

State Trail Administrators Training Workshop

September 19-20, 2003

Radisson Hotel City Centre, 31 West Ohio St, Indianapolis IN 46204, 317-635-2000

Organized by the National Association of State Trail Administrators and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

NH: Chris Gamache said New Hampshire just purchased an easement for 180,000 acres of land in Northern New Hampshire. New Hampshire manages 700 miles of OHV trails as well as trails for all other uses. Grants start next month.

Combining Funds

Some States combine funds from various programs to provide trail funding. Some States mix and match RTP funds with other funds. Some States have one grant round for various trail programs.

- New Hampshire
 - NH collects motorized fees stateside and uses them for motorized trail grants: \$4 million/year. NH gets \$600,000 from RTP. NH has a \$20,000 cap on all grants. Locals apply for the RTP for construction projects, and to the State for materials funded at 100%. No soft match is allowed in State grant program. NH would allow mixing funds only for State involved projects. NH has 2 year grants, allowing a one year extension.
 - NH has a \$54/yr ATV registration (resident). NH has completed an economic impact study which showed the snowmobile economic impact about \$1.1 billion per year, and ATV economic impact is estimated at about \$250 million per year (formal impact study underway now). NH buys a \$2 million liability policy for private landowners where trails run. The State has never had to pay for an award against a landowner.
 - NH is trying some recycled materials for trail; recycled glass and asphalt

NH just won a court case where town challenged proposed OHV area. The State sided with a landowner and won since owner was not charging, and it was not a commercial operation. Four State statutes uphold landowner against liability. NH also purchases \$2 million in insurance coverage from a private company. The program has been going for over 15 years and there has been no successful lawsuit. There is an inherent risk clause. ME also has a good policy.

NH will only develop ATV trails on public lands where there is a user group that signs an MOU on maintenance responsibility, generally for three years. The State legislature mandated that the State will do more for OHV recreation, and gave DRED 90 days to identify property to evaluate. There are strict criteria for what is suitable. The State agrees it is better to manage the use and to do it right. NH has a \$54 annual OHV registration fee. It grants about \$200,000 per year to clubs. The State budget for snowmobile and OHV programs is over \$4 million.

The NH snowmobile registration is \$48 a year for State residents who belong to a local snowmobile club, but \$78 for those who don't join. It helps clubs generate more funds to match grooming money from the State.

People generally want to provide for various outdoor recreation activities but don't want it near where they live. Even hiking has been impacted. In NH, the biggest hurdle is the noise created by the vehicles. NH reduced the maximum noise level from vehicles in 2002.

Off Highway Vehicle Information and Education Programs

Chris Gamache (NH), ATVs and the New Hampshire Bureau of Trails (Presentation will be at www.nhtrails.org)

The New Hampshire Bureau of Trails had found that a lot of inaccurate information about trail uses was being tossed around. The State wanted to get good, accurate information out to land managers and local officials on how the State program works, regulations related to motorized recreation, and proper management of motorized recreation routes. It developed: "Managing ATV use on the forests of New Hampshire."

New Hampshire has a history of trails across private land. The State Off-Highway Recreational Vehicle (OHRV) program started in 1973. The Agency is fully funded by vehicle registration fees: probably the highest in the country: \$54 a year for residents, and \$73 for out of State. The Bureau of Trails:

- Plans, develops, and maintains a statewide trail system
- Administer funds.
- Help form clubs: numbers have increased from 9 to 23 clubs in the last four years. More clubs equal more recreation opportunities.

The Bureau has a staff of 15 people who deal with trails. The State program has been involved with over 20 pieces of legislation in past two years. Legislature required State to do a new trail plan for ATVs and trail bikes.

The Bureau acquires easements and works with landowners on recreational access. It has had successes working with commercial landowners who allow public recreation access. Without cooperation of private landowners, there would be very little outdoor recreation in NH. The Bureau provides a \$2 million liability policy to all landowners who allow public OHV trails, through an OHV club or the Bureau, on their land. The landowner has right to determine which vehicles are allowed. The policy costs the State about \$63,000 a year. Over 5,000 landowners are currently participating. There has not been a suit against the State since 1996. There has not been a successful suit ever against the State program, and only a couple of minor settlements in the early 1990s. The Bureau is working to evaluate property for new ATV trail systems.

The State has very specific definitions for what OHRVs are. They must be under 50" wide, which excludes the utility and exotic vehicles. It is illegal to run an ATV through water in NH.

Other efforts:

- The website, www.nhtrails.org, won a 2003 American Trails Website Contest award in the category of "Promotion of courtesy and trail sharing."
- An ATV safety course is required.

The States would like a compilation of regulations and program information for OHVs from each State. Christopher will bring this up with Bob Walker (MT) as an agenda item for the National OHV Managers meeting scheduled for March 2004 in Portland OR.