

Bristol Plan Revision Meeting July 15, 2003: Public Comments

Topic: Trails

Questions Discussed at the Meeting:

1. What is working well with the existing trail system? For example, enough long distance trails, loop day trails, interpretive trails?
2. How can we resolve existing and potential trail-user conflicts? For example, through education, separate trails, seasonal restrictions, better maintenance
3. Specific ideas to propose for new uses of the trail system (all terrain vehicles, pack animals; bike trails). For example, what is minimum length of trail needed for use? Seeking new trail construction? Sharing of existing routes? Sharing trails in different seasons?
4. Discussion of resource, wildlife and social concerns from trail usage. Ways to help limit resource damage? Wildlife concerns? How are you affected by others trail usage? For example, what benefits are provided by existing or proposed trail use?

1. What is working well with the existing trail system? For example, are there enough long distance trails, loop day trails, interpretive trails?

Good? Lots of GREAT hiking trails and mountain biking trails (Contest Trail)

Prohibition of ORVs-but there is lots of misuse of ATVs-example at Frost Mountain

Primarily everything about the snowmobile system works well but it could use better access to services, also needs better communication between groups and between Forest Service and users

Trails on Forest Service land provide links to trails on other public lands and private land

Moosalamoo area could be a model for signage and maps

Moosalamoo area is limited-no ORVs and dogsleds

No loop trails on Forest land for dog sleds

Law enforcement and presence in woods is working "perfectly"

Cooperation between timber management and trail use has improved

Does anything prevent new cooperative agreements?

Would like to see more loop trails for all uses

Need ADA compliant interpretive trails

Long Trail relationship is working well

Large contiguous ownership (ex. Green Mountain. National Forest) is beneficial for managing Catamount Trail System

Frost Mountain-extensive ATV use that is damaging resources-not staying on trails

Benefits to towns-a lot of people come to towns to use the trails, towns may not always make these connections
Maintenance and lack of garbage along the trails in summer works well
If ATV users could get more organized, similar to VAST, may be able to work better
Logging is working well with trail system-logging has created the trail system
Logging and cross country is trails work well together-cross country ski trails use logging trails
Improved relations with existing users has led to exclusivity, harder for new users to get a seat or become a partner
Catamount-would like to see more cross country ski loop trails-the Catamount is most focused on a North-South trail
Need more interpretive trails-one in Rutland area and one in Bennington area
Hiking, cross-country ski, snowmobiles are working well. The limited offering is working well. ORV plan (none) is not working at all
"Through trail" that connects (motorized) access needs to be developed so point to point use can be had. Or at least looped

2. How can we resolve existing and potential trail-user conflicts? For example, through education, separate trails, seasonal restrictions, better maintenance

Using conflicts could be limited by having a loop system, rather than up and back-trails need to go somewhere or be part of a system
Moosalamoo map is great-good example of displaying trails, 3d printing and 60k maps
Website-hard to navigate and find maps-could work better
Another way to get maps is to call the office-receptionists can mail maps to people
Have a statement at trailheads giving a number for people to call if there are problems
Need downloadable maps for trail uses-need better education in different formats
Rochester office has lots of information but Middlebury office does not have such a good supply
Offer appropriate uses for what is being asked of the Forest-meet demand
There is an absence of signage telling of presence of other types of trail users
Forest Service should use speed limit signs on motorized trails
Roads already have signs-no set speed limit for snowmobiles except on state lands-where it is 35mph
Need accessible trails for all Forest Service user groups
Green Mountain National Forest mission is in conflict with the federal Forest Service mission to provide recreation opportunities
Bring user groups together to work on conflict issues-particularly for an ORV proposal
ORV conflict can only be resolved by offering recreation opportunity to all users including ORV
Conflict: Lack of signage of "multiple users" in the area so an expectation of encountering other recreationalists perhaps recreating in other ways (snowmobile and cross country ski; hiking with ATV/Bike/Horse users)

Conflict can be reduced or eliminated by offering legal access in designated areas and in multi use areas for ORVs, hikers, horses, mountain bikes, etc.

3. Specific ideas to propose for new uses of the trail system (all terrain vehicles, pack animals; bike trails). For example, what is minimum length of trail needed for use? Seeking new trail construction? Sharing of existing routes? Sharing trails in different seasons?

Having a place to park is a problem

Out West, most hiking trails are also used as horse trails

Motorbikes want 125 miles for a day ride

There are some standards for trail

ATV day ride needs 40+ miles

Motorcycle day use needs 80+ miles

Trails are too short for day hikes, need longer loop trails

VAST and cross country ski conflicts are a problem-Catamount Trail Association is hoping to separate uses-is not safe to have combined trail use

Some snowmobile speeding conflicts with cross country ski trails-need to ensure law enforcement presence, especially if add ORV users

Some people in the Green Mountain Club feel that a way to resolve conflict is to ban certain uses from the Green Mountain National Forest-one way is to ban ORV use-don't want machines and noise

Green Mountain was set up as multi-use, that is all users...heading for a lawsuit if trying to prohibit a use like ATVs...there may be problems now but if they can work things out like VAST, there should be a place for them in the system

Class I and II roads-couldn't that be a place to start looking or opportunities for ATV use?

Can't keep segregated trails given fiscal situation (fiscally impossible to establish a brand new system for 1 user group)-need to have some shared systems.

Focus on multiple use corridors with spur trails-need to include parking to accommodate large and small user footprints (ex. horses with trailers as well as hikers)

Western trail model is something to look at...trail systems need to be scaled to user needs-spread out the uses over a system-ex. motorcycle: 125 miles, ATV: 20-40 miles...2 miles is not enough for ATV use...a good ATV system would have 40+ miles-good motorcycle day stem would have 80+ miles-not limited to Forest but part of system that includes other lands as well

Self contained motorcycle trails must be greater than 80 miles, ATV must be greater than 40 miles for a single day use. A successful trail system will offer much greater mileage

New uses, ATV and motorcycles, will need longer trail sections than hikers or bicyclists

Reclaim old road beds to connect existing "go no where" roads to establish a collaborative trail system

4. Discussion of resource, wildlife and social concerns from trail usage. Ways to help limit resource damage? Wildlife concerns? How are you affected by others trail usage? For example, what benefits are provided by existing or proposed trail use?

Per review of independent hard science on impacts on resources

Construct new logging roads to allow for ATV use in the future

Too many hikers on some of the fragile soils during peak periods-may need to start a permitting system

Change for search and rescue-use enforcement changes for trails

Catamount Trail Board members are seeing winter mountain bikes and ATVs-they are chewing up cross country ski trails and causing conflicts

Allow winter motorcycling

If every trail user group would use Forest Service or national standards for trail construction, there would be little resource damage

Allow user groups to design and build their own trail system with the Forest Service-users know what kind of trail they want

User fees would help to pay for recreational opportunities-users have an obligation to help maintain trail

Would like to hear how the resources are protected with ATV use and how much time and effort and money is involved with that

Use techniques when building waterbars on logging roads to accommodate ATV use

Not in favor of a permit system but could improve signage to protect fragile areas and could use enforcement avenues to help with protection-use timber sale revenue to help with enforcement

VAST has seen some winter mountain bike and ORV use-but limited-can be compatible with snowmobiles but on slopes-can get chewed up-more of a safety issue with snowmobiles meeting ATVs on trails

Sled dogs-fun to see but could be conflict with cross country skiing-speed issues, cleaning up after dogs

VAST: has had good and bad relationship with dog sledgers-trail needs to be wide enough for users to pass without running into each other-then they are compatible uses

Places to exercise sled dogs in summer-pull ATVs in summer on low maintenance Forest Service roads-consider this need if considering sled dogs

Potential for building a system through a cooperative agreement with user groups who are willing to pay for a system-something the Forest Service should consider

Some users do make contributions to groups they belong to but lots of users don't pay anything to any groups that maintain trails-need something but NOT a permit system-at least not like the White Mountain National Forest (some way to have users contribute money to trail maintenance)

Limiting resource damage is done by partnering with users not prohibiting them and chasing them around

Wildlife and resource management should be based on peer reviewed science, not soft science sponsored by special interests-especially environmental groups

Benefits of ORV recreation include family recreation, stewardship, reduced law enforcement needs, higher compliance

General Trail Comments

Trail construction standards should use best-of-practices with high regard for use. NFS has many documents that establish guidelines for grade, soil, hydrology, etc. The "pragmatic" and often cost effective should also be considered. Over-specification will result in paralysis

Cross country ski trail standards seem to be for groomed trails not for Wilderness or backcountry ski trails. Green Mountain National Forest and national standards need to provide for these narrower, lower impact ski trails