

Appendix B

Pennsylvania's Specialized Trail User Group Summary of Input

In summer 2019, DCNR collected feedback from statewide organizations representing various specialized trail user groups about their trail use, priority issues, challenges, and needs. A summary of their input is provided below.

Equestrian

Over 2,600 miles of equestrian trails are mostly on state and federal lands with maintenance conducted by volunteers in cooperation with land managers. The Pennsylvania Equine Council and equestrian trail users identified the following priority issues, challenges, and needs for the next five years.

Priority Issues

- Engaging more equestrians in trail planning—in some areas, plans seem to move forward without any input.
- Improving tool-use and land-management skills among equestrians, particularly in eastern Pennsylvania.
- Spreading more information about trail etiquette. Equestrians believe that trail etiquette is generally improving, though in some areas interactions between equestrians, and cyclists need improvement.
- Continuing to maintain good relations between DCNR land managers and equestrians.
- Continuing efforts to move the Horse-Shoe Trail off roads wherever possible and install signage at road crossings.

Challenges

- Perceived tense relationship with PennDOT. Some equestrians believe that PennDOT does not place enough emphasis on safety for non-motorized users, and report that the process of getting PennDOT to install road-crossing signs is difficult.
- Lack of funding and volunteers.
- Ignorance among private landowners of the [Recreational Use of Land & Water Act \(RULWA\)](#) rule that was improved in 2018 to better protect those who allow recreation on their properties.
- Perception that parks are less “horse friendly” than in previous decades.

Needs

- Improved communication system to provide up-to-date, correct information to equestrians and clubs about hot-button issues, build a sense of common purpose, and discuss plans.
- Improvements to road crossings.
- Coordination with municipalities and land trusts to protect open space needed for equestrian trails.

Hiking

Within Pennsylvania's trail system, the largest number of miles are hiking trails – 7,100 miles with many built and maintained mostly by volunteers. These trails are some of the state's oldest trails. A significant number of miles exist on state lands; resource agencies like DCNR have played a large role in the establishment and maintenance of those trail systems. Pennsylvania's state forests thousands of miles of hiking trails including the 18 State Forest Hiking Trails that cover a variety of terrain and difficulty over nearly 775 miles of trails. The Pennsylvania hiking community, including the KTA and local clubs, identified the following priority issues, challenges, and needs for the next five years.

Priority Issues

- Identifying and increasing funding for trail development and maintenance.
- Addressing the use of e-bikes and other new motor-operated devices on trails.
- Managing trails as the climate changes and severe weather becomes more frequent.
- Maintaining existing trails.
- Building new trails (including closing trail gaps) to expand networks of connected trails and public lands.
- Promoting the idea of hiking locally and carpooling to reduce transportation emissions associated with hiking.

Challenges

- Difficulty navigating DCNR and DCED grant programs.
- Limited funding, staff, and volunteers.
- Apathy and ignorance among politicians and the public about the importance of trails and conservation generally.
- Lack of public transportation, sidewalks, and bike lanes in areas with trails, which forces people to drive to trailheads.

Needs

- Increased funding for trail development and maintenance, as well as more funding for DCNR to manage trails in state parks and forests.
- Simplified grant programs.
- More volunteers to complete trail work.

Mountain Biking

The term "Mountain Biking" encompasses many different forms of offroad cycling and each form seeks a different type of trail experience. Mountain biking trails tend to be on private, state, and federal lands and are mostly built and maintained by clubs in cooperation with landowners. This user group includes gravel biking and bikepacking, two of the fastest-growing types of cycling. Both utilize a combination of dirt/gravel roads and trails. The Pennsylvania mountain biking community who attended the May 2019 Pennsylvania Mountain Bike Summit including the PICL and a wide range of other stakeholders, identified the following priority issues, challenges, and needs for the next five years.

Priority Issues

- Creating mountain bike trails that offer skill- and risk-appropriate gateway experiences for new riders. Too often, there are either easy rail-trails or challenging, technical singletrack trails, with

nothing in between. More entry- and intermediate-level trails would allow riders to develop skills gradually.

- Building new trails, especially trails closer to where people live. Communities across the U.S. offer models of how to incorporate short skill-building trails and pump tracks into urban greenspaces.
- Developing more trails and facilities to accommodate high school practices and competitions, some of which attract thousands of competitors and spectators.
- Expanding initiatives to train and manage trail volunteers.
- Collecting and sharing more data on trail use and the economic impact of mountain biking.
- Promoting mountain biking, bikepacking, and gravel riding opportunities in Pennsylvania, including interscholastic competition.

Challenges

- Opposition to trails from land managers and residents (especially in urban and suburban areas), often stemming from misconceptions about what these trails entail or who they will attract.
- Barriers to mountain biking on state game lands and in state parks. PICL would like to work with PGC and DCNR to create more mountain biking opportunities (such as trails, pump tracks, and skill-building playgrounds) on public land, especially near urban areas where it is often the only undeveloped land.
- Maintaining trails as the sport grows and they experience heavier use.
- The lack of a statewide, central organization hinders the building of relationships between individual mountain bike clubs.

Needs

- Support, resources, and guidance about how to create trails in urban and suburban settings, including tools for advocates to make the case for mountain biking in their communities.
- Data (such as Strava Metro data) to better inform mountain biking policy and show municipalities and organizations the economic potential of mountain biking. Often this data is expensive or time-intensive to procure.
- An expansion of DCNR's goal of a trail within 15 minutes of every Pennsylvanian to include singletrack trails, as well as an expansion of the understanding of trail gaps to include mountain-bike trail systems.

Off-Highway Vehicle Riding

Pennsylvania's 900+ miles of OHV trails and riding opportunities are located on private lands, private club lands, public-private pay-to-ride facilities, state lands, and in Allegheny National Forest. The organizations who manage these trails and riding opportunities have their own unique sets of rules that govern the type of OHVs that are allowed, as well as how, when and where they are ridden. OHVs include all-terrain vehicles (ATV), side-by-sides (SxS), off-highway motorcycles (OHM), full-size four-wheel drive vehicles (4x4), and similar types of off-road vehicles. The PAOHV identified the following priority issues, challenges, and needs for the next five years.

Priority Issues

- Closing trail gaps and creating more OHV trails on public and private land in Pennsylvania. Neighboring states such as West Virginia have invested in OHV infrastructure and attract riders from Pennsylvania; PAOHV wants those riders to be able to recreate in Pennsylvania.
- Promoting the economic potential of the OHV industry.

- Rebuilding existing trails to accommodate wider vehicles.
- Allowing dirt bikes to be registered with DCNR and to access existing ATV trails on public lands.

Challenges

- Moratorium on construction of new trails on public lands. The limited number of OHV miles in Pennsylvania forces OHV enthusiasts to travel to neighboring states.
- Increasing size of ATVs—they are becoming larger and cannot fit on some existing trails.
- Lack of leadership by local authorities to tackle the problem of illegal riding.

Needs

- Continued collaboration between DCNR and the OHV community to develop OHV policy.
- Rescindment of DCNR’s moratorium on new OHV trail construction on public lands.
- Implementation of the managed-growth strategy for OHV use outlined in the recent Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Committee (CNRAC) report.
- Passage of landowner liability reform legislation to encourage more trail development on private lands.
- Passage of legislation allowing dirt bikes to access trails on public land.

Snowmobiling

Trails are generally established by organized clubs in cooperation with DCNR, PGC, and USFS. Pennsylvania’s 2,500-mile system of snowmobile trails is extensive; however, the seasons and locations where snowmobiling can still occur have declined. Snowmobile trails often serve other uses in the off-season or may not exist unless snow is present. Their alignments often change slightly from season to season. The PSSA identified the following priority issues, challenges, and needs for the next five years.

Priority Issues

- Obtaining dedicated funding for trail maintenance—especially grooming equipment.
- Implementing a GPS system to use for reimbursement of grooming activities.
- Obtaining consistent funding for snowmobile clubs and distributing it equitably.
- Increasing promotion of snowmobiling opportunities in Pennsylvania (for example, by including information about trails in registration mailings from PennDOT).
- Addressing inconsistent law enforcement concerning registration and insurance of snowmobiles.

Challenges

- Difficulty determining the cost of a dedicated fund for trail maintenance and grooming activities and how this money will be distributed. Currently, the available money for snowmobiling is not distributed equally amongst clubs.
- Lack of partnership between PSSA and state agencies (PennDOT and DCNR).
- Lack of a concerted effort to increase registration fees, initiate trail permits, etc.

Needs

- A meeting between PennDOT, DCNR, and PSSA to agree on a statewide program to address funding issues and consider snowmobile policy changes.
- Inclusion of PSSA in all trail-advisory groups.
- Increased snowmobile registration fees to cover costs and/or consider other possibilities to raise funds, such as fees for trail permits or on snowmobile sales.
- Funding for trail maintenance and grooming to be shared between the state and clubs.

Water Trails

The Pennsylvania Water Trails Partnership, consisting of the National Park Service, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, PA Fish and Boat Commission, and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, began in 2008 with a shared goal for the successful promotion and management of water trails. Since that time, the network of designated water trails has grown to more than 2,300 miles across all the major watersheds in the state. The 28 individual water trails that make up the network showcase a wide array of organizations and citizen groups that work together to promote their waterways' unique outdoor experiences. Guidance for program improvement is provided in the *Water Trails Program Strategic Plan (2017-2022)*, which was developed through significant engagement with program partners and trail managers. The following are identified priority issues, challenges, and needs related to the water trails program.

Priority Issues

- Program Oversight: Streamlining and enhancing overall program structure
- Program Support: Increasing funding opportunities for statewide program activities and individual water trail enhancements
- Program Support: Improving communication between water trail managers and program leadership
- Promotion & Celebration: Developing new ways to spread the word about Pennsylvania's water trails

Challenges

- Diverse managing organizations with varying capacity and activity levels
- Limited funding, staff, and volunteers
- Providing consistent facilities, experiences, support etc. statewide

Needs

- Increased staffing dedicated to program management
- Increased funding for facility development, maintenance, and programming and outreach at an individual water trail level
- Active volunteers to support activities of individual water trails
- Management entities for "orphaned" water trails
- Development of additional access points and improvements to current access points along existing water trails