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**Council on Greenways & Trails**

June 10, 2016

 9:30 am to 12:00

Location: Dover Public Library, Dover, DE

**Welcome & Introductions**

Charlie Emerson, Acting Chairperson, called the meeting to order. He invited members and visitors to introduce themselves and identify their group affiliation.

**June Meeting Minutes**

Charlie Emerson asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the March 11, 2016 Council meeting; and asked if there were comments or corrections. John Martin made a motion to approve the minutes; Romain Alexander seconded the motion. Motion approved.

**Trail Updates**

Bayshore projects – Karen Bennett, Division of Fish & Wildlife, briefed the Council on Bayshore projects. Bayshore area extends from City of New Castle to Lewes, bound by Route 1 on west. About 220,000 acre area – about 120,000 protected in state, federal and private conservation lands. Executive Summary is focused on land protection, connecting habitats, and restoration is available through Karen.

Delaware Bayshore Byway Corridor Management Plan is work in progress. Community meetings are being held to expand partnerships. Management plan is being written to strive for All American Byway status. [[www.fhwa.dot.gov/byways/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/byways/)].

Bayshore team worked with Ben Muldrow to develop brand for Bayshore Byway. Signs will be erected to direct Byway users to communities, facilities, and amenities. Karen provided an overview of sites and projects in the Bayshore.

* Ashton Tract – Located at Augustine Wildlife Area near Port Penn – 880 yard trail, overlook, and trailhead. Very popular with birders and photographers. Site overlooks 1000 Acre Marsh. Opened in October 2015.
* Lang Marsh – Located at Augustine Wildlife Area near Port Penn - trail and overlook in design.
* Blackbird Reserve is part of the DE National Estuarine Research Reserve system. There are 3 miles of existing trails. Short trail with trailhead, pavilion, and interpretative information. A kayak launch and more trails will be added later.
* Woodland Beach Wildlife Area at Taylors Gut – The new Aquatic Resources Education Center is nearing completion. Plans for a trail that loops the east side of Route 9 and continue on the west side with a viewing platform.
* Town of Leipsic – Waterman-Agricultural Museum in development to be located in the former DuPont School.
* Little Creek Wildlife Area – location of the new Bayshore Visitor Center. Concept design complete on a wildlife viewing site. Trail access will be enhanced.
* Bowers Beach – the existing boat launch parking lot owned by Fish & Wildlife has been redesigned. New design will support boat trailer parking and will be space for festivals and events. Some area will be converted to include a small park.
* Slaughter Beach – Now certified by National Wildlife Federation as Community Wildlife Habitat. With a combination of Bayshore funds, private sources, and Delaware Land & Water Conservation Trust Fund Trail Grant a trail, boardwalk, observation platform and information board are in design.

There are more conceptual projects. Water trails and launches are being considered. David Bartoo has helped determine potential locations.

Charlie Emerson stated that the communities involved are essentially east of Route 1. Frederica is looking at a few things to enhance town resources. Karen said that she and Ann Gravatt (DelDOT) will be meeting with Frederica about the potential to be a Bayshore Byway community partner.

Tri-Valley Trail Project – David Bartoo refreshed Council’s memory on location of the proposed Tri-Valley Trail project. Located in Possum Hill area of White Clay Creek State Park. Phase 1 includes a 1 mile trail from corner of Paper Mill and Thompson Station Roads to 9 Foot Road trailhead and expands the existing 9 Foot Road trailhead. Phase 2 - includes a 1.8 mile trail and a new trailhead parking lot. Project was put on hold for a few years.

The White Clay Stakeholder group met several times on the Tri-Valley Trail project. A public open house was held April 4th and 124 comments received. Stakeholders will meet again soon to exchange information about the project.

Matt Chesser briefed the Council on the next steps. The project will be bid this summer. The Division decided after hearing from the public and talking internally that the trail will be eight feet wide and paved. The rationale is that an 8 feet wide trail will allow for safe, two-way, multi-use traffic. It will provide space as there is more [residential] growth in future and as we continue to look beyond the borders of the park and additional communities grow and get connected. Delaware Greenways is looking at connections in the northern New Castle and Hockessin region. The decision to pave the trail is related to maintenance. We have stone dust trails that are maintained on a regular basis. Even flat areas with stone trail need to be maintained. From a longevity standpoint, we are going to pave the trail. The blackness wears away pretty quickly. Asphalt paved surface can be maintained for a longer period of time. The paved surface will allow enforcement vehicles and trucks for maintenance to access area. Those are decisions we wrestled with.

We had planned for a parking lot [at the intersection of Thompson Station and Nine Foot Roads.] We deleted the parking due to the public comments to not create it. We proposed to move two parking lots closer to roads for access and security. The existing Nine Foot Road Trailhead parking lot is a nice lot and will be enhanced. If we ever decide that we need additional parking later we can install a lot closer to Thompson Station Road. We have adjusted plans due to public comment.

Two trail alignments were considered. The Paper Mill Road side is noisier, has 4 water crossings. Pleasant Hill Road side, situated away from [Paper Mill with heavy traffic], has one water crossing, more intimate experience, more shade; this was the most favored alignment by the public and by our staff.

CEmerson said, Rep. Baumbach contacted him about trail width. Charlie indicated that wider the better is for safety and asphalt surface is better for maintenance.

MChesser – We try to balance what should be a safe trail width. AASHTO guidance calls for ten foot wide trails. Trails & Pathways funds may only be used for new trail construction.

DBartoo added that storm damage to trails at this location do to terrain will affect stone trails and their accessibility washing away surfaces more quickly.

CEmerson said, administratively this will be a transportation corridor as much as it is a recreational trail. How will you deal with snow removal?

Ray Bivens - With limited staff at WCCSP, parking lot clearing will be priority.

Susan Moerschel offered that she reached out to cycling on this question. Cyclists tend not to bike commute after snows until it is melted. Road lane widths are reduced after plowing, shoulders or bike lanes are often covered with snow leaving no room for cyclists.

Gary Kirk – Stakeholders all supported an asphalt trail surface. Trail width was another matter. We looked at trail width differently. An 8 foot wide trail with 2 feet of mowed on each side becomes a 12 foot corridor.

Auburn Heights Preserve/NVF - Matt Chesser updated the Council. The Auburn Valley Trail loop was completed in 2013 at Auburn Heights Preserve (AHP). A loop trail on Oversee Property is under construction, is mostly accessible. DelDOT through the Transportation Alternatives Program is looking at trail design between AHP and Hockessin. A public open house was held in May on AHP master plan; over 200 attendees. He is talking to folks in Kennett Square about trail connection. Land Trust for Southern Chester County owns lands between Kennett Square and AHP.

Delaware Greenways has written a grant for trail planning for this region including the area between Hockessin Athletic Club and Limestone Road.

There will be two historic bridges that will be set along trail at AHP: 1) late 1890’s pony truss bridge is from Pennsylvania; and 2) a 1890’s bow string bridge from Iowa. A Pratt bridge from Michigan will be used at the NVF site. Transportation departments are looking for alternative homes for old bridges.

The Division is conducting a test run with rail bikes to provide expanded recreational opportunities for all age and ability levels. Users can see beautiful scenery along Red Clay Creek and learn about rails. We will meet with neighboring property owners to iron out bugs in this program offering.

Killens Pond State Park Trail Plan - David Bartoo outlined progress on the developing a trail plan for Killens Pond. Internally, we have gone through a planning process with our Trail Committee. We have looked at the natural and cultural resources to inform potential opportunities for new trail alignments. David exhibited a map of the park drawing attention to trail locations, current permitted uses and potential new trails. The proposed plan shifts hiking only areas to shared-use trail changing the miles available for other recreational trail uses. Trail network expansion east and west of the core park area is proposed adding approximately six new trail miles to the park. Shared use trails will expand trail user visitation. Killens is the only State Park in Kent County.

As part of the public outreach process, a Stakeholder group will be assembled mid-year as part of the public outreach and input on the proposed trail plan. Once the stakeholders group comes to agreement on a proposed trail plan, a public open house will be held. A final plan concept could be complete by end of the year.

SMoerschel interjected a project update. DelDOT built a pathway along Killens Pond Road about 20+ years ago. This year, that pathway was replaced with federal Recreational Trail Funds. And, an early Trail & Pathway funded study looked at making a connection between the north and south side of Killens Pond. The study found due to limitations of the road right of way, pedestrian/bike improvements cannot be within DelDOT’s property right of way. The Division of Parks & Recreation has concluded that a ped/bike bridge over the spillway is a potential solution and will look at this in more detail with Trail & Pathway Bond Bill funding. If built, this bridge will create a valuable connection inside of the park and a looped trail network.

CEmerson asked what Kent County is doing to increase trail systems. Susan replied that trail and pathway connections on the west and south side of Dover are underway. When complete, Schutte Park will connect the new Kent Boys & Girls Club, Akridge Scout Camp and Brecknock Park.

Assawoman Canal Trail Phase 2 Feasibility update - Susan Moerschel updated the Council on the Assawoman Canal Trail. Last year, 1 mile of trail was opened at Assawoman Canal Trail. She pointed to map showing connections to area streets including Route 26. Under current conditions, cyclists traveling east have no safe crossing at Route 26 at the trail’s current south end. And, similarly, pedestrians moving west have no safe crossing on Route 26 to get onto the trail. A trail underpass below Route 26 will solve the crossing issue. The Division conducting is looking at options and the feasibility to implement an underpass.

CEmerson inquired about the disposition of north end of the Assawoman Canal and the marina property. Susan said that an appraisal was conducted on the marina property and its findings indicate a market value lower than the owner’s current mortgage. Buildings on the site are partially on private land and partially on state land as well. [Buildings were constructed when Canal lands were owned by the USACE.] The Division thinks this site would make a great location for kayak access and allow the trail to extend at bit further north.

The Division is designing a kayak launch adjacent to the foot bridge at the south end of the trail with parking access at the Town Road trailhead in Ocean View.

Georgetown-Lewes-Cape Trail – Susan Moerschel updated the Council saying data is being collected on the easternmost leg of an evolving trail – the Georgetown to Lewes to Cape Henlopen Trail. She gave an orientation on the location of this trail and the Junction & Breakwater Trail. The segment inside of Lewes [of this regional trail] is currently under construction. Topographic, boundary and utility data are being collected that will inform that final trail alignment for approximately 1.25 mile segment.

CEmerson asked what is the long term expected use of the rail line? Moerschel replied that the rail line currently serves the SPI Pharma light industrial site. One to two rail tanks per week move product out of the plant. DelDOT has discussed trucking the product, though this is not supported by local residents as it will increase truck traffic.

Rehoboth Way finding - Susan Moerschel collaborated with Kathy Osterholm, Rehoboth resident and member of the City’s Transportation Committee to establish a pilot wayfinding system to assist visitors with safe bike navigation. The project is intended to guide cyclist through the city. Recognizing the need to aid cyclist who are unfamiliar with city streets, as well as how to safely connect between the southern ends of the state’s Junction & Breakwater and Gordons Pond Trails, the committee took action to install way finding posts. Graphics from Rehoboth’s Bike Friendly Streets information were recreated to fit on 8x8 posts and installed at five locations. Rehoboth resident Kathy Osterholm (project lead) has received positive reviews and comments and envisions installing more way finding this coming fall.

**Reports**

Trail Use Counters - David Bartoo reported from time to time we have briefed the Council on the collection of trail counter data and how we have used the data to inform trail decision making. Counts were first collected in White Clay Creek at trail improvements were made. Our system requires staff to go to each site to download data, then analyzed by with counter software. Counters are located in White Clay Creek, Cape Henlopen, Delaware Seashore, Lums Pond, and Trap Pond State Parks; at Paper Mill County Park; and Newark’s Redd Park, Pomeroy and James Hall Trails. Other counters managed by DelDOT collect user counts on the Castle Trail.

David shared an analysis on use volumes for White Clay Creek and Cape region. Looking at these data, we extrapolate and project trail user volumes for new trails. Trail count data gives us real data for planning and operational decision making.

Trail Bond Bill Funds Fiscal Report Susan Moerschel briefed the Council starting with the trail section from DNREC’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The document looks at recently completed projects, those in progress, and looks forward to future projects. Projects outlined in the CIP document are reflected in the Trail & Pathway Bond Bill spreadsheet [a second handout]. This spreadsheet is set up by fiscal year beginning FY12. The Council receives this report at every meeting; it reflects funds spent and earmarked for trail projects. Susan outlined several projects on the financial document in State Parks and at Bayshore sites.

A third handout is a summary of projects outlined under the Federal Recreational Trail Program funds. Susan summarized the RTP eligible project categories, match sources, as well as types of projects and their locations.

Pilot Night Riding Ray Bivens reported that about 100 applications were made for night riding. No injuries or major issues were reported during the pilot timeframe. He stated this was a good pilot program and reported Sen. Sokola is an active user. David Bartoo reported his review of trail counter data – he saw no overall increase in trail users due to night riding. There were no recorded user counts after 7pm. Use numbers were very low, translating to not many nighttime users. Night riding numbers last year were lower prior to the pilot night riding program conducted over this winter.

GKirk asked if the follow up questionnaire been sent to permit holders? It was reported as not yet been sent to night time permit holders.

Ray reported that the Division will go to the White Clay Creek Citizens Advisory Committee for guidance on this program as next step. Legislators want cyclists to be charged a fee. He credited Trail Spinners with introducing the idea of night riding. Lums Pond State Park may be selected next site for night riding.

GKirk - Has any thought been given to opening parks earlier ? Ray said our challenge is stretching our staff resources to change park functions.

**Recreational Trail User Update**

Hiking - Gary Kirk reported that he and Mike Ott have been making improvements to the Mason Dixon Trail through Newark. He received positive comments coming from neighbors and users alike. Brandywine Trail, part of the Mason-Dixon Trail network, is a big concern for users and keeping it open and fully connected. Brandywine Conservancy has received William Penn Foundation assistance to keep this trail open.

Sunday hunting is a very big concern to hiking community as is the proposed Sunday hunting bill. The bill would allow hunting for five Sundays from October through January. The bill was amended to require public review and comment on the proposed hunting dates if different from the current management schemes.

Wilmington Trail Club will host a bike ride immediately following the opening of the Branch Canal Trail on June 15th.

Gary asked what is the state doing to protect former Three Little Bakers golf course? The golf course was not dedicated as open space, and was tied up in litigation to block development. Gary indicated that protecting the site makes strong trail linkages and protects open space.

Mountain Biking – Jim Ireland had no report for Delaware.

**New Business**

Naming Trail for Wendel Cassel – Gary Kirk introduced naming the Boundary Trail for Wendel Cassel. Wendel passed away in March and singlehandedly was responsible for building the Boundary Line Trail crossing PA and DE. On April 4th, Mike Ott and Gary Kirk proposed the trail renaming to PA’s White Clay Creek Preserve board. On May 12th, PA State Parks approved the change. Maps and trail markers are being changed. April 26th, Mike Ott proposed the trail renaming to the White Clay Citizens Advisory Council. The Council unanimously supported the renaming.

Gary has heard from Ray and others, why naming park facilities is a challenge. Wendel had great impact on many trails - he planned improvements and sought volunteers to build trails and trail bridges to complete key projects.

Mike Ott said half of the trails in White Clay Creek are there because Wendel cared for them. The Tri-Valley Trail was his last great accomplishment.

GKirk asked for an interpretative sign describing Wendel’s work.

Ray Bivens stated the Division’s challenge is that there are many requests to rename facilities for people. The agency has not named facilities for people; a precedent Ray does not want to make. He prefers a series of information kiosks crediting key contributions to creating and enhancing state parks. The Parks & Recreation Council does not want facilities named for people. Council will consider a policy at its summer meeting. [Adding to the complexity] the City of Newark passed a resolution to name the Robinson House for Dorothy Miller.

CEmerson stated would like to see some other option to name a trail for Wendel.

Mike Ott pointed out that the trail goes through two states and PA has approved the name change.

Jim Ireland motioned to submit a letter to State Parks requesting consideration to rename the Boundary Line Trail in honor of Wendel Cassel. The letter will also request the Division install an interpretative sign covering Wendel’s trail achievements on behalf of Delaware citizens. Motion seconded by Romain Alexander. Motion carried unanimously.

Town of Milton – Charlie Emerson updated the Council on an upcoming meeting he and Susan will have with the Milton officials regarding a rail trail project. A previous one-block project was a jointly funded with a DTF Trail grant and Transportation Enhancement funds. The rail corridor is not active and owned by DelDOT.

**Announcements**

Ray reported that the 65th State Parks anniversary coin was distributed to Council. On June 5th, Parks were free sponsored by the Delaware Tourism Office. Our Friends groups are advocating for $3.5 million in DNREC projects and from that amount approximately $2.5 million for State Parks. They have advocated for $6.5 million in State Park improvements though our agency could use $9 million. Our fee increase has helped our budget situation.

Next Council meeting – October 12, location and agenda to be determined.

Delaware City Branch Canal Trail – opening event scheduled for June 15 at 10:00am. This is project with several sources of funding, including DTF Trail funds. The trail links Delaware City to the Castle Trail.

Gary Kirk made a motion to adjourn. John Martin seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**Attendees:**

Council Members

Charlie Emerson, Acting Chair

John Martin

Gary Kirk

Jim Ireland

Romain Alexander

Agency Members

Raymond Bivens, Division of Parks & Recreation, DNREC representative

Betsy Gant, Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs representative

Scott Blaier, Department of Agriculture

Division of Parks & Recreation

Susan Moerschel

David Bartoo

Matthew Chesser

Guests

Mike Ott

Louise Young

Jeanne Rapley

Denise Husband,

Karen Bennett