



TOWN OF GROTON

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Trails Committee

Special Trails Committee Meeting "Motorized Vehicle Use on Conservation Properties in Groton"

Selectmen's Room, Town Hall
30 June 2009, 7:00 p.m.

Attendees:				Visitors:
Chairman	Joachim Preiss	Member	Wendy Good	See attached sign-in sheet.
Vice chair	Paul Funch	Member	John Lynch	
Member	Steve Legge	Member	David Minott	
Member	Alan Taylor	Member	Bruce Easom	
Member	Ed Bretschneider	/	/	

Meeting opened at 7.30 pm with the above named committee members and visitors present.

Issues Discussed

1. Signs

- Standardization across all parcels is an important goal. There was general consensus on this goal by the members/representatives of the conservation groups that were in attendance (New England Forestry Foundation, Groton Conservation Commission, Groton Conservation Trust). Some examples of potential signage were presented that were met with general approval by those in attendance. The designs will be brought to the organizations' boards for approval and purchase.
- Purposes of signs
 - To notify offenders (and provide alternatives, when appropriate). Many in attendance felt the maximum fines should be included on the signs, but there was no general consensus on this point.
 - To empower responsible users to protect land when abuse is witnessed by confirming what is illegal and by having something "to point to."
 - To identify different areas/trails for different uses (hiking, horses, bikes, skiing, snowshoeing, etc.).

2. Clarification of Laws and Enforcement

- Lt. Cullen of the Groton Police Dept. was present and he offered his knowledge and experiences, which were both very useful during the ensuing discussion.
- Trails and open space are patrolled by the Groton Police Dept., the Middlesex Sheriff's Dept. (on horseback), and the MASS Environmental Police. Complaints of land abuse should be made to any of these organizations.
- Motorbikes, ATVs, etc., must be registered. Snowmobiles require special registrations. Street legal vehicles do not need additional registration for off-road use.
- Land is assumed to be open to the NON-motorized public unless posted otherwise.
- Motorized vehicle use is permitted on private property when permission of the property owner has been obtained. However, operation within 150 feet of any home on abutting property requires permission from that homeowner.

- Properly licensed motorized vehicles could perhaps (see questions below) be used on discontinued roads (owned by town, but no longer maintained), but not on abandoned roads (where town has relinquished ownership of the right of way and abutters have gained property rights to the center line).
- Questions left unresolved:
 - Which parcels of land in Groton do not specifically prohibit use of motorized vehicles? Snowmobiles? Suggested that local members of organizations such as New England Trail Riders (NETR) be asked to assist with this research.
 - What are the legal requirements for use of motorized vehicles? (e.g., registration, helmets, age, noise, speed, use on roads)
 - What are the regulations in Massachusetts regarding snowmobiles that distinguish them from other motorized vehicles?

3. Damage to Land

- Local members of the New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) noted a great deal of empirical evidence that mountain bike trails can be designed so as to minimize or entirely avoid damage. NEMBA provides training to members on how to avoid causing damage to trails and assists with trail maintenance projects throughout New England. The local mountain bike organization, Nashoba Dirt Organization (NDO), has contributed large amounts of labor to maintaining trails throughout Groton.
- While only a few citizens supporting motorized vehicle use were present, there was general consensus that damage from motorized vehicles was much faster and severe than from either mountain bikes or horses. Nevertheless, each type of user can damage trails quite significantly and educational efforts need to be ongoing for all types of trail users.
- Particular areas/types of abuse that are considered to be most harmful include the following:
 - Stream/river crossings and destruction of the bank
 - Beaver dams
 - General soil compaction
 - Rutting of trails from acceleration and hard braking

4. Trail Designs Useful in Excluding Motorized Vehicles, Horses, etc.

- Do NOT use chains, cables, etc., to block entrances. If absolutely necessary to use them, put PVC pipe over them to provide clear visibility.
- Styles over fences, walls, etc.
- Boulders and dirt
- Tank traps, with bridges for walking over them
- Stone walls
- Chicanes made with boulders
- Designed around large trees

Meeting closed at 9.45 pm by unanimous vote.
Respectfully submitted by Joachim Preiss.