

Tunbridge Legal Trails
Draft Recommendations with Group Feedback
9/20/21

Based on the work of the Trails Committee, Planning Commission, and agreed upon outcomes from the 9/1/21 and 9/8/21 joint meeting between those two groups and the public, the following draft recommendations regarding legal trails are offered to the Selectboard:

- Regarding all four trails (all groups favor policy and not an ordinance):
 - Trails are only for recreational, non-motorized access except in the cases where legal trails intersect VAST trails for winter use
 - No event use will be allowed
 - Group 1 – need to clearly define what kinds of events we are including here (does it have to require a fee? Pre-arranged as a group?)
 - Group 2 wondered whether landowners can grant groups permission; close to consensus this might be problematic and favor overall prohibition - prefer groups negotiate re-routes w landowners
 - Group 3 full agreement.
 - Access may be limited to all user groups based on the season; we anticipate trail closure during mud season and at other times as needed due to environmental or situation circumstances.
 - Group 3 wondered about the O'Brien's wedding venues and disruption to those.
 - Partnership with landowners and trail abutters is important, but should not be the only decision point when deciding trail use and maintenance.
 - Group 1 - create a trails committee made up of volunteer residents that post trails in mud season, address environmental concerns and interface with land owners
 - Group 2 noted selectboard intention to create Trails Committee even prior to current proceedings, likelihood this group is appropriate focus for maintenance and review (with appropriate guidance and input from experts and regulators) but need to be explicit about delegation of these responsibilities.
 - Group 3 in agreement.
 - Given the challenge of enforcement, trails should be reviewed at least annually to ensure that the conditions remain appropriate for use
 - Group 2: eventual consensus that annual review needed early, appropriate planning/review window to be re-visited/evaluated over time.
 - Group 3 WHO will review etc.?

- The four legal trails are unique and should be given individualized consideration
 - Falls Hill
 - Falls Hill trail has been recently maintained and does not have any concerns regarding wetlands. This trail should remain open to all non-motorized use.
 - Group 2 noted existing VAST use to be included, mostly favored keeping ROW but not full consensus on this (input regarding discontinuance due to dead-end status and current landowner sentiment). Also OK with wording as stated here, with recognition/discussion of management needs including maintenance of waterbars and possible need for improving vegetative cover
 - Group 3 suggests the following wording: “Falls Hill has been recently maintained. Falls Hill does not have any concerns regarding wetlands, but has potential steepness causing erosion issues.” There needs to be signage at the end, respecting land owners and private property.
 - Baptist Hill
 - Aside from use during the winter by VAST, this trail should be closed
 - Group 1 - until current conditions are improved. Trail not to be discontinued
 - Group 2 also noted existing VAST use, consensus on current closure to other uses but opposition to discontinuance.
 - Group 3 added because it may be a Class 2 wetland
 - Crossroad
 - Given the current trail circumstance (lack of signage and maintenance has led to most users leaving the trail and going onto private property), this trail is closed until maintenance can occur, paired with clear signage
 - Group 1 - indicating sensitive areas where it is recommended to walk your bicycle or lead your horse.
 - Group 2 favored ‘open to pedestrian uses’ until maintenance occurs.
 - Group 3 agreed to clear signage and possibly physical fencing of areas that are presently misused.
 - Maintenance will require coordination with the State District Wetlands Ecologist to plan for and receive permission for the wetlands crossing at the low point of the trails.
 - Group 3 Maintenance would need to be with conformation with wetland rules.
 - Maintenance may be performed by volunteer groups once a plan and any necessary permitting is in place, to be confirmed by the Planning Commission

- Group 2 discussed Trails Committee may be the appropriate body, but open to broader review - but need to be explicit in delegation of responsibilities.
 - Group 3 wondered what was to be involved in maintenance water issues, downed trees etc?
- Orchard Road
 - Until this trail can be reviewed by the State District Wetlands Ecologist, it is open only to pedestrian use (hiking, snowshoeing, skiing).
 - After review, a plan will be developed for use of this trail.
 - Group 1 - for all non motorized uses with appropriate signage.
 - Group 3 felt the need to have the VT state wetland expert look at the trail as well.