

**NEW YORK STATE TRAILS COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES  
SARATOGA SPRINGS STATE PARK  
JUNE 23, 2007**

**Attendance:**

**Delegates:** Bob Bryant (Snowmobiles), Sara Chevako (Equestrian), Gary Haugland (Hiking), Michael Vitti (Bicycling), Len Howard (Off-Highway Motorcycles), Irene Szabo (Hiking), Mike Prescott (Water Trails), Ivan Vamos (Bicycling), Carol Schmelz (Equestrian), Marisa Tedesco (ADK), Ron Farra (Nordic Skiing), Neil Zimmerman (Shoeshoeing).

**Agency Representatives:** Bob Reinhardt (OPRHP), Kurt Seitz (OPRHP), Cheryl Malin (FHWA), Elaine Troy (DOH)

**Absent:** Steven Kearney (4WD), Bob Blair (4WD), Alex Ernst (ATV), Chris Murray (Bicycling), Steve Samuell (Bicycling), , Wes Lampman (Hiking), Tony Goodwin (Nordic Skiing), Ken Irwin (Off-Highway Motorcycles), Laura Clark (Running), Jim Jennings (Snowmobile), Scott Keller (Water Trails), Dan McLaughlin (Water Trails), Anne Odell (Chair, Snowmobiles), Ben Rush (Off-Highway Motorcycles), Todd Syska (4WD), Jim Underwood (Nordic Skiing), Mark Wehnau (Equestrian), Katherine Wolfe (Snowshoeing),

**Agencies not represented:** NPS, State Assembly, Canal Corp, DEC, DOT

1. **Call to Order** – Meeting called to order at 11:00 AM, followed by roll call. A quorum was determined.
2. **Correction/Approval of Minutes** - Minutes accepted with corrections to spelling of Bob Bryant's last name. Next meeting at Schodack Island State Park, picnic, Sept 15, with new Parks Commissioner Carol Ash invited.
3. **Certification of New Delegates** – Proposed new snowshoe delegate, H. Neil Zimmerman. Neil has done all Catskill peaks and many Adirondack peaks on snowshoes. Active in hiking orgs, currently chair of AHS, was longtime Pres of board of NYNJTC, etc. Approved.
4. **Delegate Reports, Concerns, Presentations** –
  - a. **Jim Underwood on Nordic skiing:** (Katherine Wolfe was supposed to be part of this presentation, but was unable to attend due to illness).

Theme - all of our activities need to keep in mind the future of our sports and their organizations, tending to the next generation. To develop a lifetime passion, start kids young. Jim conducts after school and weekend programs. The costs are very low for Nordic. Programs start before the snow season with hikes to get them in shape. Nice slide collection showing us local and trail winter scenery and pictures of kids feeding gray jays by hand. Sometimes the skiers can ski on rivers once they are frozen. His club has collected skis and boots over the years and makes them available to the kids. Of course,

Jim scavenges sales to keep their stock up. Ron Farra reported on a program in Maine to build trails around EVERY school to keep kids active in the winter. Elaine Troy reports that initiatives exist all over New England to get kids more active.

The next user-group presentation: motorized.

**Carol Schmelz** - heard of case when user sued private landowner because of tripping on root; complainer sued and won! Impact on GOL?. Woman in Nassau County. Agency involved? Mike said a biker sued for injury due to a root (vs. Parks) but lost. Bob R. will see if he can learn anything from his Long Island people. We await this update with held breath!

5. **Agency Reports -**

a. **OPRHP** – Bob Reinhardt

**SCORP** - Next version of SCORP (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan) trying to make the plan more user friendly so agencies and public can make better use of it. The goal is to complete the document this year. A summary cart identifying funding sources and eligible elements will be provided to help direct users to appropriate funding sources. Bob introduced grad student Kurt Seitz who is working as intern this summer on the SCORP and the trails plan. The Council members are welcomed to provide comments over the next 4 weeks. The Greenways and Trails Chapter will be provided for suggested changes.

**Recreation trends** - Recreation trends in the Westchester/Putnam area, power point. Changes in demographics are important in providing recreation and trail opportunities in the future: baby boomers will inflate the aged population in next twenty years, so there will be proportionately more older people. In addition there will be significant changes in the ethnic population with increases in the Hispanic and other non-white populations in areas outside urban centers.

The increase in seniors will result in a greater demand for low-energy recreational activities such as walking, gardening, visiting historic sites and golfing. Ethnic changes may increase demand for family/church orientated activities and facilities (i.e. grouping of picnic tables vs. single tables) as well as the need for bi-lingual signage. Other demographic changes such as household size and income levels will also impact recreation.

Other factors that impact future recreation include cost/availability of fuel, air/water quality, global warming and technology. Technological changes have already impacted recreation. Technology has resulted in less leisure time and more time focused on computer use resulting in less active activities but has also opened more opportunities for persons with disabilities and the types of recreational activities. Our society works more hours than most of the rest of the world. The need for private/public agency partnerships will only increase. User conflicts, personal safety, etc., continue to be issues.

How does State Parks intend to use this power point? Bob will show it to various types of forums (meetings, conferences, etc.).

**Model Memorandum of Agreement** - Parks (OPRHP) has developed a template for a MOA for Trail Friends Groups and volunteer forms. Copy attached. Limitations and process for filing a Workmen's Compensation claim was explained.

Volunteers assisting OPRHP are covered by Workmen's Compensation for injury. However, there some limitation and conditions:

- a) no co-pay by state
- b) volunteer must file injury report
- c) no lost work time coverage

Bob doesn't have answer about coverage for NPS-administered trails, for instance, on state forest property. Others in room think it's the agency whose property is involved who is first server of coverage.

Carol brought up canal trail injuries, citing a case when Thruway Authority paid bills for heart attack.

**Rail banking** - another slide show. Every Railroad operator prior to discontinuing service on a line or portion of a line must petition the federal Surface Transportation Board. The National Trails Act of 1983 provides the opportunity for a railroad to preverve its easement to operate a rail line across property while in the interim a public use as a trail is allowed – rail banking. The STB handles requests for rail banking and those interested in getting rail-banking rights have a very narrow window to respond and request the right to host a trail there during a theoretical temporary period when the corridor is without an interested railroad. Therefore, Parks is working on becoming a capable actor in rail-banking and fostering regional trails on old railbeds, working through MPOs and trail organizations. In addition to the STB action, railroads must go through a NYS DOT abandonment process. DOT has an inventory of every RR that existed in NY. Some of these lines have been abandoned (current status not maintained) or still active. Sara brings up a RR trestle she knows of, in private hands, whose owner wants to donate for historic preservation.

**Minnesota DNR (Dept. of Natural Resources) Trail Planning and Development Guidelines** – a comprehensive book for the planning and development of various types of trails with lots of illustrations. Useful encyclopedic work. One can buy a copy via [www.Minnesotabookstore.com](http://www.Minnesotabookstore.com) (stock #9-66).

**RTP grants** - few have been authorized yet since there are many layers of approval in advancing the applications after original announcements. This included reviews by OPRHP and FWHA. Even though they were announced abnormally early for this round, the schedule is relatively the same as for other rounds.

b. **DEC** – DEC representative not present – Bob provided report

**DEC trail supporter** patch - dedicated fund for the money. Bob was aware of how projects are selected. Irene asks why no prior input requested on patch from, say, Trails Council, but no DEC person here to ask. Council supposedly received proceeds only just now hearing about it, all except Marisa of ADK.

**DEC: Summary of state forest Unit Management Plans:** Region 7 recreation plan, currently under executive review by new administration. Tioughnioga currently being revised per public comments. Erwin - draft released, and public meetings have recently been held.. Virgil Mountain ready for executive review after revision.

6. **Old Business** –

Minnewaska SP horse fee did change to day-use for \$5, which is what was desired by users.

Status of DEC regulations as presented by Tom Wolfe at previous meeting: slight revisions per public comments, then sent to regulatory review board. In process.

7. **New Business** –

Delegate question: National Trails Day publicity funnel person: should our council provide again like we used to, or perhaps ask Parks & Trails NY? The function is needed for both event collection and publicity. Ron proposed we bring this up in February, but he was countered that we should address again in Sept. to create a process for Feb. action. Heads-up to PTNY that we might ask them. Stress outreach as vital feature of events.

No TV week third week of April. At schools, so ally your group with local schools and offer physical activities. Elaine Troy suggestion.

8. **Next meetings** - Sept 15, 2007, at Schodack Is. State Park

9. **Adjourn** - Meeting closed at 3 PM

Tom Casey's addendum: My apologies for missing today's NYSTC meeting. I was stuck behind

an overturned truck on the G. Washington Bridge for 2-1/2 hours and would not have made it to Saratoga for at least the first half of the meeting. Long Island to Fort Lee and back in about five hours: ah, what a great morning!

Anyway, I just wanted to put some items on the record:

1) The Suffolk County Department of Parks and Recreation is actively inspecting many potential kayak/canoe-launching sites, with the intention of providing signage and other improvements. Very good news.

2) The Pine Barrens Protected Lands Council (a multi-agency and volunteer group) spent much of this past Thursday closing off about twenty illegal ATV accesses in the Pine Barrens. We don't expect all the barriers will remain intact for long, given the nature of the illegal riders, who have on occasion hauled away 2,000-pound barriers to gain access to preserves, but we will at least be able to identify the "hot spots" and focus on them.

3) The L.I. Greenbelt Trail Conference's Walt Whitman Trail, which begins at the poet's birthplace and loops through West Hills County Park, has been awarded National Recreation Trail status. I did the application, and I wish to thank Bob Reinhardt for sending a supporting letter.

Hope to see you all at the next meeting. Contemplating renting a boat to go up the Hudson; has to be faster.

Regards,

Tom Casey