NRC Members Present: Lise Fortin (Chair), Everett Wilson, Linda Hecker, Bill Dunkel, Andy Toepfer, Sue Hammond, Michael Tuller, Kathy Urffer, Jim Pinkerton, Lynette Hamilton

CWAC Committee Members Present: None

NRC Members Absent: Kevin Stine, Bob Anderson, David Deen

Staff Present: Margo Ghia

Public:

Presenter: Jeff Nugent, GIS Planner, Windham Regional Commission

1. Call to Order
   • Meeting called to order at 5:01 p.m.

2. Introductions & Welcome

3. Additions or Changes to the Agenda

4. Approval of Minutes
   • Action: Approve draft minutes of the June 25, 2020 meeting. Motion made by Bill Dunkel and seconded by Andy Toepfer
     o Corrections:
       ▪ Remove the line about postponing the approval of the February minutes.
       o Motion passed. Abstentions by Everett Wilson and Lynette Hamilton.
   • Follow-Up on Items from previous Minutes that are not on the current agenda
     o Margo Ghia sent an EAB notice on an upcoming webinar. Margo will make sure that all NR Committee members are on EAB distribution list.
     o Lise Fortin followed up with Joanne Garten. They are not doing an in person training for the EAB app right now and there is not currently a recording. She is available to do a training on-line. Joanne could also help a town create a Town Protocol for ash tree assessments.
     o Jeff and Margo are working on an EAB newsletter for road foreman.
     o Wardsboro and Rockingham are looking to get started on their ash surveys.
     o Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association is doing a survey along its trails. They are doing it by paper.

5. Committee Focus
   • Presentation: Jeff Nugent, WRC GIS Planner, presenting on WRC Trail Data Collection
     o WRC has been gathering data since 2013
     o Data is collected on sidewalks downtown, multiuse paths, and trails. (they are not collecting on state park lands and the Appalachian Trail).
     o Retreat trails (by ski jump): trends noticed: this is a local trail system located in people’s back yard. Weekend traffic is not much more than weekday traffic.

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is due to the trail being in people’s backyard. Local trails see a spike in the spring when people want to stay close to home. As summer progresses, people tend to spread out to other trails and activities.

- **Black Mountain in Dummerston:** This trail sees more traffic on weekends than weekdays. It is not a hyperlocal trail. Black Mountain usage saw not too much difference between 2018 and 2020, but then it was closed.

- **Crosstown Trail, Dover:** Weekend counts are much higher than weekday counts. This trail sees lots of locals getting out and second home owners who have moved up are going out. In May things started to spike during Covid.

- **West River Trail:** This is a local trail. Very high multiuse trail usage during Covid, almost double what we saw last year at this time. Winter doesn’t seem to keep people off the trail. Counts are similar winter to summer. The increase in usage has been in bike usage. The bike count has doubled over last year.

- **West Town Trail:** During Covid, they had posts about how to avoid the crowds. A tip is to go before 10am or after mid-afternoon.

- **Putney Mountain:** On this local trail in April the weekend trips were high and weekday low. Early on during Covid there was low use.

**Thoughts from Jeff Nugent**

- **Overuse:** 20% of the trails are seeing 80% of the use. It seems all people are going to the same trails. Smaller trails are not seeing much use.

- **Multi use trails are very important.** They are available to everyone (all fitness levels, accessibility), multi-use, and improved trail beds are easier to access.

- **Bill Dunkel asked about Swimming hole counts – WRC has not been collecting information on recreation areas. Hard for WRC equipment because you need to have a funnel area where people are passing.**

- **Andy Toepfer’s observation:** In the regional plan recreation elements should be addressed. Might want to have language about what is appropriate use of trail areas. We need to have conversations of appropriate use of trail systems and swimming holes. Jeff agreed that the update to the Regional Plan is a good vehicle for county wide discussion on trail/swimming hole usage.

- **On multi use trails, are there conflicts between users (bikes verses walking with strollers, etc.)?** Jeff has not been hearing from trail managers about issues regarding this. There is not a regular gathering of trail managers meeting.

**Ideas for Consideration**

- **Coordinate a gathering of trail managers to discuss/share ideas a few times a year.**

- **Find ways to promote trails that are on the “underused” side.** There are ways to make underused trails (without views, etc.) more attractive (highlight geology or historic, do story walks).

- **Trail planning:** why are certain trails overused and how can we plan to have some more trails in the region that are popular. It would be interesting to have a conversation with experts to get their input on what a carrying capacity of different trails are. Then we could get a sense of what overuse is, and we could plan for how to make a trail not overused.

- **Look for funding to help multiple organizations in the region upgrade signage, etc. on their trails.** How do out of state people get information on the trails in our region? Idea is to get an intern out on the weekend to do surveys on how they found out about it. Trailfinder and All Trails are big sites on the web. Guide books are on a large decline. Currently, posting about trails is reliant for trail

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managers to get information out there. Wilmington has their own trail map. Dover is talking about doing a map.

6. **Upcoming Events/ Updates on Current Programs**
   - None at this time.

7. **Public Comment**
   - Windham Conservation Events is a biweekly newsletter listing conservation, environmental events in Windham County. If you don’t receive the e-newsletter let Margo know and she can add you.

8. **Next Meeting**
   - August Meeting – August 27 at 5pm

9. **Adjournment:** A motion was made to adjourn by Linda Hecker and seconded by Jim Pinkerton. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 6:17 pm.

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