SESSION TITLE : Protecting Trail Experience

CONVENER(S): Jim Wolf

PARTICIPANTS: n/a

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS and/or RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Should start with the legislation definition of Scenic Trails that they "provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential" and they are for the "conservation and enjoyment of nationally significant Scenic, Cultural, Natural, and Historic qualities of areas through which trails pass."
2. Considering the history (including legislative) and setting of the particular Trail, what is its nature and purpose?

Example of Uses and Activities that may be evaluated on the Trail: Mountain Bikes, Motorized Use, Competitive Events, Equestrian and other animal use

First questions you should address in considering new activities along the Trail or Trail Corridor are:

What will affect the satisfaction of the objectives for which the Trail was created?
What's happening on the Trail itself?
What activities in these areas affect enjoyment on the Trail?

How to Evaluate Activities on areas through which Trail passes:

Examples: wind farms, solar, oil and gas Hard Rock Miming
So how do we evaluate these activities?

First, it must start with an expression of the nature and purposes of the Trail for which it was created:

For example the CDNST nature and purpose statement: Provide for High Quality Scenic Primitive Hiking and Horseback Riding Opportunities and to conserve natural historic and cultural resources along the corridor

How do we evaluate proposed uses and activities in this context?

1. Do they substantially interfere with the Nature and Purposes of the Trail
2. Think of this in terms of activities involving federal jurisdiction (ownership or regulatory), where land management laws and NEPA call for such analysis; different considerations come into play for other (State and private activities).
3. What factors go into substantial interference with nature and purposes first the nature and purpose and statement itself, second an alternative for evaluation

- Physical impacts: plants, erosion and water quality, sensitive species
- Aesthetic: quiet, solitude, scenic
- Social: prior use, enhancing community support
- Safety: personal injury, water availability, desired level of challenge

- Displacement of intended uses (e.g. equestrian vs. bikes)
- Construction-related: standards (for existing and proposed segments), added maintenance implications, effective barriers to non-desired uses.

(NTSA Section 7a 2)
What tools can we use for evaluation?
Visual Quality Standards
Where can they be found for the Trail: Forest Plans, Study Reports and Comprehensive Plans
How have they been applied: Case Studies?

Experience of Other Trails
Where can we find other Trail Experience definitions
How is this applied in the Trail setting
Identify a Need: Scenery Management System Training
Identify a Need: Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Training

How do you protect a corridor when it doesn't exist?

- Within a land management unit, define a limited corridor where scenic trail values are primary
- For broader areas, such as viewsheds, corridor is wide enough to encompass the location of any activity that impacts the trail.

What are soft approaches versus hard approaches to protecting the Trail Experience. This is the idea of mitigation versus prohibition.

Identify a Need: National Scenic Trail Act Training

Tom Gilbert: Agencies should be using this philosophy: If somebody proposes a new activity- you demonstrate to me that this activity will enhance the appreciation of the trail and the enjoyment of the experience and have no adverse impacts on the Trail, then we will consider it. Positive demonstration is on the burden of proponent and not the agency or partner to show why it won't hurt the Trail Experience.

Greg Warren: Document the process in an official way to help things go forth to protect the Trail

Greg Warren- the idea is trails are so located for the Maximum protection of primitive setting

Discussion on setting: Located to avoid activities that would detract from the setting or the nature and purpose for which the Trail was designated.

A discussion of how "primitive setting" was described in house report # 1631 versus in the legislation 90-1631 followed and it was determined that the language in the report is

not necessarily advisory but can be like law direction, even though it is not what is in the final legislation.

Question to address: Is the trail designed to sustain the use.

IS the need for an Emergency closure necessary to protect the experience?

Questions to address: Designated use versus designed use or managed use versus designed use.

Ask the question: is this appropriate??

Question to address: Cumulative Impacts trail wide versus within district boundaries

Question to address: Never CE any event in relation to all events if in zone and hopefully trail wide, but rather nothing less than an EA should be used.

Scenic Trails:

Provide for the maximum outdoor recreation potential

What is evidence and potential Displacement of primary users-
Does the proposed activity provide an "authentic" Trail Experience

Identify a need: Q and A approach to have as guide for questions to address

How do other planning process impact the management of trails? Travel Mgmt, Forest Planning?

Document the process so whoever is charge can know how decisions were arrived and can't be altered.

The questions and procedure for addressing the questions should be consistent for all Trails, but the answers might be different depending on setting, nature and purpose.

Evaluate what's the congressional history, if it's just an amendment to the Act, does the legislative history of the underlying legislation transfer over and if so how does that impact the trail

Identified the Asymmetry of Aggravation principle:

- High Impact users aggravate all, but are harmed by none
- Low impact users aggravate none, but are harmed by all
- (http://www.hoosierhikerscouncil.org/about/trail_policy_issues/narrp_article2.htm)