

NCTA Board of Directors Meeting, Lowell, MI, April 12, 2003

Members present: Leinen, Veit, Lucas, Tait, Harris, Williamson, Hoffarth, Coyne, Blount, Szabo, Young

NCTA staff present: Papp, Stramm, Barr, Stahl, Meyer, Wayman, Menke, COrbett

NPS staff present: Howell

9:05 am call to order John Leinen

introduction of Alicia Hoffarth of ND

minutes from December 2002 corrected to add approval of motion to Field Grant paragraph.

Motion to accept by Blount, second Williamson, approved

New Business to be added to agenda- report from Audio Visual committee Young, report from Banff Mt Festival by Blount

Application for registration as non-profit solicitation status in each state. One state requires resolution of BOD, Papp read the paragraph that we must approve the contents of the registration statement and that the BOD will continue to supervise policy and finances. Blount moved to approve, Lucas second. Passed.

2002 Budget Report- Leinen

Error in membership dues line- should be about \$15K less, but still above projection. 100% participation in annual appeal by BOD. Thanks to all for taking this seriously.

Most estimates were roughly accurate. Postage & Printing high, but direct mail campaign was larger, so those expenses were higher, thus resulting in more members.

Earlier error lowers Revenue over Expenses line to about \$13K, but still great in a year that was very difficult for most non-profits.

Papp- Auditor still looking at the records, so may not want to approve the budget report until the final report is done.

Leinen- need to have 50% of budget in reserve, we are not there yet, but at least in black last year.

Balance Sheet- report of fund balances- CCS projects showing negative balances are really at zero.

Endowment is really small for group of our size

FG's have their own separate account now

National Operations figure comes from the budget- now about 10% of our budget

Leinen thinks Trail Councils should fund State Coordinators not Field Grants.

Veit- where will Councils get funds?

Young- FG funds are adequate, why change at this point

Cox memorial fund in western UP Michigan- they are not happy that it hasn't been spent. Papp trying to explain the delays with Ottawa NF

Heckman memorial fund- SPW is in contact with them. They understand delays.

Menke- why does Cyclic Maintenance Account (CMA) not show? Papp- Should always be zero on our sheets

Williamson- How do we get CMA money? Howell- with CCS application- and talk to NPS

Blount- do we have an inventory of structures, etc on the trail? No, Tiffany is sort of working on it with major structures and cabins.

Howell- will be requesting help from chapters to develop database so we can continue to get CMA. Some is collected with GPS data

Blount- would like to have report organized by group rather than alphabetical
Williamson- what has auditor said about our management?
Barr- not much yet. They like how we manage the cash flow, but are still looking at the rest.

2003 Budget Report

only Jan, Feb included- looks ok. Some large percentages show up because they are one-time expenses.

Blount- thanks from PNTS for paying our dues early (as PNTS president)

Papp- we are comfortable with the auditors, have a 3-year contract

Policy on Timber Harvesting- Corbett

Important tool for NCTA to use with forests

Menke- all the comments from board have been incorporated, much improved from original

Corbett- we might select a "test forest" to test reaction

Lucas- incorporates things that NFS also uses, but managers need to have it at least 2 years before timber sales.

Tait- concerned that a volunteer who reads this might confront managers without understanding the process.

Papp, Blount, Corbett- it will be on the web site, make sure managers know this. Include a cover letter.

Williamson- concerns in areas where trail is not yet on the ground, only potential, and small, low-level jurisdiction, managers such as County Forests

Corbett- realistically some will ignore our guidelines

Leinen- this is a beginning- to get some forests working with us

Tait- concerns for safety of hiker, this does not mention it

Szabo add to last bullet item that this will help keep hikers from getting lost

Papp- define acronyms

Williamson- add bibliography

Blount- moved to accept policy, Williamson seconded

Approved

Suggested notice to hikers included with Timber Policy

Young- make it shorter- most hikers won't read long page

Certification Guidelines- Menke

Dave Cornell began this process to clarify certification procedures- he sees it as an educational process and a way to reward volunteers for good trail

Dave doesn't really want board approval, but would like to send to Trail Councils for review and publish it in the NS to get public reaction

Then NPS will need to review it

Veit- it is not in NS this issue because it wasn't really in publishable form yet

Lucas- concern that volunteers will not be able to digest it easily and it may appear as increased beaurocracy. Would like to avoid using ROS in the language. Add bullet statements to hit high points

Veit- shares this concern- there will be immediate negative reaction from Trail Managers

Menke- committee is trying to pin things down more tightly

Tait- would like to see the document with responses before the conference

Blount- this document is fine for talking to agencies, not good for volunteers

Papp- are we saying the sense is good, but need to communicate it better in simpler language?

Corbett- wanted to develop a document that was concrete and internally consistent that allows us to measure progress towards certified trail. Would ask to consider writing a volunteer's guide

Young- agrees with simplifying language, but this document takes what people are supposed to be building and learning from the manual and blowing off, and makes it something they can't ignore

Veit- agrees, but a simplified version will become what people use, not the actual document

General consensus to include a summary or big picture of what the document says

Howell- NPS perspective- thinks it's good to have the document to show people why trail can or can not be certified
Hoffarth- can a checklist for progress be developed? Good idea
Leinen- what would committee like? Menke- wants to put it out for wider review
Young- moves to incorporate suggestions into the document and send it to Trail Councils for review, Blount seconded.
Williamson- is this really a revision?- Are the original guidelines being changed?
Corbett- Maybe it's an addition rather than a revision
Lucas- will this eventually be added to the handbook? Yes
Szabo- lets put summary in NS, and the entire document on-line
Stramm- under volunteer incentives- to increase their priority for CCS and crew assistance- they need this priority before they reach certification not after.
Leinen calls for question- approved

Strategic Plan- Leinen

Thanks for the many suggestions received. All were considered, most included, or if too specific were kept in a file for future reference- this document is broader strokes

Papp- approval includes the changes to the Mission and Vision statement

Blount moves to accept Strategic Plan and changes to Mission and Vision, Szabo seconded.

Approved

Williamson would note that we need to not just file this away but continue to use it- maybe develop a check sheet for progress to be delivered at every BOD meeting.

Veit- put on web site

Break

Development Plan Update- Papp

Request for bid has gone out- see handout

Will get bids from a number of consultants. Development Committee will choose

Has talked to two- they have asked for copies of the membership and community outreach plans

Williamson- graphs of members ought to reflect including the Affiliate memberships as well

Communications Staffing- Papp

Membership is higher than expected, we want to hire a part-time person to work on NS, but

Werner is going to resign from editor's position and we must speed up the timeline

Strategic Plan includes 3-year objective to provide staffing and to hire a Communications Manager

Suggests to go for highest level solution- to hire Communications Director

Leinen- in favor of the plan. Communications is step one in Development

Young- need to be putting out press releases

Leinen moves to pursue plan and seek funding to hire Com Dir, Blount seconds

Young- how would this be funded?

Papp- wants to have 2 years funds in place before hire. We have \$6K, need \$40-50/ year to cover. He would have to do fundraising- seek grants for capacity building

Lucas- how much time is required as editor of NS?

Veit- will vary with the person and their experience, and the available volunteers, but perhaps 10 hours a week

Papp- other volunteers could pick up part of the NS work

Approved

Szabo- is the implementation time compatible with when Werner needs to leave? Werner thinks this is the quickest alternative. We can fall back to other plans if this doesn't work out.

Papp- need to review this in a couple of months to make sure we are making progress

Leinen- good to get Com Dir on board and then they will have input too

Blount- would like to complement Werner for creating high quality magazine (and Irene for editing skills)

Annual Conferende- Wayman
Things are falling into place
Young- need to quickly get info on line
Tours- some adjustments to the schedule in the packet, but generally all set
Meals in college cafeteria except banquet
Meyer- have good things already for silent auction
Wayman- confirmation packets will have lots of info
Requests will go to Chapter Presidents for awards nominations
Szabo- which workshops are recommended for board members to attend? Papp- don't know yet
Szabo- Herron said she would be setting up hikes before and after the conference. Will this happen? Nobody really knows.

Environmental/ Stewardship Policies- Corbett

Environmental Policy page is the existing one- included in packet for information
Written by someone who knows policy, but it doesn't show how to interact with landowners, thus he created Stewardship Policy to include full range of owners and agreements across the trail
Need to create a routine, standard way to deal with all owners
Presented for discussion, would like a committee to refine and re-present as a document to be incorporated as a replacement for the Environmental Policy Statement. Will turn EP into a step-by-step guide

Blount- Granholm (new MI governor) is discussing changes to land use policies- need to keep informed

Szabo- Section 2, first paragraph- says applies to all properties and catch-all phrase "other use agreements" Does this apply to all handshake agreements? Rob- It could. Apply diplomacy, but try to apply as far as possible without terminating the agreement.

Papp- lots of this is quite advanced as to where we stand right now. This is an ideal of where we want to be as a Land Trust, but will be handled on priority and opportunity basis for the time being.

Lucas- this evolves us to a land management organization rather than trail management. Is this what we want to do

Menke- If we do get Willing Seller, NPS will expect NCTA to do land management and we will need the documents to say how we will do so

Szabo- Section 5, 3-5 are ideals. We need to set priorities for actual management

Corbett- This is a huge plan that we will grow into, not for immediate implementation. We must have the big plan in place ahead of that implementation which will be used on an "as need" basis
Young- reads like a NEPA document, we need to have this language in place if we are going to function as a Land Trust.

Blount- He thinks we will acquire specialized volunteers as we put these standards in place

Lucas- moved to form committee to develop the draft into a policy, Blount seconded

Blount, Szabo, Lucas volunteer for committee

Howell- comments- if we get land it will have to be managed to Federal Standards.

Approved

Howell should be on committee to represent NPS.

Corbett will chair committee

Changes to Articles of Incorporation- intro by Papp, turned over to Corbett

Papp- asked Corbett to look over Articles to make sure they are adequate for us to operate as a Land Trust

Corbett- He went through and used examples from several other Land Trusts to modify NCTA's
Increases ability to partner with other organizations and to provide administrative guidance as we acquire land.

Szabo- Is it appropriate to list agencies in the Articles?

Corbett- yes.. as you want to partner. You could use more general language, but it fast tracks us into getting funds by pre-agreeing to follow their guidelines

Papp- this is leading to a committee, and they will need to look at how specific we want to be

Szabo- how easy is it to add to the list? Not very, although the wording could be changed to make it easier.

Blount- every time you change Articles they have to be re-filed with the State- don't want to be continually doing this. Might be able to refer to an Addendum

Leinen- may be able to call on some legal help so that we make appropriate changes to the Articles

Corbett- To include these changes gives agencies more reason to trust us, because we are agreeing to follow their guidelines

Yost has already agreed to chair a committee to look at these.

Papp- this committee will also be looking at By-Laws- let's wait to form the committee till we get to that point.

Buckeye Trail Association Board- Harris

Presentation of new guide to the Buckeye Trail Guide "Follow the Blue Blazes"

A limited number of copies will be presented to "friends" of the BT. Papp receives an autographed copy.

Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour- Blount

Tour will be across country and world. Competition for adventure films

Last year 263 entries, 12 selected for the tour

Profits go to Farmington High School Leadership Course, but somehow organizations can tap into these funds

Derek gave a presentation about NCT last night at one of the showings. He got a lot of interest.

There are other film festivals as well. They are always looking for places to host a showing.

High quality presentations. He recommends.

Corbett- one or more chapters might host one of these and thus get some revenue? Yes.

He continues to make presentations about the trail at various locations

Papp- see nomination form for Volunteer of Year Award from AHS

Lunch 12:00- 12:50

Legislative Issues- Papp, Blount

Papp- 2004 Budget Request handout is what was used for lobbying week

Request for increase to \$840K

Increases would be Trail Planner for NPS, Trail enhancements, Two Regional Managers

In reality, 2003 we got \$543K not \$550K

About in same position as last year, yet perhaps a little better in a political sense.

Blount- we always strongly leverage Federal dollars- positive response

We do well at fitting with Increased Partnerships and Healthy Citizens initiatives

Appreciation by staff at our presentation and transparency of how we use monies

Papp- will be sending letter to Chapter Presidents to encourage invitations to legislators for NTD Events

Will be talking to Alicia Hoffarth to try to leverage Dorgan (ND) better in his role as Appropriations Chair

Several legislators signed as a result of letter-writing campaigns

Blount- make an effort to visit offices personally

Willing Seller- looks promising to get the 9-trail bill (S651) out of the Senate

Hearing will be May 6- link on web site to reach it

If this passes we WILL be in the Land Stewardship business

Regional Workshops on Land Trust Activities- Corbett

Leinen- Announces that Pat Allen is resigning as Land Trust Chair

Corbett- Trips to NY and PA indicated that there is interest in pursuing ways to acquire access to land. We need to develop a sophisticated Land Trust Function. Need to come up to speed

quickly. In NY, would like to involve chapters, local land trusts, guest speakers for training, local professionals (attorneys, real estate, estate planners). In PA the needs are a little different, but still a need to link up with planning organizations and land trusts. Need to find funds to actually do this. Would like to start in NY.

Young- big need to make progress in SE Michigan

History and Heritage Committee- Leinen

Saur has resigned as chair

Leinen- good for someone from West Michigan to head up because that is where it began

Veit- will check on some potential people to work on it

Recruiting Leaders- Williamson

Rich Harris will not run for re-election, so will be giving up VP East

Is working on a list of potential board members as a pool

Finding people from development, real estate, communication management backgrounds

Regional Trail Management Assistant Program- Corbett

His job has expanded rapidly in only 3 months

Need to catalog assets along the trail

Need uniform data along the trail

Proposes an internship to develop this information

Put together a possible way to fund this- somewhat late this year, but may be able to go ahead

Has a PA assistant who will work on a volunteer basis this summer

By-Laws Updates- Papp

Need to clean up and review them

Wants a committee to take a look, both minor and a few major issues

Affiliate definition does not work for some of our partner organizations- might want a new category

Should be same committee that is looking at Articles of Incorporation

Volunteers- Williamson

Goals- By-laws by Aug, Articles of Incorporation by Dec

Mountain Bike Club Activities- Papp

Recent correspondence from MMBA's Todd Scott- they have requested that we remove the language to manage the trail primarily for hiking and backpacking- but we can't do that
Corbett- has talked to Todd Scott.

Should be talking about renewing the idea of an MOU to find the things we have in common as muscle-powered activities

He would like to get them to agree to increase trail miles, but with segregated use

Blount- has talked to Dan Harrison. They want to partner with SOLAR to work on the spur from the NCT to the Lake Michigan Rec Area

Szabo- Can we add a statement to the membership to support our vision for the trail

Papp- probably not consistent with having a representative organization

We will not compromise our Vision, but will continue to try to communicate

Chainsaws- Corbett

Came up as an issue early in dialogue with Allegheny NF. You must use NF certification if you want to use chain saw in the NF. He followed up with the question of how fast NF will respond if volunteers report locations where trees need to be removed? ANF said "within a week." Baldwin district of Manistee NF said "3 days." Hold them to this, give them accurate notification.

Tait- what happens if a chapter buys a chain saw and someone gets hurt? Liability issues.

Corbett- FS is very interested in seeing volunteers sign the Volunteer Agreements.

Blount- can chapters get their own training by people who have passed FS course? No

Young- Training has been reduced to 20 hours to certify for everything except felling trees. You can't hold them to response time. But yes, we do need to do a better job of getting volunteers to sign the Volunteer Agreement

Veit- people do use saws on land that is not NF, impatient trail workers. WMI passed a Chapter resolution to require training

Lucas- don't give up on the FS. Try to work with the lowest level (Districts in NF's)

Papp- the organization should have a policy

Howell- Szarka arranged for NPS trainer to give a course to FLT. NPS and NFS have agreed to an 8 hour training.

Leinen- most work can be done with hand tools anyway

Menke- NPS, FS, NCTA have almost agreed on standards for chainsaw certification

Break

Reports

GIS Coordinator- Stram

MI-06 map completed

Many maps in progress

One intern this semester

Also updates to some maps

Some larger map samples available for view

ADK Unit Management boundaries

Grant received to get additional computer program license

National Geographic Topo software has made contact to put NCT on their maps as a download from their website. Their staff is working on the conversion program to make this happen

Trail Status Definitions for map legends has been revised for better understanding

Ultimately, every section of trail will fall into one of these categories

Veit- may want to redo chart in North Star

Executive Director- Papp

See written report

DTM – Corbett

Thanks to everyone who has helped him get up to speed, and made him feel welcome

First Forest Plan Revision letter is on the way to the Manistee National Forest

Creates a model letter to be used with other forests

Trail Council and Chapter meetings- has begun attending these to interact and learn

NY- met with folks from DEC office to discuss the Umbrella Plan for route selection through Adirondack Park. They don't have time to write the Request for Plan proposals, but he has been able to streamline that process by offering to help write an Invitation for Bid proposal. Then NCTA could bid on the plan. DEC sees conflict of interest, but a separate organization could write the proposal. NPS has agreed to do this.

PA- met with Trail Council, ANF. Central Planning Commission wants to use our trail as a kickoff for their 16-county travel and tourism promotion

Lowell rail corridor- doesn't seem to be much movement on this, not sure why they have cooled off

Has been able to do some presentations at MSU to both students and faculty. They want to add an internship requirement to some programs and may want to work with us on that. Rob said they need to keep that open for all seven states. May be a similar opportunity at Slippery Rock College in PA.

Veit- Carol Griffith (GVSU) wants to update trail user demographics survey

Corbett- another project with wetland crossings by trail

Williamson- How long are the internships? How are these funded? Volunteer internships are not a good way to go. We need to find private money to fund them.

Tait- has started a grant-writing organization to pool information and training

Hoffarth- Valley City, ND also has a similar group- very successful

Has submitted criteria to Nature Conservancy, to look at reroute in Wisconsin. They want to know how wide a buffer zone we want protected

In MIUP also looking at TNC purchase, and will protect the NCT

Trail Foreman- Menke

Most items already covered- see report

Spends a lot of time with Tiffany with conversion to standardize the NPS and NCTA maps to produce new master quad sheets

Has worked on revision of proposed route in PA for about 150 miles

Tait- sent directly to county planners who could print them for use and presentation

Travel to Angola, IN to speak to Great Lakes Park Training Institute- largest in Midwest- includes state, county, city parks, etc. Good way to provide info about the NCT

Training on trail maintenance at White Cloud this past weekend. Talked about Adopter's responsibilities

In late June, roving trail crew will go to Valley City for hands on training and muscle-power to build the trail up the steep hill behind the college

Audio-Visual Committee- Young

Old program has been reviewed and it is just not useable. We will have a draft of a new script by the August meeting

Veit- Dill has sent a sample Power Point program we can look at too

Web Site Report- Young

See report- hits in March did slip back under 1000, but average for year about 1000/month

Chapter Feature has not been updated- will be taking more control of this soon

NPS Report- Howell

Minnesota Arrowhead Reroute Scoping meetings have gone very well. Well attended, no conflict Will be written up and sent to Supervisor for signature. Should be official within the year.

Cyclic Maintenance money will require that we have an inventory of structures

Corbett- does NPS have a template for info that must be filled in? Yes

FSTAG- Papp

He has spent a lot of time reviewing and writing comments on their guidelines

They are about as good as we can hope for

Biggest remaining issue is that FS says any facility that is built must be accessible even if the trail is not.

The AT has been trying to fight this. Papp would like to also write to support them.

General consensus is that we agree with this and support Papp in this issue

New Business-

Recognition of outgoing members, Veit, Harris, Young

Next meeting is 2 pm Thursday, Aug 31, Marquette

Motion to adjourn Veit, second Blount

Adjourned 4 pm

