

Meeting Minutes  
**Pisgah State Park Management Plan Steering Committee**  
October 13, 2010  
Hinsdale Town Hall, Hinsdale, NH

**Members present**

Chris Gamache, Chief – Bureau of Trails, NH Division of Parks and Recreation  
Don Kent, Administrator, Natural Heritage Bureau, NH Division of Forests & Lands  
Bob Smith, Friends of Pisgah  
Mark Zankel, The Nature Conservancy  
Brad Simpkins, Director – NH Division of Forests & Lands  
George Bald, Commissioner – NH Department of Resources and Economic Development  
Meade Cadot, Wildlife Biologist  
Emily Hague, Monadnock Conservancy  
Tim Butterworth, Local State Representative  
Kathy Thatcher, Non-motorized Recreation  
Tim Murphy, Southwest Regional Planning Commission  
Ted Whippie, former Selectman of Winchester  
Ken Desmarais, Administrator, Forest Management Bureau, NH Division of Forests & Lands  
Tim Hill, Licensed Forester and Local Resident

**Steering Committee Meeting**

Commissioner Bald began the meeting at 5 PM by welcoming everyone in attendance and asking each member of the Steering Committee to introduce themselves. He then went over the meeting's agenda.

Ken Desmarais spoke about the public comments received. There were 243 comments received as either e-mails or as letters. Comments concentrated on four main themes: Equestrian use, Bicycle use, ATV use and Timber management. Ken asked how many people in the audience had fully read the plan and 17 people raised their hand. Other people mentioned that they had read portions of the plan.

Ken also discussed the comments pertaining to forest management in the park. He said that several commenters had concerns that too few acres were going to be managed and that they did not understand that the acreage under management would change as a new inventory was conducted and mapping resources improved. Ken explained that as compartments get re-inventoried the accessible and operable acres would be adjusted. He also said that harvest goals would change as the acreage suitable for management changed.

Chris Gamache discussed the changes to the recreation section of the plan due to comments received. He mentioned that most uses would not be expanding but instead the Trails Bureau would be trying to reconfigure the uses to better accommodate the users.

Commissioner Bald asked the Steering Committee if they had any questions or comments about the changes made to the plan based on the public comment. He also instructed the public to funnel comments about the changes through a member of the Steering Committee that best

represents their particular interest in the park. Once the new draft is completed in early November it will be posted on the DRED website and comment will be received from Steering Committee members for 30 days.

Representative Timothy Butterworth asked Chris Gamache whether ATV use will be expanding within the park. Chris mentioned that there would be no new trails. Rep. Butterworth then asked if DRED will be expanding the number of other uses onto Pisgah trails. Chris replied that most trails are already multiple use. Commissioner Bald asked if the trails should be open to multiple uses. Rep. Butterworth asked what the procedure would be to get public feedback when trail uses were changed. He also asked how do we increase revenue from the park or have we accomplished the revenue question? Chris Gamache said that there is no guaranteed revenue. There are some iron rangers available but there is a cost to maintaining them.

Rep. Butterworth was concerned about expanding the uses within the park while not maintaining or increasing park staffing. He felt that as we do more, we will need more staffing and funding. Bicycling and equestrian use will put more stress on the trails and we probably can not keep up with maintenance.

The point was made that trails in Colorado are heavily used and are well maintained, however they charge a fee for use.

Kathy Thatcher thought that greater use will take away from the quality of the park by increasing trash left behind, no oversight at night and on weekends. She has a major concern about increasing use of the park while withdrawing staff. She also asked if all the recreational pieces of the plan will be in place with the plan or are there more questions and solutions to explore.

Commissioner Bald said that not everything will get covered but that the Steering Committee will be reconvened in a year to a year and a half and will re-work issues that need adjusting. Rep. Butterworth mentioned that there may be a lot more hikers. Kathy Thatcher asked about whether the Dogwood Swamp Trail is appropriate for horses and wheeled vehicles. She also asked about whether the Monadnock Happy Trails members had changed their minds about the trail. Commissioner Bald said that DRED will pay attention to their comments.

Emily Hague thanked the Commissioner for suggesting that the Steering Committee reconvene in a year to 18 months.

Tim Murphy asked about the process, when the draft will be completed and how the changes to the draft will stand out from the rest of the document. Ken Desmarais will make the changes using the “track changes” option in the software so the public will be able to see what has changed in the plan.

Commissioner Bald said that the draft will be completed early in November and the Steering Committee will be given an additional 30 days to respond. He also thanked the Steering Committee and said it has been a great help in the planning process and we can be proud of the input.

Rep. Butterworth thanked DRED for their work. He thought DRED really listened to people and that people really listened to DRED and the Steering Committee. He summarized the concerns that he heard from the public.

- \* Concerns about how the park is used and the fact that the park was purchased with federal Land and Water Conservation Fund money. Most recreation activities are allowed, harvesting is allowed to improve the ecosystem, flora and fauna. He believes that harvesting just to make money is not allowed by the funding.
- \* Concerns about global warming, that trees take in CO<sub>2</sub>, that old trees probably do not take in much and dead trees release carbon through decay.
- \* Invasive species, where they are and how management and recreation will affect that. He thought that DRED was doing a great job managing the invasives. Perhaps a university such as Antioch could study invasives prior to future management activities.
- \* ATVs are a concern and he would like to see a business plan prior to any more trails being built in the park.
- \* Caring for the park including buildings.
- \* Where will the funding come from to manage the park properly

Tim Murphy echoed Emily's point to reconvene in 18 months to revisit the plan.

Kathy Thatcher mentioned - should the park be a park or should it be a reservation? She felt it should be a park.

### **Commissioner Bald asked for comments or questions from the audience.**

Senator Molly Kelly thanked the Steering Committee and the public for working through the issues and developing the Draft Management Plan for the park.

Rep. Butynski introduced himself as well as Executive Councilor Deborah Pignatelli.

Julia representing Rep. Dan Carr mentioned that Rep. Carr could not attend but wants to protect Pisgah for all the generations to come.

A member of the audience asked that the members of the conservation commissions be identified for the communities in which Pisgah is located. Those members were asked to stand and introduce themselves. The chairman of the conservation commission in Winchester introduced himself and the chair of the Hinsdale conservation commission introduced herself. Tom Duston who is the chairman of the conservation commission in Chesterfield introduced himself.

Bob Miller from Chesterfield volunteers in the park. He asked about who would be responsible for implementation of the plan on-site within the park. He cleans up materials from other projects. He mentioned that there are 4 divisions working independently within the park. Commissioner clarified that only 2 divisions manage the park. Trails Bureau is a bureau within the Division of Parks and Recreation and that the Fish & Game Department is an independent department of the State. Commissioner Bald will talk with the Director of Fish & Game to see if more law enforcement and monitoring can take place.

Bob Miller mentioned that he was a construction manager for 40 years and there is no way that a site can be managed without an on-site manager. Bridge materials are discarded in the woods. More materials are needed for projects that are being done in the park. Needs gravel for the roads. Commissioner suggested he send a list to Ted Austin – Director of Parks and he will see what he can do.

Tom Duston said that self funding for Parks is not sustainable. Hampton has parking meters to help with the cost. The Pisgah plan has very little inside it for ideas to raise revenue. State should install iron rangers to collect donations. Plan should list more revenue ideas.

Matt Domkey is a member of the Friends of Pisgah and has many thoughts, wants someone on site to coordinate work and enforce the rules. Many ATVs and trail bikes ride wildly in the park. He wants the buildings staffed to provide information to visitors. Commissioner Bald said he will meet and discuss the buildings with the Friends of Pisgah.

An audience member said he did not read the plan from cover to cover but did read most of the plan. He asked how much money would be saved by not having a full time manager work at the park. Commissioner said that it's been a difficult year and Parks has had to move people around. The savings from one position is about \$70,000 to \$80,000 per year on average. It's not a question of saving \$80,000 by not filling a position, but more of a matter of placing park staff where they are needed the most.

Matt Edson asked “is there going to be a manager or not going to be a manager?”. Commissioner Bald said that he can't tell yet if there will be a manager 7 days a week at Pisgah. Park revenue depends on the weather and park attendance.

It was mentioned by a member of the audience that the park needs someone to supervise or efforts will go without the support that they need because without volunteers the park will not maintained. Leadership is needed in the park.

Bill Roberts asked what the future of the visitor's center and barn will be. Commissioner Bald said he and Ted Austin will meet with the Friends of Pisgah to work something out. Mr. Roberts introduced Bill Mitchell, an original member of the Friends of Pisgah.

Ray Egan from Chesterfield has a hard job hearing there is no money for Pisgah. He has a trailer at Lake Francis and said the State has about 100 miles of ATV trails in Pittsburg. Pisgah needs a manager. Most cars in the parking lots at Pisgah have out-of-state license plates. The state should charge a parking fee just like the White Mountains because people from out-of-state love to come to Pisgah. He also mentioned that the ATV trail that was put into the campground at Lake Francis ruined the campground because it goes right through the campground.

Mr. Egan also said that we need to take care of the park. He mentioned that much of the land was taken by eminent domain, that people lost their homes. The state needs to take care of the park and they should not tell him that there is no money because he sees it in Pittsburg. Commissioner Bald said that the State does not own the ATV trail in Pittsburg. That Fish & Game controls it.

Amanda Barnard teaches in the outdoor recreation department in Richmond. She thanked the state for all they do and that children can go out there to hike. Children have had close calls with ATVs. All of Norma's efforts to work with her class are important to her. She feels there are not enough people working at the park. Ms. Barnard works for a non-profit and would pay a fee to use the park. We all need to work together to figure it out.

Fred Ross congratulated the committee for their hard work. There are a lot of trails and roads within the park. Some of them were roads and some of them were trails. Some trails are very rough. The Friends of Pisgah do a lot of work in the park and that saves a lot of money. Someone who spends a lot of time taking care of the park should have a lot to say about what is going on. He then thanked everyone again for their help.

Ken Knowles lives in Winchester and has served in the NH House. He heard rumors that moose plate money was used for other purposes than conservation. Is there some funding from that that might be used for Pisgah? Commissioner Bald replied moose plate projects are overseen by a legislative committee. Sen. Kelley said new legislation was passed that allows someone to purchase an emblem each year that allows the purchaser to get into any state park for free. She wondered if maybe that caused some confusion about the use of moose plate funds.

Jasen Stock said the plan is an impressive document. He wanted to know if some technical points will get addressed. Specifically forest structure goals are a concern. About 99 acres per year will receive forest management activities and he doesn't see how the forest structure goals will be met. He believes the wildlife habitat goals won't be met either. He suggested using the website to explain how those goals can be met using cutting plan. He was also disappointed to hear that the Forest Management and Protection Fund does not give revenue back to the park. At Bear Brook State Park past timber sales had provided lumber to the park as part of the stumpage payment. The State should consider "stewardship contracting" to permit the harvest to help provide resources back to the park. Designating land without a comprehensive inventory is like "fixing dinner without knowing what's in the ice box". He is concerned that Criteria 1, 2 and 3 was designated without strong inventory data, and that long term decisions need inventory data.

John Caveney from Chesterfield said he enjoyed Pisgah since before there were any gates; he knows the park between the trails, not necessarily on the trails. He hears comments from people from the surrounding towns discuss revenue, revenue, and revenue and he is confused. Has anyone ever presented them with a list of things to be done? If someone gave them \$250,000, is there a list of things they would begin working on. If someone were to give that much money he wonders what kind of a wrangle there would be about how to spend that money. What do we want the park to be? That question sends people into corners and there is much disagreement over that question. Some want it to be locked up for hiking, if so then it does not need a big budget. Park can not be exclusive to any one user. Has anyone ever said if you get some money, what would you do with it in the park?

Tom Duston wants the park the way it is with a manager.

John Caveney said the Forest Service has stewardship timber sales which involve a list of things such as timber for maintenance materials, gravel, services, etc. He asked if it can be done. It gets things done if money is scarce.

Nell Genest asked if there was a truck or gravel available to the park and she said the park needs to have someone there to prevent the park from being damaged. "Madame Sherri Forest is completely trashed". There is no supervision. Walkway is falling in. She went to Pisgah for a picnic and the motorcycles tore up the lawn.

Laurel Powell from Chesterfield said the draft plan doesn't have volunteers reporting to anyone. Who manages volunteers? Who manages the park for us? The park was transferred to Trails. Now it's a reservation managed by Forests and Lands. Clarification is needed to determine who to report to on tasks to be done. Commissioner Bald said we are one agency with several skills. We use all the different skills available. Trails Bureau is a bureau under Division of Parks; it is not a separate agency. Who will coordinate, we don't know. Forest Lake State Park is a good model. An isolated park is difficult to shift staff to. A volunteer coordinator is on staff to help work with volunteers. We have the same discussions at other parks. Laurel asked if an MOA could be worked with the volunteers. Commissioner Bald replied that people want to help but often don't know the correct way to do them. Or they don't have the background information needed such as whether Natural Heritage has rare plants or other elements in the area. It's not that we want to stop anything that the public wants to do but we want to prevent bad outcomes from people with good intentions.

Sen. Kelly discussed setting up a system that will promote communication between the State and park users. What will happen tomorrow in the short term? She also mentioned that the barn and visitor's center are still in play. She believes that the State and Friends of Pisgah will be discussing the buildings as well as materials and equipment. Commissioner Bald extended an invitation to meet with the Friends of Pisgah to continue discussing the buildings.

Rep. Butterworth said that the best person for volunteers to talk with is the park manager. He believes the 3 local communities can help with the financial issues at Pisgah.

A member of the audience asked why the State is considering opening the road from Chesterfield to Winchester. Commissioner Bald said he was not aware of any plans to open the road. Another audience member mentioned that the State has proposed it as an option in earlier meetings. Commissioner Bald re-iterated that the State does not have plans to re-open that road to everyday public motor vehicle access.

Another audience member asked about enforcement of ATV rules. He has seen a big spike of ATVs and unregistered bikes as well as the reckless use of those vehicles. He asked about the Tri-state riders, an ATV advocacy group that promotes responsible use and that there is education available to teach riders how to police their peers on the trails and educate them in responsible use of the trails. Commissioner Bald said there are groups like that and he will also discuss enforcement with Fish and Game Department Director Normandeau.

Rep. Butynski pointed out that the plan says that Pisgah deserves the best management possible. He mentioned that the plan says that the historical features, both found and not yet found should be protected and the dams should be checked weekly. He doesn't think that most of the plan can be done without a full time park manager there to oversee those activities.

There were no more comments so Commissioner Bald thanked everyone for coming. He then closed the meeting.

Kathy Thatcher reminded everyone that there was also a Technical Team that worked on much of the Pisgah Management Plan.