

Lake Vermilion Trail Steering Committee
Meeting #3 Notes
2/10/16 – Greenwood Town Hall

Attendees

John Bassing – *Supervisor, Greenwood Township*
Glenn Bergerson – *Beatty Township*
Carol Booth – *Wakemup Village Resident, Cook*
Joan Broten – *Office Manager, Minnesota DNR Parks & Trails, Tower City Council*
Greg Dostert – *Breitung Township*
Russell Habermann – *Arrowhead Regional Development Commission*
Cathi Hiveley – *Beatty Township*
Tim Johnson – *State Farm Agent, Cook*
Linda Keith – *Clerk, City of Tower*
Tyler Lampella – *St. Louis County Planning*
Holly Larson – *National Park Service*
Steve Lotz – *Vermilion Lake Township*
Bev Peterson – *Greenwood Township*
Tom Rukavina – *4th District Commissioner, St. Louis County*
Sidra Starkovich – *Bois Forte Reservation*
Sue Wolfe – *Owens Township*

1. General Updates/Comments from Committee Members
 - a. Carol connected with Shawna Kishel from Northwoods Friends of the Arts, and Shawna said they would be willing to hold a logo design contest for the Lake Vermilion Trail.
 - b. Carol researched possible fiscal agents and fundraising opportunities presented at the January 6 meeting. The Iron Range Partnership for Sustainability could serve as a fiscal agent if needed, and a roundup fundraising opportunity is possible through Lake Country Power.

2. Decision Making Process for This Group
 - a. Proposed Decision Making Process: Informed Consent
 - i. As it stands now, this committee is informal; it is not authorized by any government or other body. Anyone who attends the meetings is invited to take part in the discussions and decision making. Any decisions made by this committee will be “recommendations” to the eventual owner(s)/managing entity(ies) of the trail.
 - ii. Holly suggested a process of informed consent. This process does not rely on a majority vote, nor does it try to achieve complete “consensus” (unanimous agreement). Instead the group will work to ensure that all committee members understand the options, and strive to reach compromises that all committee members can accept.

- iii. Committee members noted that they do not believe the committee or trail is at a point for a more formal structure.
- iv. The committee agreed that informed consent is the best decision making process at this time.

3. Trail Corridor Acquisition (Purchase)

a. Typical Process

- i. Holly reviewed the typical acquisition process with the committee. Unless a trail is proposed on land already owned by the developer (usually a government or nonprofit), acquisition of a corridor is necessary. The developer would acquire either a trail easement or the land in a corridor outright. "Acquisition" involves the developer following a legal process to purchase easements or land, or to receive land or easements as gifts (some landowners may donate easements or land for trails). If state or federal grants are used for acquisition, it can only be from willing sellers, and the price is limited based on the market value determined by a certified appraiser. Another option is to use local funds, or private funds raised through other means to purchase lands; then you would not need to use a certified appraiser, and your purchase price would not be limited by these state/federal requirements. Whether easements or land purchase is most appropriate will depend on the preferences of the landowners and the future trail management agency.
- ii. The committee agreed that they want to work with willing sellers only.

b. Landowner Acquisition Sheet: Should we make one for this trail group to use?

- i. The committee noted the importance of being consistent and deliberate about communicating with the public. This transparency should include documenting discussions and having an information sheet to control public dissemination of information.
- ii. The committee also noted the benefit of utilizing a webpage and URL to pass along information about the trail. A webpage for this project is currently set up at

www.arrowheadplanning.org/lakevermiliontrailimplementation.

c. Next Steps:

- i. Sue Wolfe, Carol Booth, and Tom Rukavina will work on land acquisition.
- ii. Ron Potter, recently retired for the DNR, also would be a great resource to work on land acquisition. Carol Booth will contact Ron.
- iii. Holly will draft a land owner acquisition sheet for the Lake Vermilion Trail.
- iv. The committee would also like a training session on land acquisition/working with landowners. Holly will set this up.

4. Trail Development

- a. Bois Forte Reservation: Currently, about 5 miles of trail is in place, and engineering work for 1.7 miles of trail has been done between Fortune Bay

Casino and Highway 77. Money is being sought with the eventual goal to connect the trail to the Y-Store.

- b. Maps for Later Discussion: Aerial maps have been prepared of the ridgeline and the Tower end of the trail for subcommittee discussion later in this meeting. The maps include township, parcel, public lands, wetlands, and topography data.
- c. Mesabi Trail: There are no new updates. Holly and Russell are meeting with Bob Manzoline following this meeting and will discuss a potential relationship between the Mesabi Trail and the Lake Vermilion Trail.

5. Regional Significance Designation

- a. Regional Designation Application: The application for regional designation through the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) is due April 29, 2016. In addition to general information about the trail and its compliance with GMRPTC standards (detailed on handout, attached), the application includes the need for photos, letters of support, and a determined management structure for the trail. Photos and letters of support are pieces of the application that committee members would best be able to collect. A recent economic impact study on the Mesabi Trail could also support the reason for building a trail.
- b. Master Plan: A master plan has been drafted using information from the previous plans, but the main priority is completing and submitting the regional designation application.
- c. Next Steps:
 - i. Russell will work with the Master Plan/Regional Significance Subcommittee to draft the regional significance application, due April 29.
 - ii. Russell will draft a letter of support to send out to committee members as they approach their respective townships/cities.
 - iii. Russell will research the economic impact study on the Mesabi Trail.
 - iv. Committee members should collect photos that would show off the vision of the Lake Vermilion Trail and send them electronically to Russell at rhabermann@ardc.org.

6. Funding

- a. Funding for Acquisition:
 - i. The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) does not allow for land acquisition, but allows for construction; a letter of intent is due in October.
 - ii. DNR grants can be used for land acquisition; these grant applications are due every March. To apply, a city or county must serve as the applicant.
 - iii. Application for GMRPTC Legacy funds (following regional designation) will be due this summer with a master plan.
 - iv. Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) is a funding source to also consider in the future, but Tower's current grant does not apply to this project. Applications this year are due March 21.

- v. GMRPTC (Legacy) funding allows for land acquisition, and does not have a match requirement. The Master Plan would have to be finished, and a managing entity would have to be committed before applying.
- vi. The committee agreed to a current funding strategy of applying to GMRPTC this summer IF the trail gets designated as “regionally significant,” and a project can be readied in time. More likely, the March 2017 DNR and/or LCCMR grants, and the Summer 2017 GMRPTC grants will be the target. By then it is possible that a project for land acquisition and development may be ready to apply for funding.

7. Sub-Committee Work/Sub-Committee Reports

- a. Trail Development – Wakemup Hill to Camp Vermilion
 - i. Walker/Biker Origins: Pehrson Lodge Resort, Camp Vermilion, Scenic Overlook, RV Park, Golf Course, Ashawa Ski Trail, Voyageur Cove Resort
 - ii. Walker/Biker Destinations: Crescent Bar and Grill, Camp Vermilion, DNR Landing (restaurant), Wakemup Campground, Beatty Town Hall, Whispering Winds Resort, Head of the Lakes Public Access, Spring Bay Resort, White Eagle Resort, Moosebirds General Store
 - iii. Constraints: Wetlands, Steep Hills near Scenic Lookout
 - iv. Opportunities: Berry Picking, Bird Watching, Developing Forests, Wakemup Hill, Tax-Forfeited Lands
- b. Trail Development – Tower End
 - i. Walker/Biker Origins: Soudan, Tower Harbor, McKinley Park, Hoodoo Point, Y-Store, Fortune Bay
 - ii. Walker/Biker Destinations: Soudan, Tower Harbor, McKinley Park, Hoodoo Point, Y-Store, Fortune Bay, Tower Depot
 - iii. Constraints: Bridge across River, Wetland near Houseboats, Private Ownership
 - iv. Opportunities: Opportunity Ridges, Historical Markers, Power Line and/or Old Highway 169
- c. Management Structure/Communications
 - i. Logo Contest: Existing forms from previous contests are already available to repurpose, and prizes could be attained from the credit union or other local businesses. Carol will work with Shawna at Northwoods Friends of the Arts to further develop this contest.
 - ii. Management Structure: St. Louis County does not have a history of trail building and maintenance, so they likely do not have interest in taking on ownership and maintenance. But the County could provide a letter of support for the trail. The Mesabi Trail may have constraints as to what kinds of trail it can own; Bob Manzoline would offer more insight into the possibilities. Until more research is completed with the County and Mesabi Trail, a joint powers board is potentially the preferred option for management.

- d. Regional Significance/Master Plan Discussion
 - i. Review of Application: The application will be sent out to all committee members, who will have a designated time period to review the application prior to submission.
 - ii. Letters of Support: The best way to collect letters of support is to have committee members approach their respective entities.
 - iii. Photos: Committee members will collect photos and send them to Russell for consideration by the steering committee.
- e. Fundraising Questions
 - i. Potential Funding Sources: Northwoods Friends of the Arts (logo contest), Sportsmen's Club, Lake Vermilion Resort Association, Lake Country Power (Operation Roundup) and Minnesota Power (similar program to LCP), Natural Harvest Food in Virginia (Roundup), IRRRB, LCCMR, Transportation Impact Fund, St. Louis County Transportation Sales Tax Fund, McKnight Foundation, and Hills Family Foundation

NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9TH, 10 am – 12 pm, at the US Forest Service LaCroix Ranger Station in Cook

Required Elements on GMRPTC Regional Significance Application

Prepared for the Lake Vermilion Trail Steering Committee

1. General

- Park or Trail Name
- District
- Location Description
- Map Park or Trail
- Facility Website
- Lead Applicant Organization (Lead applicant must be a city or county (or a joint powers group with one or more of these listed as a partner). Any party acting on behalf of a joint powers group must include a statement from the listed partners that they are authorized to submit the application on behalf of the group. (Include authorization statement as an attachment.))
- Have you applied for regional designation for this park or trail before?
- If so, what year?
- Lead Contact First Name
- Mailing Address
- State
- Phone
- Lead Contact Title
- Joint Applicant #1 Organization (Optional - Attach any resolutions from joint applicants, as available. Statements of support are encouraged as part of application. However, formal resolutions of support will only be required for proposals that ultimately receive designation.)
- Describe Other Project Supporters (Provide listing of groups or organizations that are in support of the park or trail proposal.)

2. Description

- Regional Significance Statement (Provide a short "elevator speech" describing the regional significance of the park or trail. Focus on the core vision, essential qualities and primary public values the park or trail offers. 75 Words Max.)
- Classification: Regional Trail (Non-motorized)
- Overview/Description of Park or Trail (500 word limit)
 - Overview/description of park or trail should include:
 - General description of the park or trail (setting, land characteristics, special features)
 - Statement of regional significance (what makes it regional, versus local)
 - Overview of user groups that would be served
 - Overview of type, size and scale of facilities to be provided
 - Overview of programs to be offered
 - Describe the proximity and/or relationship of the park or trail with other state, regional, county, or local parks, trails, or related facilities.
- Total Acreage or Mileage
- What is the Acquisition and Development Status? (New Park or Trail/Existing Park or Trail)

3. Facility Listing
 - List existing or proposed facilities at the park or trail.
4. Master Plan Status
 - Master Plan Status: Existing Master Plan is Available (but needs to be updated to meet strategic plan)
 - Describe Other Supportive Information (Provide any pertinent information that could help the Commission in its evaluation of the regional significance of a park or trail. This is especially important when no master plan is available. Also provide any information related to previously completed cost estimates for acquisition, development, operations, maintenance, and programming. Also indicate if any development phasing has been considered.)
5. Classification Details
 - Describe in detail how your proposal aligns with the criteria associated with the selected classification Refer to Section 3 of the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan for detailed information about criteria and rating scales. All applicants are strongly encouraged to attach (tab 6) photos or graphics depicting the characteristics or features of the facility described below.
6. Attachments (Attach files and provide a short description of each file.)
 - Master Plan
 - Location Maps
 - Letters of Support
 - Resolution
 - Agreement
 - Photo
 - Other
7. Submit