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**Council on Greenways & Trails**

December 4, 2015

Alapocas Run State Park

 9:30 am to 12:00

**Welcome & Introductions**

John Martin, Acting Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. John welcomed everyone to the December 4th 2015 meeting. He invited members and visitors to introduce themselves and identify their group affiliation.

**September Meeting Minutes**

John Martin asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the September 25, 2015 Council meeting; and asked if there were comments or corrections. Mary Everhart had a motion to accept the minutes from the September 25th meeting; a second was offered by Wendel Cassel. Motion carried.

**Trail Updates**

Tri-Valley Trail

Wetland delineation and topographic survey data collection has been ordered. David Bartoo is guiding Century Engineering to collect the data needed to determine a final sustainable and accessible trail alignment for Phase 2 of this project – approximately 1.0 miles. We currently have available two foot topographic contour GIS data. We are interested to see how well Century’s one foot topographic data collection lines up with current available data. This will verify the validity of existing data. We expect to hold a public open house in early 2016 to review the Phase 2 alignment.

Century Engineering is under contract to engineer trailhead parking lot and trail for Phase 1 – approximately 1.8 miles. Natural and cultural resource evaluation is complete. Phase 1 engineering is expected to be completed in summer 2016, wrapping up construction in 2016-2017 timeframe.

Bob Ehemann: What is the status of the Route 72 culvert project? David Bartoo: DelDOT engineered a culvert below Route 72 creating an underpass connection between WCCSP-Possum Hill Area and Middle Run Natural Area. An existing metal oval culvert will be replaced with a larger concrete box culvert with a 5 foot wide sidewalk. At times of high water flow the sidewalk will be inundated; as water recedes it will be passable. This will be the first time that DelDOT will build a road underpass for bike/ped use. There are far more people going underneath the road through today’s culvert than are crossing the road between the two park properties. David will provide an update at the next Council meeting.

Bartoo: On Polly Drummond Road between the Judge Morris area entrance and the west side of Polly Drummond, DelDOT will construct a median “safe island” as part of ped/bike light signal. When engaged, the signal will stop traffic. This provides a much needed safe crossing in the Newark regional trail network.

Charlie Emerson: Added an update on Redd Park. Newark is in holding pattern to create a connection at the northernmost trail point in Redd Park to Paper Mill/Possum Park Roads.

The final alignment will wrap around a storm water basin; basin improvements/upgrades will be made first, then trail section constructed. Basin improvements are behind schedule.

Bartoo: Ultimately from Paper Mill Park, a county park, through White Clay Creek State Park, through downtown Newark to the Amtrak line will be an excellent recreation and alternative transportation trail corridor.

Emerson: The Newark Bicycle Committee is very active committee; the group is assembled to evaluate alternatives for Cleveland Avenue intersection. There are five converging streets, the Pomeroy Trail, and bike lanes that join making bike and ped crossing very challenging. DELDOT is considering closing one of the streets to alleviate congestion. When Newark first starting talking about the Pomeroy Trail, bridging or tunneling under Cleveland Avenue was considered; those alternatives did not work do to ADA compliance grades and the million plus dollar cost to construct. An on-grade road crossing of the Pomeroy was the only solution.

Rocky Run Bridge

The site of the new Rocky Run Bridge was shown relative to the previous historic bridge. Construction is underway; abutments are nearly complete. The bridge is key to the Brandywine Valley Trail and on Brandywine Creek State Park’s east side. This trail continues up river into the First State National Historic Park.

Cape Henlopen State Park

This is a 1.25 segment from the park entrance to Freeman Highway. There are a lot of features in this corridor including the rail line, utilities, and wetlands. Wetland delineation and topographic survey data are needed; a contractor meeting has taken place to determine the cost of data collection. The trail alignment will consider habitat impact, a connection to the Cape May-Lewes Ferry.

Bartoo pointed out the regional trail system between Rehoboth and Lewes – the Junction & Breakwater Trail, Gordons Pond Trail and Georgetown-Lewes Trail – a 15+ mile network. This last segment in Cape Henlopen State Park is critical in completing the regional network of trails. Bartoo conveyed that this link is very important in the Governor’s Trails & Pathway Initiative objective to build paved bike and ped trails and to connect communities.

Susan Moerschel: Council will be briefed at the next meeting on the Lewes Trail segment construction schedule.

Castle Trail

Several segment west and east of the Summit North Marina are complete. Details inside of the marina are nearing completion. Gaps in the trail are not yet constructed nor is a third trailhead parking lot (Lums South) . Delaware City will complete the 0.4 mile segment in spring 2016. When complete the Castle Trail will be approximately 13 miles long. A trail link from Lums Pond State Park to the Lums South trailhead has been flagged as a potential connection. Corps of Engineers and our sister agency the Division of Fish & Wildlife (the trail manager) have taken the position that they will not discuss this potential trail connection until the Castle Trail is complete.

Trail tread is failing in places on the Castle Trail created by from the weight of soil upslope from the trail. The Corps has considered driving sheet piling to create a barrier and hold back soil from slumping.

**Northern Delaware Greenway Trail (NDGWT)**

Originally a stone with fines surfaced trail, a two sections of the Northern DE Greenway Trail were resurfaced in asphalt. A segment between Park Drive (below the Blue Ball Barn) and Alapocas Drive and another along the river near the Brandywine Condos. A land donation of 45 acres from the Nemours Foundation, below the children’s hospital, was granted to the Division of Parks & Recreation earlier this year. Previously the Division held an easement on this property. The NDGWT is now paved from Brandywine Creek to the Cauffiel Property in Bellevue State Park.

**Assawoman Canal Trail**

The Assawoman Canal Trail was opened and dedicated earlier this year. We are now working on creating a kayak launch adjacent to the bridge, a short walk from the trailhead at Town Road. We hope to have a Gator Dock structure that floats with tide changes installed in the coming spring. Paddle boarders and kayakers are increasingly using the Assawoman Canal for water-based recreation. Next week, the southernmost end of the trail will be connected to Route 26 via a sidewalk.

Charlie Emerson: Asked where paddlers currently access the Canal. And, are there opportunities to connect at the north end of the Canal property?

Ehemann: Paddlers and kayakers have no official launch structure and are climbing down the banks in some places and over rip rap. We own the property at the north end [where the Canal and White’s Creek meet] though there is no formal water access. The Division has not determined this site’s use. A connection from the trail’s northernmost current point to Elliott Avenue is envisioned and is in on-going discussions with a landowner.

**Auburn Heights**

The Open Space Council approved a new acquisition and easement. The first trail was opened in 2013. Two bridges – trail links - will be constructed next year. Division contracted with Working Bridges, a company that acquires old bridges for repurposing, to construct two rehabbed historic bridges. Additional trail work will also be completed next year.

Emerson: Are there commercial interests planned for this location? Moerschel replied she does not know and does not have details in that regard.

**Brandywine Creek State Park Trail Plan**

For those that do not know, the Division has been through a public participation and outreach process over the past year to develop a trail plan for Brandywine Creek State Park. The 30 day period for public comment on the proposed trail plan closed this week. 80 attendees to public open house. Summary of 223 written responses following the October 28, 2015 public workshop on the BCSP Trail Plan:

* No specific requests or suggestions for changes to trail plan;
* Less than 10 responses indicated some desire for changes to the proposed plan although no specifics were offered;
* 3-4 people that made negative comments about trail plan, with no specifics;
* Majority of respondents want more navigational aids (trail markers and maps) and restrooms;
* Vast majority of the trail users in the park use trail very frequently;
* Respondent composition: 60% mountain biking; 37% users are walkers/hikers; 13% dog walkers; 16% horseback riding; 16% runners;
* 2/3 of walkers also participate in other park activities;
* 53% mountain bike only;
* 69% horse ride only;
* 14% trail runner only; far more participate in multiple park activities;
* Combined - walkers, runners, hikers use trail most frequently;
* 30% equestrians use trails a few times/year;
* 50% of trail users are on BCSP trails at least 1 time per month;
* More bike trails, more equestrian trails, more challenging trails; and
* Support to limit trail erosion

We know where trail users use trails, but do not know holistically the number of trail users.

Next steps: Division’s Trail Committee discussion on how or to what extent the public comments will change the proposed trail plan. Based on the public input and written comments, we believe the trail alignments as proposed would stand. The Plan needs to address to better parking, trailheads.

The Plan’s Stakeholder group is comprised of Park Friends, neighbors, hikers, runners, equestrians, mountain bikers, and the National Park Service. The majority of public open house attendees were mountain bikers; the majority of comment form respondents were mountain bikers as well.

**Local Projects Update**

Bob Ehemann briefed the Council on the following project:

Delaware City Branch Canal Trail – 0.4 mile segment connecting Castle Trail. Project behind schedule, expected to be completed in Spring 2016. Trail will be built on berm.

$250K in DTF Trail Grant assistant leveraged $2.1M in other funds.

Woodland Park Trail is the first Sussex County park. DTF grant assistance used to acquire property and a second DTF Trail Grant to construct trails. Sussex County is looking for another organization to have an on-site presence to oversee trail.

Charlie Emerson: Does the site get much use? Ehemann: Doesn’t think that the park is officially open. Moerschel: we need to address the issue of closure with the County.

Mill Creek Greenway Trail – New Castle County was awarded a DTF Trail Grant to construct a demonstration trail segment on the historic Camp Wright property. Trail currently not connected to other properties. Corps of Engineers asked for Bog Turtle survey that will take place next year. The trail may be extended based on survey findings.

Emerson: What are plans for buildings? Ehemann: We do not know. Camp may have been active in 1970s.

**Trail Ranking**

Bob Ehemann briefed the Council on the Trail Ranking Committees work. About a year ago the Council began discussing how trail modeling could be incorporated in to the ranking of DTF grant projects and Governor Trail & Pathway projects. Gary Kirk, John Martin, Charlie Emerson, Ehemann and Moerschel have met 4 or 5 time this year to develop ranking criteria. Committee has developed a solid foundation for a two part evaluation.

Part 1 – Ranks how well sponsor demonstrates:

* project addressed in a comprehensive or other plan
* degree of public participation
* trail network – how project connects, fills gaps
* recreational asset connections
* support facilities – restrooms, way finding, trailhead parking, other
* natural and cultural/historic site access
* accessibility
* transportation and destination links
* resource protection and environmental impacts
* matching funds
* future maintenance

Modeling ranking:

* proximity to people
* access to areas previously not connected
* multiple uses
* demographic impacts of proposed trails
* trail classifications
* access to businesses, schools, parks, other facilities
* proximity to public transportation
* State Strategies for Spending
* Applicants history of maintaining existing facilities

Ehemann explained that regional/destination parks are typically larger and may not be close to residential neighborhoods. These parks may score low for the walking models but are still important places to make investments.

Everhart: Consider adding to the application a demonstration of unique characteristics and/or conditions of the sponsor’s project.

Emerson: this ranking system is a guide to make decisions regarding grant submissions.

Moerschel: Administratively we can adjust priority changes to ranking based on need. We can ask Council’s advice on priority investments ahead of the beginning of a grant cycle. When we inform eligible agencies of Grant Program priorities [in any given year] this provides guidance in what can be submitted; it will help communities plan in advance of a grant submission.

Moerschel: How would the Council like to proceed based on the Committee’s work ?

Emerson: Are you looking for the Council to vote on the trail ranking as a practice ?

Moerschel: In a previous meeting this year, the Council expressed interest in developing a ranking system that would be adopted.

Emerson: The ranking needs to shared with the Council for their review, questions, and comment. That should be the next step.

Martin: Then take action at the next meeting.

Moerschel: We will send the ranking system after this meeting for Council review and adoption at the next meeting. Comments on the ranking system should go directly to Bob Ehemann.

Emerson: It would be helpful to share the rankings on the projects and tested the model. Overall the Ranking Committee is very pleased at where the criteria stand today.

Martin: We used examples of existing projects to test to see how they would have scored.

Moerschel: We will send a complete package of the proposed ranking and test case scores. Maps trail projects with other trails, amenities, facilities, etc. should be part of the package to give Council a complete picture for evaluation of the ranking tool. We will mail a complete package.

**Recreational Trail Users Report**

Hiking

Wendel Cassel: The Tri-State Trail was completed on Sunday, September 27th.  The trail became officially part of the Mason-Dixon Trail on November 14th when a Mason-Dixon Trail System work party installed decals at all of the trail intersections.  This addition of 4 miles to the Mason-Dixon Trail brings the total to 198 miles.   This is an important addition to the Mason-Dixon Trail as the trail now passes the Tri-State monument which is the only actual Mason-Dixon Survey marker on the trail.

Documentation on the Tri-State Trail is being prepared for submission to the National Park Service for consideration as a National Recreation Trail. If designated, this would be the fifth or sixth NRT in Delaware.

Gary Kirk: At the Mason-Dixon monument, half of the land is in PA; one-fourth in DE; on-fourth MD. Lands owners are not happy with trail users visiting the monument. Gary and others are taking the lead and talking to state agencies about protecting the monument and some small surrounding lands in public ownership. Field meetings will occur soon. Gary will report on progress at next meeting.

Moerschel: When the NRT application is complete, please send it to me to secure the Division Director’s signature. NRTs are the only trails in the National by the Department of Interior

Emerson: Brought up the proposed bike ped bridge over white clay creek.

Spoke to deldot is moving along with bridge design. $1M available for project. 14’ ,

12’ would be adequate

230’ long

John Martin asked if Susan received a mountain biking report from Jim Ireland. Susan did not receive a report.

Equestrian Report

Mary Everhart: Since our last meeting, this Council member continues to ride the trails primarily in New Castle County. I have learned through my contacts that Gateway Stables in Hockessin, Delaware has closed and those equestrians have had to make other boarding/riding arrangements. I have met one rider who moved to 800 Beaver Valley Road, Wilmington and been told that others have also relocated to this area. This makes it more important than ever that we maintain open space and trail mileage for increased users. However, I wonder if we have lost riders, and therefore revenue, to boarding facilities in Chester County, Pennsylvania and near Fair Hill, Maryland.

At our last meeting, it was suggested that I might want to show this Council some of the types of facilities I have encountered on my 2015 travels through 33 of the contiguous 48 states. That information is now a ten-slide PowerPoint presentation that I can share whenever desired.

Moerschel: We will show Mary’s power point at the next meeting.

**New Business**

**Extended Trail Hours**

Mike Krumrine reported the Extended Trail Hours the Division’s pilot program in White Clay Creek State Park. It started in mid-November running to April 15, 2016. Certain trails are open until 8:30pm. Trails are accessed from two parking lots – Nine Foot Road trailhead and the small trailhead at the bottom of Wedgewood Road - or via adjoining communities. All other parking lots are closed at dusk. A permit is required to be on the following trails after hours: Bryan’s Field; Whitely Farms; Smith Mill Road; and Pomeroy between Newark and Hopkins Road. Extended hour trail users are required to have a light that is on, reflective clothing, communication device, ID and permit and bikers must wear a helmet. Trail etiquette applies.

Cassel: Read a Trail Dawgs email that the Trail Spinners are encouraging mountain bikers to get permits for night riding.

Krumrine: Will update the Council at the next meeting. He will pull numbers on trail counts and permits numbers.

**Announcements & Updates**

First Day Hikes – January 1. Delaware State Parks is offering 20 hikes. Gary Kirk is leading a hike on the Tri-State Marker Trail.

Next Council meeting - March 4, 2016. Deerfield was suggested as a site. In 2016 the Council agenda’s should include an update on Bayshore projects and Forestry trails.

Council was given the State Park Quarterly Report with an update on all

**Adjourn**

Wendel Cassel motioned to adjourn, Gary Kirk seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**Attendees:**

Council Members

John W. Martin

Mary Everhart

Wendel Cassel

Gary Kirk

Charles Emerson

Romain L. Alexander

Agency Members

Raymond E. Bivens, DNREC

Scott C. Blair, Dept of Ag

Division of Parks & Recreation

Susan Moerschel

David Bartoo

Bob Ehemann

Mike Krumrine

Council on Greenways & Trails

Friday, December 4, 2015

Recreational Trail Users

Activity Reports

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Respectfully submitted,

Mary Everhart

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Submitted by:

Wendel Cassel