

Hancock Plan Revision Meeting July 17, 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?

Multiple use on trails NOT working well-lots of effort on hiking and snowmobile trails or single uses but not if for or on shared trails

Local mountain bike trail and Contest Trail are kept clear by mountain bikes and enhance the hiking experience-that is working well

In Moosalamoo region, have enough trails to keep everyone happy-can barely keep on top of maintenance

VAST trail system-have been asked to keep signs up for hiking and that works. But no good trailhead parking for summer and winter use-parking lots either not big enough or don't exist

Funding-if have different groups fighting for single use funding, it doesn't go as far as if groups worked together on multi-use trails-funding would be easier to get and go further

Groups would be interested in taking on maintaining footpaths and old logging trails that are not necessarily on the system-it is an opportunity to share uses and the Forest is well-suited for this-gets people off primary systems into more wild lands

Forest Service did a good job getting the trail system established for Blueberry Lake area

Administrative study trails for mountain bikes working well-but need more mountain bike trails

Seem to be a lot of single focus trail-opportunities exist to combine uses-such as go from snowmobile to snowshoes-Green Mt. Has unique opportunity to do this

Green Mountain Club concerned about downsizing of funds for trail maintenance-concerned who will do the work

Multi use system is the way to go-out West better trailheads and bridges *combine snowmobile and horses

System would work better if we follow-up *clarity on who can use trails *Cooperation on maintaining the trails of all user groups

Some trails are on the Forest but not on the system-Blueberry Lake trails cannot be maintained if not on the system and they cannot be raised to standards if not on the system

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

Education and communication-groups need to communicate with each other to understand what each others needs are...listening forums, moderated meetings

There is conflict, but maybe not much...can occur at trailheads when they aren't large enough-especially for multiple users. Dog sledding and snowmobile may be conflict-especially at trailheads, but snowmobile trails are really beneficial to dog sledding

Conflict with dog sleds-snowmobiles have trails that go from private land-federal land-to private land, etc. Private landowners don't want sleds on their land due to insurance-VAST has insurance but sledding does not.

There are local places to visit where ATV use has been regular for 12 years where we can see what kind of resource damage exists

Conflicts between cross country skier and snowmobilers don't appear to be an issue here-sometimes conflicts are reported incorrectly-some have had good experience with sharing the system

Rochester/Bethel/Randolph-lots of cross country skiing on VAST trails, unlike up at Island Pond

There is now mountain bike use going on-preferred is on packed snowmobile trails-not much conflict with that-don't think it will significantly mess up trail or that it is a significant use (or will be)

Disperse use by creating more trails

Seeing more demand for horse use, which can be a conflict with trails (Moosalamoo)

Blood Root Mountain-conflict between snowmobilers and snowboarders

GPS-orienteeing is a new use-off trail lots of people are figuring out creative ways to use them

Multi-purpose will take away conflicts-ATVs are here to stay and need a place separate from other trails-will help lessen illegal use

ATVs should have some access from one side to the other-from Pittsfield to Rochester

Dogsled use maybe a conflict with snowmobiles from the dogsled perspective-there have been dog fatalities

Time of day and time of week separation of dogsleds and snowmobiles would help resolve the conflict

Just because ATVs are here does not mean they should be given a place-if resource damage occurs, they should not be allowed

Not a problem with cross country skiers and snowmobilers in this area-maybe because they (skiers) are getting off the trails

Look at other things coming up-gyroscope, knobby tires

Seeing snowsurfers on trails near mad River-snowboarders have been almost run into on Blood Root

Logging jobs create new trails that could be sued for newer uses to help reduce conflicts-make them into loops, not dead ends

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?

Mountain bike: even a one mile connector can help expand network-Peavine, Rochester, to Quarry road-make it a mountain bike trail-parallel 100-go over to Hancock tunnel using a snowmachine trail (Corridor 100)...new trails, nice not to have flat and straight so more enjoyable on a hiking trail than a groomed wide trail

Up Texas Falls-lots of stump dumps-would provide excellent spots for adding trailhead parking with minimal work-would provide year-round access for lots of activities, some may be iffy for snowmobiles but some are ok for larger uses. Use old log roads and use them to create a series of loop trails. Focus on opportunities for shared uses...15-20 miles is a good distance for horses-would like to ride all day plus local use-need horse trails

New trails with deficit in maintenance-will we really make new trails? Depends on partners and ability of partners to find money.

Close trails that aren't being used much or are problematic

Part of expense of snowmobile trails is overbuilding of trails. Forest Service has strict guidelines that require more expense-standards are too high or over-engineered...standards on private are less and work well.

Technology is improving that is leading to larger groomers that require larger trails and public desire for flatter and wider

ATV-most snowmobile trails are suitable for ATVs except in wet areas-30 to 40 miles are worth it for a good ride-want loops and connectors to trail system from off Forest-ways to get to Rutland and other big ATV systems

Single track mountain bike trails closer to highways and population centers-1 or 2 miles to connect to snowmobile trails and then allow mountain bikes on snowmobile trails

Many trails that folks could use have no horse signs on them

There are many new private stables coming up in the area and increased desire for use

Do a survey of the entire system-how to figure out if there are trails that are not being used-close some trails and create new trails that will be used

Many sportsmen use ATVs for sport access-hunting and fishing

Using the Forest Roads system for ATVs would be valuable

Need an east-west corridor between Pittsfield and Waitsfield-cannot do it now due to Wilderness

Need Pittsfield to Rochester trail

Forest Service should understand that it is not alone-there are other areas-town, state, university Forests-neighborhood groups can be formed-well developed path network in Mad River Valley...should be coordination with these groups with grants, etc.

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?

Multiple use trails leads to fewer trails and thus less damage

Impacts of horse use in areas not built for horse use can be a problem-one way is to stick to the old town roads-where road beds already exist

Education-will help educate users about damage created and how to mitigate

VASA and VAST-leads to lots of manpower-can work together

When trails are designated, partners can develop and grow-maintenance is limited...need but if designated will happen

Most horse use is May, June, July, and August (out of school)-eliminating spring use wouldn't really impact riders
There is a Green Mt. Mountain Bike Patrol that do first aid and some policing and education-most other groups do this as well
One person's multi-use may be a problem to someone else
Need to figure out how to hardpack horse trails to prevent erosion
Education through the Forest Service website will help reduce impacts-Don't Use Trails when Wet
Benefit is that trails create access to public so they can see animals, natural areas, etc
One thing that causes problems with ATV and snowmobiles is use in the early spring-Don't use trails during this time period. Forest Service should develop way to explain this to people
Look at what the law enforcement needs and capabilities are in the process of creating any new trails
Don't understand how we can buy more land and not have money for maintenance

5. General Comments

Questions on deferred maintenance trail inventory: 1) what percent of trails (miles) fell into each category; 2) what is the difference in and between maintenance needs in each category and maintenance budget received; 3) what are budget trends; 4) can I get results of maintenance standards surveys (conducted on the Forest)

When will spectrum runs be done? Melissa said you may not use Spectrum...what would you use instead? Will you use CISC? FIA plots? A combination of both? When will you freeze the data? What survey and updating of the records will be done beforehand? What efforts are you making to determine local economic multipliers? Will you use FEAST? What is your analysis schedule?

Purchase property SW of Warren

Allow maintenance of existing trails in Alpine Village

6. Trail Proposals

Proposed snowmobile trails were drawn on a map at the public meeting, the following comments attempt to explain where all the lines were drawn on the map!

Mount Cleveland to FR 43

From Trailhead near FR 25 to FR 50E

Add trailhead at FR 25

FR 50 to FR 207

Loop along FR 55

Add trailhead at FR 42C and at interpretive site on Brandon Gap

FR 62 to Sucker Brook