



State of Delaware
Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control
Delaware Division of Parks and Recreation
89 Kings Highway
Dover, Delaware 19901

Council on Greenways & Trails

Biden Center, Cape Henlopen State Park
September 25, 2015

Welcome & Introductions

John Martin, acting Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 9:30 am. John welcomed everybody to the September 25th, 2015 meeting Council of Greenways and Trails in Biden Center, Cape Henlopen State Park. He asked those in attendance to introduce themselves.

John asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the April 20, 2015 Council meeting; and asked if there were comments, additions, or corrections. Mary Everhart made a motion to accept the minutes from the April 20th meeting; Wendel Cassel seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Trail Updates

Power points slides of the Tri-Valley Trail (White Clay Creek State Park), Rocky Run Bridge (Brandywine Creek State Park), Cape segment of the Georgetown-Lewes-Cape Henlopen Trail (Cape Henlopen State Park) and the Castle Trail were presented to the Council.

The Council information packet includes the Trails & Pathways Initiative projects with allocations/expenditures and projections by fiscal year. The Division is spending FY14 and 15 funds and has allocated FY16 to specific projects in the Division of Parks & Recreation and Division of Fish & Wildlife [for Bayshore projects]. DNREC received \$3 million for Trails & Pathways in FY16.

Tri-Valley Trail – Susan Moerschel outlined the extent of the project, indicating that it first begin in FY2012 as a two phased project from the Paper Mill-Thompson Station Corner through Smith Mill Road at Paper Mill, approximately 1.8 miles long. An onsite field review was held in March with the expectation was to combine this phase with Phase 2 through the Big Pond area of Possum Hill. The project may be split again into two phases. The alignment of Phase 1 was determined in the earliest stages of this project. Some of the preliminary and design engineering were done on this earlier phase I of the project.

Wetland delineation and topographic survey data collection are needed to determine final trail alignment for Phase 2 – Big Pond area. There are wet soils, hillside seeps, and grades that should be avoided. Design and engineering can proceed when the alignment is known. We had earlier indicated that we targeted a fall public open house to present proposed trail alignments.

Rocky Run Bridge, Brandywine Creek State Park - The bridge was closed, a temporary bridge installed. The replacement bridge abutments have been poured and setting of the bridge is expected in October.

Cape Henlopen State Park – A 1.25 mile corridor between the park entrance and the Lewes & Rehoboth Canal has undergone preliminary evaluation to determine the eastern-most trail segment of the Georgetown-Lewes-Cape Trail. Wetland delineation, utility information and topographic survey are needed to further evaluate and assess potential alignments for this project.

Castle Trail – Maryland’s 2 mile segment is open. Segments from the Maryland line, east have been completed, though there is no full connection yet in Delaware. The segment in the marina is under construction; work on sidewalks, drainage improvements are underway. Construction through marina should finish in November. Paving the entrance roads to the Biddle Point and St. Georges trailheads is expected to be completed by the end of the year. A short segment of the trail will move onto a tier 2 Canal road – design of the segment is expected to be completed this winter.

John Martin said it is good the positive progress on completing and opening recreational trails though he concerned that the Tri-Valley Trail and the Cape Henlopen Trail are not showing progress. He expressed concern to get these projects moving forward. Mary Everhart asked what is holding up the projects. In both cases, as reported, additional data collection is needed to determine best trail alignments. Charlie Emerson asked what is holding up data collection. Susan Moerschel indicated that contractors had not yet been charged with the tasks.

Mary Everhart motioned to ask Secretary Small why the projects have not moved forward and to advise when the Council can expect survey work to move forward. Charlie Emerson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Trail Ranking

Bob Ehemann updated the Council on the status of developing a trail ranking system that can be used to prioritize all trail projects for all funding sources. John Martin, Gary Kirk, Charlie Emerson and Jim Ireland are on the group developing and evaluating the tool. Ranking criteria cover the following: comprehensive planning; public involvement; trail network; recreational access; support facilities; natural and historic site access; transportation/destination links; environmental impact and resource protection; funding; and applicant maintenance record. Another aspect of the trail ranking is trail modeling for the following: proximity to population; access to new areas; access to parks, schools, businesses; shared-use trail; demographic impacts; trail classification; and trail location in State Strategies for Spending zones. This ranking tool that used to evaluate this year’s DTF Trail Grant applications. The tool needs further vetting to finalize its uses and adoption.

2015 DTF Trail Grants

Bob Ehemann acknowledged that this year’s projects were evaluated by Gary Kirk, John Martin, Anthony Aglio, and Kendall Sommers. He thanked the Grant Review Committee for their project review and evaluation. Bob presented this year’s Grant Review Committee recommendations and summarized each project in power point slides. This year applications were submitted by Sussex County, Milford, New Castle County, Dover, Slaughter Beach, Lewes and Newark.

James Farm Ecological Preserve – Sussex County

150-acre bayside preserve near Ocean View

Center for the Inland Bays

2014 Master Plan identified priorities

Phase 1 design, engineering and permitting

Parking improvements and trails/signage enhancements
DTF request: \$37,500
Match: \$37,500 Cash – County
Completion - winter of 2016 (construction to follow)

Gary L. Emory Nature Trail at Goat Island - Milford
Goat Island (9 acres) anchor of the Mispillion River Walk
Final phase for improvements - design work completed
Construct 3 overlooks and 1 pavilion
Parking improvements and trails/signage enhancements
DTF Request: \$50,000
Match: \$50,000 Cash - City
Completion - summer of 2016

Jester Park – New Castle County
32 acre passive park currently farmed
Preliminary design is complete
Adjacent to Hanby E.S.
Proposed trail - catalyst for future park development
Construct 1-mile 10”wide asphalt perimeter trail
Community connections and Safe Route to School
DTF Request: \$350,000
Match: \$350,000 Cash - County
Completion - fall of 2016

Mallard Pond Park - Dover
6-acre passive park
Critical link in the bike/ped network
Dover H.S.
Construct 1,000 foot long 10’ wide concrete trail
Creating a link between 4 unconnected neighborhoods
DTF Request: \$50,000
Match: \$50,000 Cash - City
Completion - summer of 2016

Coastal Sussex Regional Trailhead project - Lewes
[Note: this is the Lewes Segment of the Georgetown-Lewes-Cape Trail]
Prior DTF acquisition assistance
Junction of 2 regional trail systems
6-acre multi-use public complex
Construction of an all-season restroom
Concrete boulevard, trail, bike rack and water station
DTF Request: \$125,000
Match: \$144,750 Cash – DelDOT, CTF and City
Completion - fall of 2016

Curtis Mill Park – Ped/Bike bridge over White Clay Creek
2011 City Master Plan
Central link to extensive trail network
DTF assistance to Curtis Mill Park
Unsafe bridge crossing

Design and construct a ped/bike bridge over WCC
DTF Request: \$200,000
Match: \$800,000 Cash – DelDOT
Completion - spring of 2017

Bob asked if there were questions regarding projects. Charlie Emerson stated he will abstain from voting as his agency submitted the Newark application for a DTF Grant.

Gary Kirk made a motion to accept to Committee's recommendations for Trail Grant funding. Wendel seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Recreational Trail Users Update

Hiking – Wendel Cassel

The Friends of the White Clay Creek Preserve in partnership with the Wilmington Trail Club had a very successful dedication of the northern segment of Tri-State Trail on National Trails Day, June 6th, 2015. Hikers carrying the state flags of Delaware, Pennsylvania and Maryland converged from all three states and met at the Tri-State Marker for the celebration. More than 250 participants turned out to walk the new Tri-State Trail and celebrate the day 250 years ago that Mason-Dixon marked the northeast corner of Maryland and started their westward survey.

PA Representative John Lawrence presented the Friends with a House Resolution declaring June 6th White Clay Creek Preserve Day in Pennsylvania and Delaware State Representative Paul Baumbach presented a Senate Concurrent resolution declaring June 6th Mason-Dixon Day in Delaware.

We have only one tenth mile of additional trail to complete on the southern segment of the Tri-State Trail and we should be able to complete the trail this coming Sunday if we have a good turnout. With this completion, the entire four mile loop from the White Clay Creek Nature Center to the Tri-State Marker and returning to Arc Corner Road is open for use. In addition thanks to Gary Kirk, Representative Paul Baumbach, Delaware State Parks, and DelDot an approved high quality crossing has been completed for pedestrian use across Hopkins Road. The Tri-State Trail combined with the new crossing provides important access from existing trails and parking areas in Pennsylvania and Delaware and encourages further recreational and education opportunities on the history of the Mason-Dixon survey and the Tri-State borders. The trail is expected to become part of the national Mason-Dixon Trail system that passes through three states and connects the Appalachian Trail with the Brandywine Trail.

The Delaware State Parks Trail Crew completed the one mile portion of the trail that is in Delaware and provided materials for the bridges in Delaware. More than 60 different volunteers worked more than 2600 hours in building the trail in addition to the work by the Delaware State Parks Trail Crew and five Eagle Scout Projects. The five Eagle Scout Projects involved an additional 117 volunteers that worked more than 900 hours.

The cost for bridge materials and equipment rental for completion of the 3 mile portion of the Trail in Pennsylvania is approximately \$21,000 which was raised through contributions and grants from the list of sponsors attached. The trail will be completed ahead of schedule and well below budget.

Equestrian – Mary Everhart

Since our last meeting, Mary Everhart has ridden trails at Blackbird State Forest, Lums Pond State Park, First State National Historical Park and Brandywine Creek State Park. Mary also solicited trail usage and condition information from members of the Delaware Equine Council. They have reported riding at Redden State Forest and the C&R Center. From our perspective, the trails are in good condition. Parking in the Beaver Valley is always a challenge, but Stewart Ramsey (Ramsey Farms) is generous in allowing equestrians use of his area as long as he is not holding Pumpkin Patch. New Castle County has also allowed limited parking at Forbes Field. For the winter season, volunteers are pursuing parking at the Wilderness Canoe barn at 500 Woodlawn Road. Some of this information has been reported previously. Mary is happy to report that we have had no problems based on usage the aforementioned facilities.

Fall weather is ideal for equestrian sports. Mary looks forward to using our trail system when deer hunting season permits. Mary indicated she would like to ride at Trap Pond.

Susan asked Mary if she would be willing to assemble pictures of facilities that she has encountered on her cross country riding trips. Mary said she could do that for a future meeting.

John Martin inquired if Jim Ireland sent in a mountain biking report. Susan reported that Jim did not send a report.

Gordons Pond Trail Overview

Mike Krumrine presented PowerPoint slides that summarized the Gordons Pond Trail evaluation and assessment process conducted by the DNREC Gordons Pond planning team. Factors affecting the final trail alignment included rare species and habitats, dune migration, marsh fragmentation, and sensitive cultural resources. Features of the new trail alignment were highlighted and some of the initial trail visitation numbers were presented.

Immediately following the meeting, Council members took a ride on the new trail and David Bartoo highlighted some of the construction techniques that were used on the boardwalk section and scenic overlooks.

Announcements & Updates

The public open house for the Proposed Trail Plan for Brandywine Creek State Park is scheduled for October 28th, Nature Center, Brandywine Creek State Park.

Division of Parks & Recreation was selected by NRPA to receive the organization's Gold Metal Award recognizing State Park excellence.

John Martin stated that he received a letter from a trail user outlining safety and other matters on the Gordons Pond Trail and Junction & Breakwater Trail. Width and railing heights on the Gordons Pond Trail boardwalk were outlined in the letter. John Martin said he did not have enough information to reply to the letter and asked Susan Moerschel if she could send a response on behalf of the Division. David Bartoo said that narrower trails tend to slow down its users. Mark Chura echoed the comment.

Gary Kirk raised a land issue on the Tri-State Marker Trail. The marker adjoins private lands on both Delaware and Maryland sides. He would like to see the state consider trying to get an easement on the Delaware side and maybe helping facilitate acquiring some of the land in Maryland for future access.

Susan Moerschel said she would raise this with Ron Vickers, Land Protection Office Chief. She also suggested Gary and Wendel may want to visit Ron in Dover or on site.

Gary Kirk continued to explain that the real benefit will be in Maryland acquiring the portion of land in Maryland and the owner is up in years. Acquiring property for a trailhead would be helpful.

Wendel Cassel said he had suggested to the Friends of the Preserve that access be developed. It made sense for Pennsylvania to protect a piece of land. The owner land falls in two states.

John Martin called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mary Everhart moved, Scott Blaier seconded the motion. Motion to adjourn passed.

Meeting Attendance

Appointed Council Members

John Martin

Mary Everhart

Wendel Cassel

Charlie Emerson

Gary Kirk

Betsy Gant - Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs

Scott Blair – Department of Agriculture

Division of Parks & Recreation

David Bartoo

Bob Ehemann

Mike Krumrine

Susan Moerschel

Guest

Mark Chura