

Minutes – Trails Meeting, November 21, 2016

Present were Rob Loveman, Bill Wall, Curt Friede, Steve Kloetzel, Mark Williams, Lee Boman, Dave Sharbono, Jon Haufler, Cathy Kahnle, Ken Kronsperger, Katie Knotek, Rachel Feigley and Jenny Rohrer, notetaker, plus Kathleen and Larry Dent via Skype.

NOTE: The next Trails Project meeting will be Monday, January 9, 5 pm at The Hub.

Announcements:

On January 7-8, the Montana Mountain Mushers are promoting a 'fun weekend' during the Pond Hockey Tournament at the Seeley Trail Head.

On February 3-4 – Peter Hale race will be at Rich Ranch – Friday night will feature educational & fun things and the race will be on Saturday

Curt said that Glacier Country Tourism is providing the new Warren Miller feature ski movie to show in the community – no date is set. Hopefully it will be screened at Brian and Kerry's Eagle's Nest airplane hanger. Seeley Lake is prominently featured in it: the film features alpine, downhill, snowmobiling.

Seeley Ranger district is having an Open House at the Ranger Station on December 15 from 4-6 pm. Refreshments and drinks will be served.

Dropbox:

Cathy mentioned that we've created a Trails Project Dropbox where we have deposited the charter and other documents of note. The AC decided that we want to have the charter and minutes publicly available for anyone to access, but after some discussion, the AC decided to have them posted on the CRC website's Trail's section (www.crcmt.org). Rob mentioned that we put the documents on Facebook as well as the website. We can also offer hard copies upon request. Kathleen mentioned that it's wise to drive traffic from the FB to the website and to provide links from the FB to the website. Kathleen recommended Googledocs as another good site for sharing documents for the Trails project.

Mapping Sample:

We went over the sample GIS map that Scott forwarded – at this link:
<http://mdt.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=62dc636a51374c789b1a55dd3db23a99>

By phone, Scott described the base maps and how to manipulate different overlays – topographic or summer trails versus ski trails or snow machine trails. A layer could represent ownership, or trails usage. Ownership would have to be an overlap. These base maps are created by ESRI, available on line.

Dave asked how detailed will the maps be re: distance. We can add information in the info box – re: motorized, non-motorized. We can put a different color for each trail status and also can designate trails with more than one use. Bill suggested that each of us play with the demo map – and Cathy will send out the link so everyone can access it (see link above in the

minutes).

We discussed briefly the criteria for maps, Katie says that a hiking trail can be 18” wide, plus the clearing width. On this website – the purple trails are USFS trails. Bill mentioned that we have a limited amount of money and we have to focus Scott on what we really need for our Trails.

Committee Reports:

Public Engagement Committee:

Jenny reported that Public Engagement Committee members took specific assignments to seek out other AC members, we created a Pathfinder ad and a “Trail Lovers Wanted” notice.

NOTE: the Public meeting originally set for January 28 is now on February 25!

Lee mentioned that the survey should ask what people currently like about the existing trails. Katie mentioned that most of the USFS rails are set up for both hiking and pack horses. Mountain bikes can use the trails – but they aren't specifically designed for mountain bikes. People emphasized that it's a great community service to amplify appreciation about the number and quality of trails that we currently have. Katie also said that the public needs to know that some trails are 'user created trails' and not maintained by USFS.

Technical Committee:

The technical committee is in the data gathering phase, setting up meetings with land managers to talk about their data, how to share it – and what the sensitive areas are within the landscape, and what's possible and not possible out there. Then we need to acquire that data and get it to Scott – who is very skilled at integrating the data. We need to develop summer and winter maps, and get those back through the agencies who will evaluate that data, and then get those revisions into the base map to make them ready to do the public engagement process. We also need to considering integrating user created GPS files (mountain bikers, etc). Bill mentioned that there are system trails and non-system trails – which is a USFS term. A USFS System trail has a USFS number and a specific use. By contrast to a user-created trail is non-managed recreation. USFS doesn't want these trails to be signed, which creates an expectation on the USFS. Cathy asked if a user created trail can be converted to a system trail. Rachel cautioned doing this, but mentioned that a positive example of when a user group had offered to 'maintain' a specific trail for the Forest Service it can work out - the positive examples are the Driftriders and someone else who contract with the USFS. Please remember, the USFS budget has been reduced 7% for trail maintenance and will continue to be reduced. Rachel asked the Advisory Committee: who are we building this Trail System for? For instance, if it is for the local community, they don't need such well-marked trails. But if we are marketing the Trails Project for visitors – the signage is much more important. Rachel thought the USFS could respond to the data requests from the Technical Committee quickly enough to keep the January 28 Public Meeting.

Technical committee decided that they won't provide a set of maps of existing trails unless and until they are ready. Cathy mentioned that we want to show the public meeting that we have an existing system, and have a means to draw ideas from the public about where they 'want to play'. Jo clarified that we hope to have an integrated map of currently available trails that have been vetted by the land managers. Katie mentioned that at that first public meeting, we want to clear about the limits of our expectations. Jennifer Arnold is creating a survey to

be used in the January meeting and on-line, and the content of the survey will be available for review and comments by the Advisory Committee prior to use.

Economic Development and Trails Marketing:

The Economic Development and Trails Marketing (EDTM) committee reported that they discussed merging with the Seeley Lake Community Foundation's committee of the same purpose and that the SLCF is also positive about a merger. However, the Trails EDTM committee will proceed to implement a survey of the businesses, and is mindful of the need, as Bill reminded the AC, to create a distinct marketing strategy as a deliverable for the grant.

We briefly discussed whether the SLTrails Project would want to incorporate the Community Council's Connecting the Community Trails Committee into our work. Rachel mentioned it is a good opportunity for the SLTP to build these community trails into our process – most of them are on USFS land and we could market those trails in cooperation with agencies. Cathy mentioned that the Connecting the Community Trails funding is restricted and must go to trails maintenance. Such would could involve work on the Seth Diamond trail, and trails by Gus the Larch could be made winter trails, or further work on the nature trail with Bridge Laird at Big Larch.

Ground Crew:

Katie provided the booklet (Trails Construction and Maintenance Notebook) from USFS about how they build and maintain trails – and they do training for that purpose. Katie said the Forest Service would work with us to provide training for our group as well (design standards, etc). For instance, saw work requires saw training. Cathy clarified that we want to have an understanding about trail clearing and maintenance in the event we have low hanging fruit options that become available soon, or we have the chance to work with other groups on trails.

Cathy has a copy of a DVD about building Mountain Biking trails. Andy B. said IMBA has a crew that helps train people on Mountain Biking trail maintenance. Cathy contacted Russ Ehnes, from National Off Highway Vehicle Association, and they have fabulous materials about trail use, trail learning, kids booklets on trail etiquette.

Katie asked what role is the ground crew playing now – isn't it too early to be learning about trail maintenance and signing? Cathy said it's more about educating the public at this point, and sharing these concepts with the community. Discussion was held about how much detail regarding the constraints and uses of the public lands we need to present at the Jan. 28 meeting. Rather than getting into detail about these issues, the January 28 meeting could present a cautionary overview.

Next Steps to Launch the Public Process:

Rob mentioned that the survey's should be circulated to the whole AC committee. Cathy described the tentative plans for this First public meeting.

Next SL Trails Project Advisory Committee Meeting:

Monday, January 9, 5 pm at The Hub