

**Stratham Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes
Public Session
October 14, 2020**

Conservation Commission Members Present: Bill McCarthy, Ana Egana, Brad Jones, Allison Knab, Bob Keating, Tim Copeland, Kyle Saltonstall (on Phone)

Non-Members Present: Seth Hickey, Lew Shelley (on Phone), Dan Crow (on Phone for Park Association), Duane Hyde

Meeting Called to order @ 7:05 PM

Special Meeting to review the Snowhawk DRAFT Trail Management Plan:

Draft distributed by Seth Hickey with the first 46 pages describing in trail in detail. The following sections, starting on page 47, were reviewed and discussed with comments:

New Trails section

The report recommends the closure and rerouting of some trails, and that there be no new trail development for the next 5 years;

Add some information and education efforts that could be used to discourage unsanctioned new trail development, including short trails created by abutting homeowners to gain easy access;

Add more detail on methods for trail closure such as fencing or obstacles which make the trail unusable. Duane Hyde referred to signs in Fort Rock trail system stating that trail closed per order of Exeter CC (official statement);

Trail Maintenance section

Add detail that monitoring of trails would be useful, such as the use of trail cameras or people counters (used by Pease trail network; Strafford County Regional Planning Commission may have one for loan). Establish trail log and yearly review of log to more effectively track changes/damage to trails (pictures helpful). The review should happen at about the same time of year, possibly June-July when the field work for the plan was performed. Lew has photographs that can be used as baseline.

Leaf Blowing section

There is not a clear answer based on the available research. Don't recommend removal unless the leaves become a problem. Duane Hyde, mentioned that he wrote a white paper that was reviewed by two soil scientists that concluded that removal of leaf cover accelerates erosion.

Add that trail closure is an available option if trail is deemed unsafe due to presence of leaves. Duane mentioned that certain trails are designed and manufactured to

control drainage and can withstand leaf blowing, but there are no such trails currently in SHP system.

Tim Copeland asked if problem trails could be rerouted to alleviate safety concerns.

Trail Structures section

A few structures are in need of repair, and the plan notes that wetland permits may be needed in some cases.

Pictures of the structures should be memorialized in the plan.

Some erosion control structures have deteriorated over time, such as those installed by Timberland several years ago. Some rubber structures (conveyor belt material) have been installed and are cost efficient as well as wheel friendly. There is some concern about the possibility of chemicals from the rubber leaching into the ground water and causing harm.

Some erosion control structures could be avoided by closing specific trails to certain uses such as, for example, closing the Lincoln trail to mountain bike uses. Further, some trails could be limited to one-way traffic.

Signage and Trail Markings section

Seth Hickey favors moving from using medallions to paint blazes on trees for trail marking. Frequently used trails should be clearly marked, and a key available.

Signs associated with specific events should be removed quickly after the conclusion of the event. A process should be established that identifies a responsible individual for the signs.

E-bike section

There is a question as to whether class I e-bikes could be allowed. Some organizations, such as Green Woodlands, now allowing class I bikes on their trails. Consensus is to monitor the situation.

Code of Conduct section

There is a new proposal for an Eagle Scout project to provide trail etiquette rules.

Add detail on education and signage that could be used to communicate code of conduct to public.

Dogs on Trails section

Plan states that dogs should be leashed on the trails, which is consistent with the rules in NH State Parks. Consensus is comfortable with the language and noted that Town Ordinances apply.

Group Size section

Currently being managed by Seth Hickey who provides a summary of planned events at the beginning of the year to the Barker Farm.

Disabled Accessibility section

Trails are available that have desirable grade, but modification is expensive to construct. The trails at Mt Agamenticus in York are a good example of what could be accomplished.

Recommendations for trails to be closed

Seth Hickey expressed concerns of short cut trails and recommended a site walk of trails that are recommended to be closed.

There was a question if a trail with significant length is closed, would a new trail be opened to preserve the overall mileage of the trail system.

5-year plan

Bill McCarthy indicated that everyone should review the recommendations and provide comments to Seth and Bill.

Given the lateness in the year, the plan should be renumbered to 2021-2026.

Leaf Blowing Policy:

The CC discussed whether to recommend a modification of the leaf blowing policy given the learnings from 2019 and the review of the trail management plan.

The CC decided that no modification is necessary.

9:02 PM

Tim Copeland moved to adjourn, Bob Keating Second— motion passed unanimously; Meeting adjourned

Next regular meeting scheduled for 7 PM on Wednesday, October 28th at the Municipal Center and via teleconference.

Respectfully Submitted:

Ana Egana

Serving as Secretary