

Seeley Lake Trails Project Minutes – June 23, 2016 Meeting 5:00 PM, SLE Outside

The meeting was called to order by Cathy Kahnle at 5:12. In attendance were: Bill Wall, Anne Beach, Mark Williams, Dave Sharbono, Zach Porter, Jan Guelff, Jeremy Watkins, Katie Knotek, Ken Barber, Kurt Friede, Lee Boman, Lisa Moisey, Rachel Feigley, Rob Loveman. Joann Wallenburn, recording.

Jeremy Watkins will be coming on board as the Trails Supervisor for the Seeley Lake Ranger District on July 11.

Announcements:

- The Nature Conservancy is holding their 2nd annual celebration of the Clearwater-Blackfoot Project with Revive & Thrive Work Party & Celebration, Sunday July 24, 2016 at Tupper's Lake from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. Approximately 30 volunteers are needed!
- Cathy passed around a survey from Jennifer Arnold about the training sessions.
- Bill Wall announced that of the \$28,000 requested in the Rural Business Development Grant application, \$21,000 has been offered. There are still some hurdles left, including match.
- The Clearwater Resource Council is holding their annual picnic at Camp Paxson on July 10th from 3-7 pm.
 - Titled Celebrate the Clearwater: Trails for Everyone, the event includes presentations by Russ Ehness of the National Off Highway Vehicle Conservation Council and Heidi Von Everen of The Whitefish Trail.
 - There will be a free cookout, silent auction and a kayak is being raffled off. All proceeds will to the Trails Project. Raffle tickets may be purchased in advance. You need not be present to win.
 - There will be space available for organizations to have booths. Currently DNRC, the ATV club, SLROCKS, and USFS have signed up to have a booth. Hoping to showcase what's available in Seeley Lake.
 - Jenny Rohrer's cameraman has volunteered his time to film interviews with individuals at the event.
 - Jenny emailed posters. Please share and forward.
- The July trails meeting will be the CRC event.
- The Bob Marshall Music Festival will be held July 15 and 16. There are 21 bands at 3 stages throughout town. The event includes running, biking, and paddleboard races; food, camping, beer garden, kids activities. Volunteers are needed. Anne Beach is coordinating vendors and booths.

- Katie Knotek announced there are two full trail crews getting trails opened. The BMW website has a link of trails opened and there is now an information board available 24/7 outside the Ranger Station. She will send updates to Cathy who will forward it to everyone.
- Anne Beach announced that the Montana Alternative Transportation Grant 2017-18 funding cycle applications will be out in about a month. There is \$4,000,000 available; 10% is required for maintenance.
- Anne Beach announced that there is an effort to update photos on the visitmontana.com website. Please visit the website and offer appropriate photos that you may have. Juan de Santa Anna has offered his photos.
- Zach Porter announced that the Governor has launched a huge public lands initiative and created an office of outdoor recreation. This will create new opportunities to further work similar to this group.

Lisa Moisey: Missoula County Parks & Trails Program Manager

Ms. Moisey attended to provide information about the Missoula County Trails Bond Program. She referred everyone to a video on the Missoula County website (search Trail Bond Program) created by John Stegmaier. The county has \$3,000,000 for trails projects that are still available. No applications have been submitted thus far. The bond covers 20% and was set up to serve as match for other grants. The Transportation Alternative grant requires a 13.4% match. Some criteria for use of bond funds:

- Connecting communities
- Connecting a community to adjacent public lands
- Connectivity within a community (e.g. paths to bike to school)

The land manager must sign off on any project for consideration for bond funds.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has a recreational trails program suitable for smaller projects. This program requires a 20% match and does fund trail maintenance, not just new trails.

Anne Beach asked how unincorporated communities in Missoula County raise matching funds to qualify for bond funding.

Zach Porter presented, representing the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Project (BCSP).

Mr. Porter opened with the statement that the goals of the BCSP align closely with the trails project group; believing that trails will help bring long-term economic success. The BCSP wants to sustain the economy and the environment into the future. The BCSP was formed out of an effort by the Montana Wilderness Association (MWA) and the DriftRiders that resulted in an amendment to the Forest Plan in 2006 to allowing snowmobiling in the Elsin Basins. The DriftRiders pledged support of wilderness in the West Fork of the

Clearwater. Other stakeholders came on board, creating the BCSP. It is a model of collaboration and led to this area being part of the Southwest Crown of the Continent Collaborative (SWCC). The goals are to:

- Support the local economy
- Retain community values
 - Timber and restoration
 - Lolo Forest Plan: identified 3 areas to be added to wilderness, but requires an act of Congress
 - Recreation

They have proposed a 2 year study of recreational opportunities in the Seeley Lake district. In 2009, Senator Tester introduced the Forest Restoration and Jobs Act. It has been introduced to Congress three times. Current action is to reduce it to just the local project and put it forward. It needs our support, from individuals, businesses, and organizations. They would like our group to endorse the project.

Dave Sharbono asked where logging will happen. Answer: currently roadless areas will remain roadless, with no logging. Areas designated as *suitable harvest* may be logged.

Bill Wall commented that the SWCC is the gold standard for collaboration and the lessons learned have gone all the way to Congress, e.g. simplifying NEPA. This group can help define the proposed study, and can help inform the process with our process.

Cathy Kahnle asked if there is a more effective way for the Trails Group to communicate with BCSP. Zach suggested she attend their next meeting.

Lee Boman, Seeley Lake ROCKS (regional outdoor center for kinetic sports)

SLROCKS began almost 7 years ago. The initial goals were to increase local sales in winter month and help decrease childhood obesity by getting kids outdoors. The first project was to get cross-country skis for every 4th grader. This led to the Thursday afterschool ski program and has expanded into supporting a ski team as well. Lincoln is following SLE's example. Last year the yurt was added.

SLROCKS had a feasibility study done to answer the question, "Can S.L. become a regional destination for Nordic skiing?" Answer: YES

1. Adjacent to Missoula (commercial airport)
2. Suitable terrain, due to historic glaciers

3. Snow: varies each year, but should always be better than our nearest competitor sites
4. Homologated: our terrain supports the standards to be homologated. Only 6 courses in the US are homologated.
5. Elevation: 4000-6000' is ideal. We're in there.
6. Community support and strong volunteer base.

Homologate: to sanction or certify. Olympic and international competition courses are homologated to ensure similar competition standards.

An economic study concluded that 30,000 visits would generate \$4.2 million and create 86 jobs. We currently have 20,000 snowmobile visits per year.

The Fawn Creek area was identified as most suitable for an homologated Nordic ski area. It will also be spectator friendly. The ski area trails will be usable year-round for other activities such as hiking and biking.

General Meeting Issues and Comments

A Big Sky Trust Fund grant can be used to create a Master Plan.

Cathy Kahnle requested feedback on what kind of trails each group is interested in. "What is your dream list of trails?"

At future meetings, we will start looking at actual on ground trails and how it fits the criteria we developed at the last training session.

BLM is revamping its entire program and is asking about the desires for motorized trails. They have suggested a 200 acre ATV park. They are also revamping grazing policies.

Cathy sent out a revised charter and updated the names of the advisory group. The revisions also talk about who the decision makers are.

Please email Cathy with any comments. Next meeting is the Celebrate the Clearwater. The August meeting will focus on the charter.

We need to create some subcommittees:

- Ground crew
- Fundraising/crowd sourcing
- Economic development
- GIS and trails suitability

Volunteers for the subcommittees are needed. Please contact Cathy to state which committee you will be able to participate in.

We need to expand our collaboration with other groups. That will be easier now that we have some funding.

Also, if anyone will be coming from Missoula, please let us know if you are willing to participate in a car pool. We have some people interested in coming from Missoula.

Meeting adjourned.

Attachments:

Revive & Thrive poster

Seeley Lake Community Trainings survey form (If you haven't submitted one, please do)

CRC Celebrate the Clearwater poster

Trails Bond Program: Fact Sheet

BCSP: Investing in our Montana Backyard poster

BCSP: List of Supporters

BCSP: Article from the Independent Record