Trails and Blueways Council (T&BC) Meeting Report May 28, 2024

Attendance: 10 members in person, 3 members virtual and 2 members absent.

Staff persons Bryce Barrett, Yolanda Hipski, Eugene Loew, David Kroeger, John Simkins and DPR Deputy Director Janet Bartnik were present.

Highlights and News:

Trail Maintenance and Volunteer Efforts

Eugene Loew gave a presentation on Trail Maintenance Updates.

- FY24 marked the inaugural year with John Simkins serving as the first PWC Trail Supervisor. Alongside his team member Dustin Dugan, they conducted regular monitoring and maintenance of trails across PWC, installed unarmored turnpike and culverts on Powell's Creek and orchestrated two significant clean-up events, resulting in the collection of 200 bags of trash and 40 tires.
- They, along with the TBC and other groups, advocated for additional resources for trail creation and maintenance. $99K is allocated for trail equipment. $325K is allocated for three additional maintenance staff members, increasing the FY25 staff by 300% and including $75K in additional service and supply funds.
- There are three Stewardship agreements in place:
    - Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts (MORE) – Locust Shade & Saving Grace Trail
    - Animal Education and Rescue Organization (AERO) – Meadow and Pollinator Garden Rollins Ford Park
    - Prince William Conservation Alliance (PWCA) – Natural Area Maintenance Veterans Park
- These create opportunities for enhanced features or amenities through partnering for maintenance either directly or indirectly maintaining the enhanced feature or service.
- They summarized the Trail Monitors who inspected 435 miles during 303 Hours of Volunteer time over 1 year. They also reported on Adopt a Trail activities in which 291 people from 23 organizations participated for 435 hours with 55 miles of trails cleaned and maintained. Multiple pictures from these efforts were shown.
- The Volunteers Description, Policy and Stewardship Agreements were distributed at the meeting. DPR is looking for more volunteers to walk trails and report on needed maintenance activities as Trail Monitors. One can volunteer through Volunteer Prince William. It is important that there is maintenance identified for any new trails created in Prince William County. This might be a good topic to discuss in an upcoming Coles District newsletter.

Trail along VRE Rail

[COLES] Bryce Barrett described the ATIIP Grant Application for the Design of the VRE Manassas Line Trail with Rail.

- It is being jointly filed by PWC with the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park. The first phase (3.5 miles) will run from the Manassas VRE Station on the north side, crossover in Manassas Park, possibly at their community center or VRE Station and then run on the south side into Fairfax, connecting over a bridge of the Occoquan with the Bull Run Occoquan Trail in Fairfax and the trails at Bloom Park in Manassas Park. Note that the map in the application shows the trail entirely on the south side of the tracks which does not match what is desired by Manassas due to existing trails and roads. Ultimately this trail will run all the way to Arlington.
- A resolution (24-12) to support this ATIIP Grant Application was brought before the T&BC, passed, and sent to the BOCS. You should have received it in late May.

234 – Brentsville Interchange

- [COLES] Bryce reported that the completion of the interchange and the opening of the bike-pedestrian bridge over Route 234 had slipped to June. A ribbon cutting will be scheduled once this is completed.
- On June 1st, I noticed that the barriers were no longer in place blocking access to the bike-pedestrian bridge and that it appeared to be open on June 2nd. On June 5th, I rode my bike up to Manassas on an errand and crossed over this bridge for the first time. Here are a few pictures from my ride.









Yorkshire TLC Grant

- [COLES] Bryce reported on the Yorkshire TLC Grant Draft Report from the consultant. It will be put on the website shortly and we will be notified of this. The 50-page report includes travels through 15 intersections in the travel area with a fact sheet for each and general corridor improvements. He is looking for comments on the draft report.

Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST)

- David went over the $325K FLAP Grant status. It is still in procurement and should be cleared within the next week. He will share it with the group when this is in place.
- I mapped 194 data points of existing signage and trail features on sections of the PHNST starting in Occoquan and at Veteran's Park.

Destination Place Rezoning Application

- The Destination Place Rezoning Application includes land at a critical gap in the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail as well as a key location for a possible waterfront access. It is also at a visible entry way into Prince William County. It is highly desirable that the PHNST runs along the water in this section, not along a far-removed urban road (VA 123).
- Liz Cronauer reported that Patti from DPR submitted comments to the developer and invited the developer to a T&BC Meeting. The developer declined the opportunity to attend. Staff reminded the T&BC that the developer did not provide enough detail in their application and thus this will require a resubmission. Discussion pursued on how to move forward. Yolanda mentioned that a chunk of the property is affected significantly by rising sea levels. Members were invited to keep their supervisors appraised of this situation. No need was identified for another resolution until the next submission is received.

Belmont Bay Rezoning

- Yolanda Hipski reported that there is a new submission for Belmont Bay. Land bays appear to be given back to Parks. There is a lot of information of interest in PHNST. This was just assigned to Yolanda, who will report on it at the June T&BC Meeting.
- Russell Bryant, a citizen attending the meeting, also reported on a meeting on the upcoming Belmont Bay development with the WPCA. PHNST was only recognized along the adjoining wildlife refuge. No wording changes were made on the northern sections of the redevelopment.

Hawthorne at Kettle Run, Alderwood at Kettle Run, Longleaf at Kettle Run plus Two Other Rezonings

- Bryce Barrett reported on these five applications along Vint Hill Road in the western part of the county – three had been received and two were forthcoming. Links to three received rezonings were provided.
- There were very few details provided beyond a set of design guidelines for all of them that are not enforceable. There are many issues across all PWC agencies. There are trails called out in each package, but no one appears to have looked at connections between them. Bryce and George are reviewing. These rezonings will cause Vint Hill to be widened to 4 lanes with a planned shared use path. It was also pointed out that the Longleaf development wanted to bring Vint Hill Road through their development instead of widening it on the edge. Thus, there would be no shared use path on the old Vint Hill road. This appears to be solely for that development's benefit and not other parcels on the current Vint Hill Road.
- Hawthorn at Kettle Run (easternmost parcel) is supposed to be 60% Open Space but the submission does not meet this.

Administrative:

- Janet handed out challenge coins to all TBC members to give those contributing to county trails and blueways efforts. If you are aware of any worthy recipients, please let me know or contact Janet for a coin to give them.

External Organization Reports

Greater Prince William Trails Coalition (GPWTC). Eileen Sheridan, Chair, Neil Nelson, Secretary

- The second Sunday hike in May took place on the Occoquan Greenway. June's hike was TBD at the meeting but actually repeated a hike along the Catharpin Greenway on Sunday June 9th..
- The Quarterly GPWTC Meeting will take place on Thursday, June 27th at 10 AM at the GMU Science Center in Belmont Bay. NVRC will provide an update on the PHNST and there will be an update on the AIITP grant application.

Prince William Trails & Streams Coalition (PWTSC). Neil Nelson, Bill McCarty

- There will be a workday on the Occoquan Greenway including an updated bridge.

- The PWTSC pays for many Adopt-A-Trail signs.

Mid Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts (MORE). Jason Williams, Rich Wilson

- 2 miles of new trails have been created in James Long Park. This is a multi-use U-shaped trail along Little Bull Run.
- The next SMORES ride at Andrew Leitch Park was on June 4th.
- A raffle has been set up to collect for Locust Shade Park improvements.

Trails Keepers. Catherine O'Connor

- Three trail walks occurred to maintain Conway Robinson State Forest trails.
- They are taking part in the Bee Festival on June 22nd.

T&BC Member News and Concerns of Note

- Duane described new trails for horses at Dove's Landing and continued improvements there. He likes the new signage there. He also mentioned riding in the new state park in Hillsboro.
- Duane noted that the Park's County Recreation Mapper is lacking equestrian facilities. This will soon be retired, and the replacement will have equestrian facilities.
- Duane asked about who to call when people without handicap signs or plates park in the handicap spaces of Long Park. He was directed to call the Duty Ranger for any problems like this at any park.
- Eileen reported that Supervisor Bode asked her about the joint money for Transportation and Parks and thought that parking for Neabsco would be a good match. Janet reported that there was no decision from Transportation and Parks yet. Eileen also mentioned an upcoming Strategic Plan Meeting for the Occoquan District.

Next Meetings

- At Hellwig: Full T&BC – June 25th at 6:30 PM.
- At Hellwig: PHNST S/C – July 17th at 2 PM.

Reported by Joe Marshall