

Minutes – Seeley Lake Trails Advisory Council Meeting

October 17, 2016 – 5-8:30 pm, The Hub, Seeley Lake, MT

Decisions Made:

- Auguste Lockwood (mountain bikers) and Rob Loveman (mushers/back country skiers) are now voting members; The Nature Conservancy has decided to abstain from voting like the other large land managers.
- A Recruitment Plan will be coordinated by the Public Engagement Committee and involve personal outreach, a Pathfinder announcement, and a Trails Facebook Page to recruit more community representatives to the Council before January.
- The landscape definition of this planning effort remains as it is emphasizing planning in the Clearwater Watershed, plus Woodworth Road area and coordinating with other groups outside the watershed.
- The public engagement process was passed as described in the Proposed Approach. The details of the voting process (target audience, electronic/paper and time) will be worked out with the Public Engagement committee.
- The wish list of proposed trail ideas that Cathy has received from people in this group and others will not go out to the Council members until the public comment period commences, with a big disclaimer. Until then, Cathy will keep the list to herself.
- Tribal and Cultural Issues was added a new Evaluation Criteria.

Action Items:

Jennifer will update the charter to state that a decision is made when all voting members hold up three or more fingers.

Jennifer will update the charter and proposed approach to explain the steps between planning and implementation for the agencies, for example NEPA on federal lands.

All committees will meet before the next Advisory Council meeting to discuss their responsibilities and a timeline for their work. CRC will help set up the first meeting.

Attending:

Jan Guelff, Jennifer Arnold, Ken Kronsperger, Bill Wall, Kristen Baker-Dickinson, Auguste Lockwood, Dave Sharbono, Chris Bryant, Lee Boman, Ron Cox, Andy Baur, Vickie Edwards, Scott Eggeman, Cathy Kahnle, Rob Loveman, Rachel Feigley, Mark Williams and Jenny Rohrer, notetaker. Missing was Anne Beach, Ken Barber, Carol Fulton, Kathleen Dent, Larry Dent, Curt Friede and Chris Stout.

Announcements:

- Lee invited people to help put the ski yurt up on Monday, October 24-26. Andy Baur said that another meeting of the 'Trails Summit' group will be held in later February/March of 2017 in Lincoln.
- Bill thanked the group for submitting letters of support for our potential application to the State of Montana Big Sky Trust Fund through BREDD – the Bitterroot Economic Development Group.

- Rachel said she wants to have an open discussion about the Wish List that Cathy sent out and discuss where that fits into this planning process. Cathy mentioned that this is a completely unvetted list gathered widely from people in this room and a few others at the July trails event – but hasn't yet been subjected to the Evaluation Criteria. Chris Bryant and Kristin Baker-Dickenson also expressed uneasiness about the possibility of the list going out and raising unrealistic expectations (*more discussion about this later in the meeting*).
- Chris B. thanked Kristin and Rachel and others for playing music at the Tupper Lake event. Chris also stated that Auguste Lockwood is working on building a groomer for Fat Bike trails and TNC may be putting some trial trails out using that groomer.
- Vickie reported on the trail going from the community to Big Larch – Five Valleys Land Trust is still working on alternate easements to make it work. Montana Mountain Mushers are having a skijoring event in Seeley Lake on January 7-8.

A) Finalize the Charter:

There was general discussion about the requested changes to the charter (see handout). The group confirmed that they would like to be called the Seeley Lake Trails Advisory Council, not Committee.

We discussed three main topics in some detail: 1) Who is a decision maker? 2) What are the geographic boundaries? and 3) Clarify proposed committees, responsibilities and sign-ups.

1) Who is a decision maker? Jennifer reviewed who is a decision maker on the Advisory Council (AC) and that the Advisory Council needs minimally six voting members to make a decision. All land managers currently have chosen to be non-voting members. Previously, The Nature Conservancy chose to be voting member, but Chris Bryant stated that The Nature Conservancy will be a non-voting member because they want this process to be owned by the community. Jennifer described the consensus decision making process using the 'fist to five' process. She noticed there is a sentence missing in the charter that says a decision is made when all members show 3 or more fingers, which is how the group has been making decisions – she will correct this omission in the charter. The Advisory Council has previously made decisions about geographic scope and evaluation criteria, and tonight we'll explore the public engagement process. Jennifer stated that it is best if we work with a core group that is committed from 'start to finish'. If representation from some groups is important to the success of the final plan, then we might want to set up some goals for recruitment. Chris B. asked Jennifer to clarify how the land managers have the 'option' to vote. Jennifer responded that the AC encouraged the large land managers to be voting members, but most land managers thought it would best *not* to vote. Jennifer emphasized that this group will listen carefully to the concerns of the large land managers even though they are not voting members. Current decision makers at the meeting are Jan Guelff, Ken Kronsperger, Dave Sharbono, Lee Boman and Mark Williams.

Ken K. moved that people who represent new categories come on as voting members – such as Rob for Mushers, Auguste for Mountain Bikers, and Ron for the SLCommunity Council.

The motion passed. Although there were only 5 voting members after The Nature Conservancy decided to abstain, which is just short of the 6 members needed to make a decision, we decided to move forward with a consensus decision since there has been strong interest from the Council in all past meetings to get more community member representatives. Auguste and Rob agreed, while Ron chose to be a volunteer and not a voting member on the AC at the moment.

The group brainstormed a list of community groups they would like to be involved in this planning effort: backcountry horsemen, outfitters, hunters, fishermen, backcountry and yurt skiers, students and families, the U of M recreation program, SL elementary school Woodworth Road area, lodging providers, Place Lake area (Fultons), Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe. Below are some suggestions for recruitment.

Jan Guelff has called the Backcountry Horsemen in the Bitterroot to ask them to become involved. Our representative for local outfitters is Jack Rich who is being updated regularly by Jan Guelff. Dave Sharbono is no longer a member of the Driftriders, so we need a new Driftriders representative.

Both hunters and fishermen are unrepresented. Lee mentioned that we need to be careful to include the activities that tourists and recreationalists come to Seeley seeking, i.e. we need to give a voice to our customers. Mark brought up that we need to find someone to represent not only the cross country skiers who are represented by ROCKS but back country and yurt skiers. We need to include the high school students who recreate and their families. Scott suggested that we consider the recreation program from the university. Lee mentioned that perhaps we could get someone from SLE besides Chris to represent that program (Bridget Laird). How about citizens in the Woodworth Road area – potentially Rob Henrekin. We need representation from the Lodging community: the Tamaracks, the Lodges, Double Arrow. We need to seek representation from significant tribal areas (Vickie will talk to Pelah at 5 Valleys Land Trust. We need to contact Germaine White from CSKT), or if tribes do not want to participate in the Advisory Council, we need to make sure that we specifically reach out to them to hear their concerns and interests during the planning process.

Jennifer Arnold emphasized that new Advisory Council members need to be willing to participate in monthly meetings and contribute to work in between the meetings, and if they aren't able to commit on that level, they could then participate as volunteers in committees. Jennifer said we should try to nail down new members before January when the public process begins. Rachel suggested we send out a message to the community through some public media, i.e. through the Pathfinder. Rob Loveman will reach out to SLE (Bridget) and Rob Henrekin. Rob will also represent the back country skiers. Lee asked should we build our trails based on the % of what recreation is used based on available statistics. Rachel emphasized that we will have decision criteria, and those decisions will rest with the community – do they want to be a quiet mountain gateway, a place for ATV rallies, etc. Vickie emphasized for this plan to be successful, we need the community buy-in.

Recruitment Plan: This will be coordinated by the Public Engagement Committee and

involve personal outreach, a Pathfinder announcement, a Trails Facebook Page. **This action plan was approved by consensus.**

2) What are the geographic boundaries? Anne, Mark and Lee suggested that we shouldn't confine ourselves to the Clearwater drainage – but should match the recreation area which extends beyond the Clearwater drainage. Jan mentioned that the charter now states that we update the charter annually – that might take care of that question since the geographic area could be expanded in the future. Cathy mentioned that there are people in these other areas planning trails, etc., and we don't want to step on their toes. Dave stated that we should concentrate on what we have now – we have a lot to do here in the Clearwater. Proposed is to leave the landscape definition as it is now emphasizing planning in the Clearwater Watershed, plus Woodworth and coordinating with other groups outside the watershed. **All votes were 3-5 fingers and passed.**

Other comments on the charter:

Lee asked how do we recognize, incorporate, partner and account for other trails planning efforts like SeeleyROCKS? Jennifer said that we should add language to that effect in the charter, mentioning specifically other Trail Advocacy groups doing trail planning efforts. Auguste mentioned a mountain bike trail effort that could also be included. **This passed.**

Rachel stated that she wants to have language added that more adequately explains the steps between planning and implementation for the agencies so people are realistic about what can be accomplished and the time line. Cathy agreed that this is important and what we've been talking about all along, but that it's not written specifically in these documents. Jennifer said she will add this language in the charter and proposed approach. Kristin mentioned that the public process should emphasize the reality of the current extensive infrastructure, authorized uses and trail conditions when asking people for their ideas.

3) Clarify Proposed Committees, Responsibilities and Signups:

Jennifer described the roles of each committee. Cathy mentioned that there will be a CRC person that works with each committee, who will contact each person who signed up, and set a date to get started on the work before the next meeting.

Jennifer said that the AC will continue to work monthly, but the committees will takeoff and work on their tasks, will be aware of what the other committees are working on and report to this committee.

Vickie said it's difficult to commit a lot of Five Valleys time to the Ground Crew committee. They are working on the Big Larch trail and may step away for a bit – but will become more active when rights-of-way and easement become a priority for the AC to work on. Also, Jon Haufler and Scott Yates from EMRI will be a resource to the technical group. Bill Wall will be facilitating that connection. Andy Bauer will join the Ground Crew Committee. Dave Sharbono will join public engagement. (Full committee list is an attachment)

B) Proposed Approach for a Recreational Trail Master Plan.

Deliverables: 1) Recreational Trails Plan, 2) Funding Options, 3) Trails Marketing Strategy. Rachel mentioned that we need to add language that explains steps between planning and implementation for agencies, etc.

Timeline: August 2016-February 2018 (12-18 months)

C.) Public Engagement Process: These are the steps agreed upon for this process:

Advisory Council preps maps and materials

Evening meeting to launch public process in January 2017

Open public comment period

Outreach to businesses & non-profits (January – April 2017)

Council to develop trails options from input and compare using evaluation criteria

Evening meeting to present trail options (July 2017) and explain voting preferences

Public 3-day voting process – both electronic & paper (or some other way to define the voting period)

Council to describe preferred option and develop plan

Present final plan to the public (October 2017)

Andy asked how do we define 'public' re: do we solicit input from people outside the area, and if so, who votes? Bill emphasized that voting is for guidance only. Rob asked if the voting process should be 3-days or should there be a series of public votes. Cathy based the 3-day voting window on the successful model created for the traffic study in Seeley Lake.

Dave mentioned that we need to be cautious about overloaded input from certain constituencies. Should we do it only on paper or fill in your name and zipcode? These are details that we can work out in the Public Engagement committee as long as people agree with the overall approach.

This public engagement approach was passed with all 4 and 5 finger counts.

Rob mentioned that we could ask people to submit ideas on Facebook and have the admin manage the list to eliminate that which should be eliminated – but this openness avoids the perception that there is anything that is predetermined. Discussion took place that the current 'wish list' is entirely unvetted – and people should be cautious about their assumptions – certain suggestions could be entirely unrealistic. We agreed that we need a well-written disclaimer for the wish list.

Discussion ensued re: should we pass out the preliminary wish list? Cathy asked Rachel and Kristin if they are comfortable with the lists being passed out tonight? It was pointed out that we could be specific that this wish list is completely unvetted. Jennifer suggested that we hand them out tonight, collect them, and then add a heavy disclaimer plus the criteria for distribution. Dave proposed that we pass the hard copy out to the AC members and then collect them at the end of the meeting. Rob Loveman suggested that we make it electronic

and add the BIG disclaimer and summary of the criteria for decision making. Bill Wall stated that he's convinced by the Agency's arguments that the list shouldn't go out, but it should be provided to the technical committee. Lee proposed that the list not go out until the public comment period. After much discussion about the integrity of a transparent public process, the group decided that there was no need to see the list before the public process begins. At that point it will be helpful for Council members to understand the list so that they can be informed as they answer people's questions. **Lee's proposal was passed by consensus – the list will not go out to the Advisory Council members until the public comment period commences, with a big disclaimer.** Until then, Cathy will keep the list to herself.

D). Evaluation Criteria:

Quality

Partnerships – including overlapping user groups

Feasibility

Sustainability

Liability

Economic Impact

Environmental Issues

Education

Tribal & Cultural Issues (**this criteria was proposed by Bill and passed by consensus**)

Bill will take on Tribal Cultural Issues and reaching out to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

The AC broke into two-person groups to answer the following questions for each evaluation criteria – What questions would you ask to compare trail options relative to this criteria? And time permitting, What information would you need to answer your questions? These are the notes from that short session.

Quality: (Andy and Vickie)

What are the views from the trail. Are views maximized?

Is the trail built to meet the needs of the intended user group (and avoid conflict)?

Does the trail system accommodate different abilities (i.e. family friendly)?

Does the system disperse users to avoid conflict and allow for solitude?

Does the trail provide a dramatic destination point?

Are there opportunities to view wildlife?

Partnerships – including overlapping user groups (Lee, Scott & Ron)

Which user groups is the trail appropriate for?

Do these user groups have capacity to implement?

Are they organized. Do they have funding? Are they knowledgeable? Have people power? Equipment?

Do they respect rules? Are they committed?

Feasibility (Jan and Kristin)

Terrain

New versus existing

Need for license or easement
Long-term implications – i.e. maintenance
Use-type or amount. Possible conflicts
Land Ownership – private, different agencies?
Cost
Regulations – county specifications, environmental constraints
Current or needed access to trail
Public interest

Sustainability (Rachel and Ken K)

What questions would you ask?

Do you have a plan for funding for maintenance?
Are there partnerships available?
How much use will the trail receive?
Are user conflicts resolved?
Does it meet the needs of the user group, e.g. ADA compliant?
What is the quality of the experience?
What is a manageable trail system and how is it distributed across ownerships?

What information is need to answer those questions?

grant opportunities
funding mechanisms
who uses the trail, trail suitability
ADA compliant guidelines & review
what are the trail amenities (loop, view, destination, condition good, etc.)
partnership interest,
capacity of agencies

Liability: (Cathy & Rob)

What questions would you ask?

How dangerous is it?
Who's likely to use it?
Do you need insurance/can we be sued?
Do we need easements? Special use permits? What types?
What type of use?
Disclaimers needed – expectation vs. reality – non-alignment, e.g., are they going to expect it to be perfectly maintained vs. the reality of how trails age over time.
How accessible is the trail?

Information Needed:

Trail condition
Type of use
Level of technical difficulty
Analysis of legal issues involved in trail use
Types of permits required re: each land manager
Who 'owns' the land?

Economic Impact: (Jenny & Mark)

How can we develop trails usage to emphasize non-peak seasons?
Some users are not big spenders. How do we develop facilities to enable economic gains – yurt systems,

more lodging, accommodate skiers and bikers on major tours? Other user groups?
How do we capture Seeley Lake as a destination for tourists who pass through seeking trails?
How do we expand and create synergy to bring in tour partners, partner with Ovando and Condon opportunities, create a Mountain Bike Camp? Use Camp Paxson more fully Fall and Spring?
Develop SnoCat tours like in Yellowstone for a non-sking user group?

Environmental Issues: (Bill & Chris)

Are there water quality, sensitive species or season habitat issues, etc...(regulatory issues?)
Can user groups help solve environmental issues (weeds, habitat enhancement, building coalitions)?
Consulting with agencies, best available science, local knowledge.

Education: (Dave & Auguste)

User group information
School children emphasis
Tread lightly
User classes
Safety
Historical & Tribal significance

Tribal & Cultural Issues

(this was a new category and not assigned to a subgroup)

Closing Announcements:

Cathy mentioned that Ron Cox sent around an email about the Community Council "Connecting the Community" Trails group. Ron stated that in January that the Community Council committee has to decide how it will proceed, i.e. the Council is questioning whether it's even appropriate for the SLCC to work on Trails. Ken K. sent Cathy K an interesting article about the high percentage of Americans (1/3) actually have disabilities!

The meeting was adjourned by 8:35 pm. AC members will be contacted for committee meetings to happen before the November AC Meeting.