

Rutland Plan Revision Meeting July 22, 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?

Is good to have the opportunity to set up a bike trail and see this work-the bike trails are also serving as multi-use trails

Current trail emphasis on AT/LT acquisition-that should continue

More loop trails but watch where they are placed due to popularity and potential for resource damage

At more popular trails-set up kiosks for "Leave No Trace" education-in places where they can be easily seen

Cross country ski only trails-quiet use trails-would like to see more of these trails-more single track backcountry opportunities exclusively for cross country skiing

Preserve the cooperative maintenance model-partners are part of trail decision making-helps to contribute maintenance and stretch dollars

Keeping trails away from sensitive areas-for example, North and South Pond

At and LT should continue to be footpaths only-keep in new plan

May need another long distance trail-AT and LT are very popular

Need trails for equestrian use-connect dead end roads

Cross country ski could be a winter use for bike trails

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

Keep AT-LT trails for hiking only

Develop some narrow "backcountry" style loop (6-15 miles) cross country only trail systems

Look at possible hike-horse-bike-cross country ski joint use (non-motorized) for some new (or existent) trails-to accommodate bikes and horses as new users. (Or horse-bike-snowmobile combinations)

Close any unauthorized snowmobile trails that now exist-crack down on illegal use with targeted enforcement

Give careful attention to wildlife impacts of trail use and location; keep users away from sensitive areas, increased hunting pressure due to ORVs, snow compaction effect on rodents et al.

Consider and manage noise impacts of different trail uses on one another and wildlife

Mushers and snowmobiles-there are standards for how these two uses can be compatible

Conflicts not always face-to-face between uses-it can also relate to trails being used beyond their design-wear and tear...who is paying for maintenance? Resolution....VT Trails and Greenways Council-meet periodically to try and discuss these issues. Could be a model for Forest Service-get users together periodically to discuss and try to resolve conflicts

Organizations should help out with law enforcement-should be monitoring their own uses-example ATV use

Partnering with Trails and Greenways-Forest Service should have a seat at this table-good idea. Should also look at partnering more with other state-wide organizations-for information access for all recreation uses available

Website is bad-hard to find information on Green Mountain trails

Some uses have a good code of ethics built into their organizations-only build new trails if a partner/organization with a strong code of ethics is involved

Important to remember that there is always a percent of any user group that act inappropriately and break rules-they are often the source of a lot of conflicts

It is legal to drive/ride on public waterways-as long as they are navigable-they are state regulated and state allows snowmobile use

All of the organizations have to do a bunch of their own policing-there are more of the users out there than the Forest Service

Whatever trail system comes out, you need detailed accessible trail user maps. Also need contact information for users to let Forest Service know when illegal use is happening-so people who want to report this can do so quickly before things get out of control. Requires signs being posted as well

Different seasonal uses would help but opposed to exclusionary trails (single use)-should exhibit multiple use ethics in trails-educate people that trails will be shared

There need to be some trails that are single use (just for hikers)

Current rules we now have are not enforced-ex. motorized vehicles on hiking trails, better law enforcement would help resolve conflicts

Every trail cannot accept every activity-should use trails to fullest use

Minimize some conflicts through intelligent trail design: for example, Branch pond situation-trail too close to pond. Also crossings of hiking trail being crossed by mountain bikes-don't cross where there is visually a gorgeous single track trail at crossing-too tempting

Mountain bike group very carefully sign AT/LT as "no mountain bikes" to prevent illegal use at Stratton Pond off of IP Road

Access can encourage use of snowmobiles on ponds but it is legal

Are there problems with commercial groups or large user groups-they need a permit. Insurance costs for providers of recreation has quadrupled-

Forest Service requires insurance

Forest Service should have better and more law enforcement

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?

Seasonal use option would be good for ATVs-Class I and II roads act like trails anyway-use in places where ATV use could be appropriate

ATV use should not be allowed on the Forest_Forest Service should look at impacts and evaluate if they really are compatible-not just with trails but with run-off problems in streams, law-enforcement

Consider motorized access (ATV) impacts to wildlife and effects on hunting opportunities...also erosion and soil impacts may be greater than other uses

ATV trails should be well thought through-standards come from out West-here rainfall and soils are really different-ironically the best places to ride may not be where the least damage occurs...need to consider also the "irresistible" places out there-needs very thoughtful design to avoid leading riders to incompatible places

Horse use: loop (6-15 miles) range for a day ride for a small or large group. Looking more for a ride-doesn't need to be a destination-look to existing roads and connection between roads-needs to be suitable soils...potential conflicts with bikers due to bikers being quiet-more conflict than with louder uses which you can hear coming...season: summer and fall-avoid hunting season; saddle ride more than pack string

ATVs are a lot quieter than snowmobiles and they can go slower...depending on soils, some sites can take ATVs going up steep areas-site specific.

Should be allowed on designated trails-especially for people who are disabled. Two areas to consider: FR 85-372-313 (Sunderland/Gastebury) and FR 266-391-393 (Lamb Brook/Readsboro)-all can accommodate ATVs

Talk to VASA about trail lengths

How do ATVs differ from snowmobile use in the winter? Forest Service needs to evaluate this in the DEIS

Had experience with ATVs on private lands-had to stop because it was tearing land up-especially in steep areas, should allow in places that are not steep and design trails correctly

Agree on need to have a plan for ATV use that limits damage-and there needs to be a group to work with ATVers on responsible use

Looking for viewscapes for horse trails-possible camping areas...summer and fall most likely times for use. Some trails tend to be muddy, should deal with drainage issues-hikers not really a problem

If strategically placed, erosion on ATV trails should not be a problem-At/LT has erosion problems and trails keep getting relocated

Do not really need to be creating new trails-just need to chose the appropriate existing trails or logging roads

Is snow mountain bike use a new trend? Use of the IP Road is only from April-November-would have liked year-round but snowmobilers were

concerned about conflicts...snowmobiles are loud enough that it would not have been any more problem than it is to cross country skiers...changes in technology is making winter biking easier

ATVs don't bother wildlife much

One of the downfalls of VANR is they have not defined other uses on state land (ex. rock climbing) so do not allow uses. Forest Service should do an inventory of possible uses so that we address all uses in the plan

Mountain bikes-loops are good 2/3 to 10 mile loops-use is mostly 1/2 day activity-nice to have mix of easy and technically challenging...most snowmobile trails have a good mix of conditions for bikers (steep, flat, rolling)

Not opposed to ATV use on Forest-ATV community could gain friends if they work with other user groups and intelligently design trails so they are accessible to other users

ATV use is happening on Forest in the summer because VAST uses them for trail maintenance under their agreement with the Forest Service (administrative use)-but trails must be ok for ATV use if that use is happening now

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?

Wildlife love trails

Don't trails provide access for predators preying on species and for cowbirds to nest predate? Consider impacts of winter access for predators

Traditional uses should be maintained on newly acquired lands-motorized access is important, especially with rescue squads

Quiet users are not necessarily benign-need to stay away from sensitive areas where even non-motorized users can disrupt wildlife

Fumes from snowmobiles-health issue for those sharing the trails

Pay attention to impacts of incremental increases in the trail system-especially snowmobile trails-width of the trails-"beaver gene"-adding on to and improving existing systems-Forest Service should periodically evaluate this

If loggers could think of the other uses that could occur there, log roads could be designed to accommodate other users and there would be less conflicts

Logging roads-loggers only have a 50% say on the roads-Forest Service also involved

Interactive trails-log roads could be a big part of that-opportunities for interpretive rails

Please don't close any trails or any roads

Wildlife loves trails up at Michigan Brook-they are moose highways-use the trails in the winter

Would like to see some attention paid to noise-Forest Service has policies around scenic management but does not have noise management policies

Do not think winter trails should go anywhere near deer wintering areas-skiers have dogs that stress out the deer

As noise concerns are addresses-may make vehicles too quiet-n waning to other users

Create a forum for trail maintainers to talk to timber harvesters before harvests-harvests have some benefits for trails

Could be a lot more vistas on trails-do not have enough vistas now

Great percentage of existing VAST trails are from logging-trails are not the reason to log-timber harvesting is

Would like to see noise management raised up in the Plan Revision process...noise sheds-experience for which one goes to the Forest can be ruined by loud, close noises

5. General Comments

I oppose use of ORVs in the Green Mountain National Forest. ORV users, not all but enough and over a wide enough area to convince me, have shown themselves to be irresponsible in their treatment of the land. I have seen where they have turned wet trails into mud holes, cut shrubs and trees to circumvent gates, and created multiple intertwining trails where no authorized trail existed. The vegetation damage, soil erosion and compaction, noise, and exhaust odors they leave behind are inexcusable. They negatively impact natural resource values and reduce recreation values for other legitimate Forest users. I expect, but offer no proof, their use disrupts wildlife activities. I am convinced an ATV users club would not be able to speak for, much less control, ATV users in the GMNF. Legalized ATV use in the GMNF will bring even more use and more problems than the current illegal ATV use of the Forest.