use incorporating ATV’s, mountain biking and hiking wherever possible. Most of the basic infrastructure for snowmobiles is already in-place, albeit subject to major improvements and relocations.

DRAFT MEMO – November 23, 2019

Re: GEGR - Detailed Minutes from Snowmobile Club Meeting – 11-21-19
From: Elbridge

Quod County SC – Springfield

- Kevin O'Brian – President - Robert Jacobs BoD
- 120 miles of trail, 2 Groomers, 1 operator – retired - 34 miles within GEGR
- Key trail within GEGR – End of EGSC 105S to Drew Bridge – involves a section of Stetson Wind "8" Road which is plowed all winter for Tower access – has arrangement to allow trail on side of road – not acknowledged by plow contractor in 2019
- Connects to Springfield, Lakeville and Grand Lake Stream (35 mile one-way to Sysladobsis Dam)
- Shortest run – 9 hours – a deterrent for attracting groomer volunteers - nearly all of trail within GEGR is in UT
- Has clubhouse – high level of community involvement (Free thanksgiving meal)
- Mostly large landowners – much logging road – minor landowner issues
- Other?

Eastern Maine Sno Riders (Reed Plt. – Macwahoc Plt)

- Jody Moulton – President
- 85 miles of trail, 2 groomers (older–medium to small size), 2 operators – one employed full time - 35 miles in GEGR
- Trail is all one-way – each outing nearly 100 miles round trip – up to 16 hours
- Very remote trail system – (Within GEGR links Quod County at Drew Bridge to Haynesville) – key segment of proposed Heritage Trail
- Connection to Macwahoc south and Sherman to the north (Molunkus Valley SC)
- Four (4) volunteers – difficult to find good operators – running older equipment need good mechanical skills and ability
- No real community center – no services on entire length of trail
- High priority for trail development - decrease trail mileage to Haynesville
- Some landowner issues – a serious choke point at Wytopitlock Village & EM Railway railroad crossing of Route 170
- Much logging road as trail base – lacks some former land management bridges – one "no-bridge" stream crossing on Wytopitlock Stream for groomer to avoid public road
- Other"

Linneus Sno Sports

- Carl Campbell – President – Greg Smith – John Carrie
- 150 miles of trail – 2 Groomers (relatively new) – 4 operators – some retired– only 5 miles of trail within GEGR but of high priority as it connects EGSC to EMSR at Route 2A bridge over Mattawamkeag in Haynesville
- High use trails – connects EG area to Aroostook – well known snowmobile destination is Grammy's County Restaurant in Linneus
- Has clubhouse – very active in community – grooms x-county ski trails - membership 60 over 100 in past- many members do not snowmobile – trail worker/maintenance volunteers are becoming critical
- A critical link to Aroostook – uses portions of former US pipeline ROW – several sections in wetlands must be frozen – new groomer has lower ground pressure
- Landowner issues prevalent – experienced loss of trail in past –some serious choke points in settled areas
- Other?

East Grand Snowmobile Club

- Troy Fish President – Ryan Fish VP – David Conley
- 47 miles of trail – all one way- 1 groomer -3 operators – all operators in work force
- Funding a serious issue – need 2nd /newer and faster groomer
- No clubhouse – donates use of Skantic for use with community/school x-country ski trail some participation in community functions – 30 members – not many volunteer workers
- About half of trail on logging roads – balance on pioneered trails thru woods and fields
- Trail thru village of Danforth is serious choke point – public roads, churches, residences, Route 169 Baskahegan River bridge and EM Railway crossing - major relocation in 2019-20 to reduce public road travel by 2/3rds – another option: explore bridge over Baskahegan downstream from Village area
- Many landowners in Danforth & Weston along US Route 1 and Route 169 corridors - Landowner permissions are major undertaking – resolutions required nearly every year anticipate major issues in future as ownership continues to churn
- High priority to develop trails to underserved area lake neighborhoods- critical economic issue - major development required to avoid lakes & construct water crossings
- Much of trail is ITS 105 connecting Washington County to Aroostook – difficult to maintain – all one-way –no loops - fields, topography, trails thru woods- water crossings
- A must trail as Danforth is service center for all of Region – Gas, full service restaurant, EMT-Ambulance – gas has credit card access 24 hours - Lodging available
- One major landowner in area is very concerned about motorized recreation – have been able to work around – propose discussions to explore access to SE part of Region
- EGSC must be promoter and leader of proposed *Heritage Trail*
- For Greater East Grand Lake Area to become a destination must improve infrastructure and increase capacity for trail maintenance and development
- Other?

DRAFT MEMO

Date: November 22, 2019 – Revised 11-23-2019

From: E. Cleaves

To: Greater East Grand Region - Snowmobile Club Leaders

Re: Observations Gleaned from November 21st Meeting at Weston

Big Picture

- While the program has been around for many years and has undergone adjustments it continues to distribute nearly all of the risk and most of the work to a diminishing group of older and overworked volunteers.

Volunteerism

- There are committed leaders in each organization
- Those leaders have a long standing passion for the sport, a high level of interest in trails and an outdoor work ethic
- Succession in leadership is at risk, in part, because prospective volunteers cannot/do not share those same passions, commitment and outdoor work ethic
- Youth is becoming a missing ingredient (Ryan Fish was the only person in the room under 40 – thank you Ryan)
- Volunteerism is being taken captive by today's fast paced and individualized culture.
- Despite a looming shortage of qualified and willing volunteers there is a hesitancy to compensate "trail work" as it will bring an abrupt end to volunteerism as it has been known
- Paying for trail work must be accompanied by a good business plan, and conducted by a governmental/legal entity in support of local snowmobile clubs

Money

- There appears to be a wide variation in current resources amongst the Clubs
- The smaller (fewer members, less community footprint, more remote areas) the more the organizations are struggling
- Current funding formula requires a tailoring of activities and project descriptions to the drivers of the State reimbursement program
- Project caps linked more to historic levels of activity rather to what is necessary to meet current needs of the clubs program
- Risk related to capital outlay for equipment is a major deterrent especially in remote areas where there are no sources of funding to help amortize loans beyond the pass thru from State levels of reimbursement for actual trail work performed.
- Successful applications for capital equipment grants appears to be an art not science
- The current model of funding may work for some, but not everyone, so the question is with the loss of volunteerism, will it work for anyone at all.
- All Club Presidents speak highly of Joe Higgins

Landowner Permission – A huge issue

- Annual landowner permission in settled residential areas is a burdensome administrative activity- failure to be informed of changes in ownership puts potential personal and organizational resources at risk
- Loss of permission from changes in ownership and/or lack of landowner respect by users jeopardizes years of investment in existing trails and structures
- All of the above is beginning to weigh heavily on decisions about trail location, improvements and development
- It is a key strategic issue for the future of the program
- Must have more direct involvement including funding by the State in the process
- Insurance and indemnifications must include landowner cost of defense

Recommendations

- Must employ multi-use trail concepts where feasible– focuses funding - encourages strategic planning – makes for more efficient use of resources – increases user base
- Reduce financial risk and increase availability of capital for equipment purchases
- Increase direct reimbursement for all out of pocket expenditures
- Reduce risk of failure to obtain permission, admin time and expense by utilization of electronic data bases for property records and landowner permissions
- Increase State involvement and provide landowner cost of defense.
- While there is a hesitancy to compensate “trail work” it will likely be inevitable as volunteerism as it has been known continues to show diminishing returns.
- Paying for trail work must be well thought out and accompanied by a good business plan such as conducted by an umbrella governmental/private NFP entity that has the capacity to support contractual and/or payroll employment of labor and hired equipment
- For the EGSC trails, sustaining access to the Village of Danforth is critical as it is the only service center for the entire Region – Gas, full service restaurant, EMT-Ambulance – gas with credit card is 24 hour accessible – has the only commercial winter lodging facilities in entire Region
- One major landowner in the area has had cause for major concerns about unauthorized motorized recreation and trail development on their lands – propose discussions to explore a long-term plan to site, fund, develop, maintain and control a motorized access corridor into the SE part of Region.
- EGSC must be the leader and coordinator for the proposed *Heritage Trail concept*
- In order to fulfill the role of a destination for the GEGR there must be an improvement and expansion of service related infrastructure right along with increased capacity to fund, improve, develop and maintain trail systems.

**GREATER EAST GRAND REGION – BASE MAP DEPICTION OF
ATV TRAILS – 11-23-2019 – DRAFT**

