

ATV Trails Meeting

Greater East Grand Region (GEGR) Economic Development

February 20, 2020 Meeting Notes

Attending

Brian Bronson - Supervisor, Off-Road Recreational Vehicle Office, Bureau of Parks and Lands
George Hurteau – Recreational Trail Coordinator, Off-Road Office, BPL
Todd Cameron – Aroostook Riders ATV Club
Shelley Beals – Aroostook Riders ATV Club; Michael Beals – Aroostook Riders ATV Club
Roger Rossignol – Grand Lakers ATV Club
Bill Malone – Haynesville Woods ATV Club
Jackie Morse – Machias Savings Bank, GEGR committee
Dwayne Young – Town of Weston, GEGR committee
Judy Cleaves – GEGR committee
Elbridge Cleaves – GEGR committee
Sarah Strickland – Project Director

Comments on ATV Trail slide show – attached

- Some revisions are needed on the maps – missing parts of the trails
- Grand Lakers - there are missing links; there are some cross trails not on the map; south end we can't get to link in Springfield; Baskahegan; David Snow
- Haynesville - 90% is land management road system; Wagner license/Malone owned; bridge crossings are important
- Aroostook Riders - Peakaboo Fire Tower
- There are undocumented trails in the UT
- Greenland Helipad being developed for emergencies

Connector Concepts that require feasibility studies

- To Brookton – what is possible link? Only one-way?
- Signage is needed on how to connect to Peakaboo Fire Tower and other attractions/scenic turnouts/MOOSE!
- Dark Cove link – legal, political and funding issues seem to be complex
- EMEC Power Line on Route 1
- CMP Power Line – (Has safety rules – need for EMMC Line) concern that signage becomes gun targets – have to be 15 feet away from poles/guidewires; ideally stay on one side of poles; cables in the ground to neutralize rust - material put over the cables/we do not dig
- For a larger economic advantage to the region - there needs to be ATV trail(s) from Grand Lake Stream/Lincoln that runs into Danforth. The gaps in the trail system need to be closed.

Key Highlights from Brian's presentation – Major Factor - ATV Task Force Report – 1-1-2020

<https://www.maine.gov/ifw/docs/ATV-Task-Force-Report-2020-1-6%20FINAL.pdf>

1. Multi-use trails are a priority for the state. ATV, snowmobile, bikes, hikers, horses – common sense right-of-way rules and signs will be needed.
2. ATV clubs will need to collaborate to leverage continued state funding.
 - a. Together, the clubs need to determine what the priority trails will be for the region.
 - b. Determine what is most important so it can be maintained.
 - c. Big loops will be funded. Dead-ends will not be unless they provide access to food and fuel
 - d. The organization needs to have the capacity to police and maintain.

- e. There will be third party inspections - if not met, the trail will be closed
 - f. Which trails could be added for greater connectivity and be part of the main state funded system?
 - g. Which trails can be kept but designated as club-only maintenance?
 - h. Are there trails that should be discontinued to have a sustainable network for the club? For the region?
3. ATV and Snowmobile clubs need to work together
 - a. Let's make the main artery trails the focus
 - b. Camp owners manage and fund connectors - there will be more of this.
 - c. Now is the time to make the hard choices to create a sustainable trail system.
 4. Pending the outcome of current legislation, funds will be available but clubs will need to work together on funding proposals preferably based on a sustainable, regional plan.

ATV Guidelines/Rules under revision – Available Soon!

- Best management practices book being revised. Will be complete soon.
- These practices will need to be followed or the trail will be closed.
- Also revising landowner information and permission forms to make easier to understand.
 - Bottom line – “It’s all about the landowners”
 - Very important that new landowners not from Maine understand Maine law on liability. Education is key.

Trail improvements & Access & Landowner Liability Law

- Maine law - landowners are not liable for recreational accidents
- Exemption goes away if you charge an exclusive membership or the landowner does something malicious
- Camp owner roads - owner and association has to authorize to use/crossing (State funded trails are open to the public for whatever uses are authorized – public rights can conflict with private property issues)
- Make it clear that the landowner can say how the trail will be used
 - they want the right to say what the trail will and will not be used for
 - Ex: they can permit ATVs, but not hikers
 - The intent is to have this be very clear for every trail
- Easements are usually rights specific and not transferrable by licensor

Digital Mapping

- We need to have trails digital mapping to access by phones. (Many phone apps out there such as OnX Hunt but source and accuracy of data not standardized or updated)
- Paper maps are going by the wayside
- Phone application downloaded beforehand does not need a cell phone signal
- Accuracy depends on where the map comes from – best map provider will be the BPL
- A new question for landowners - do we have permission to map on paper and electronic use?
- Data has to be accurate and nearly real time to build in seasonal and annual changes in trail locations- ground truthing data; ATV data available from Brian

Current Legislation – Your Voice is Needed – In March!

- When bill is available you will get an announcement.
- Every club needs to contact Legislatures with letter and phone calls
- March Public hearings
- April banquet

Trail Buildout Cost Information

- Brand new multi-use road = average cost is \$20K with ATV; without ATV \$12K per mile (Of note trails located on land management roads may enjoy shared costs with cooperating landowners thus substantially reducing cost of development & maintenance)

Funding for New Trails

- State of Maine not currently funding new ATV trails without additional funding
- TIFF, other sources need to be accessed
- What is required for trail funding?
 - landowner permission
 - the relationship between cost, permanency is key
 - connector projects - cost, long term license, protected by easement - each situation different
- Doug Beck office and BPL are working creatively to get available funds to clubs for projects

Drafters Post Meeting Notes: Most ATV and snowmobile clubs are State of Maine non-profit corporations highly endowed with volunteerism. These local organizations are critically important in rural areas as they not only provide trail services but many sponsor community and social functions, operate cross-country ski trails and clubhouses. Aroostook Riders, in co-operation with the State of Maine assumed ownership and maintenance of the Peekaboo Fire Tower in Weston. It is a primo place to take in the Million Dollar View. Similarly, the Grand Lakers ATV Club was instrumental in obtaining landowner permission and funding for a life- flight helipad in Greenland Cove in Danforth. Several years ago Greenland Cove was the site of a horrific ATV accident nearly claiming the life of an area youth.

These Clubs and organizations are key to the funding, development and maintenance of recreational trails. Most are 501c7 non-profits not 501c3 organizations and thus for some funding sources they will need fiscal sponsors in order to be eligible. Many municipalities already act as “pass-thru” with the State BPL municipal grant program. Towns contract with local ATV and snowmobile clubs to provide trail services. Funding for trails thru BPL are either municipal grants or club grants. Municipal grants require a match (usually like-kind in volunteer labor), highly documented and can be in the thousands of dollars – documentation is done by the clubs and submitted to the towns for billing to the State) Documentation by the Club includes obtaining written or documented oral permission annually from every landowner that is not under a longer term license. Club grants are much smaller in dollar amounts and usually are direct reimbursements for actual expenditures. Club grants are capped at a fixed amount per mile of trail.

https://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/grants/atv_grants/index.html

https://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/grants/snowmobile_grants/index.html