

NTS GIS Network- Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 17, 2019 1:00 pm Mountain Time (12pm PT, 2pm CT, 3pm ET)

MEETING AGENDA

1. Welcome & Introductions (Peter Bosnall/Ryan Cooper)

Meeting Attendees:

1. Russell Hirschler, Executive Director of the Upper Valley Trails Alliance (Presenter)
2. Claire Polfus - Center for Community GIS (Presenter)
3. Peter Bosnall (moderator)
4. Ryan Cooper (moderator)
5. Anthony Tridente - USFS, Florida National Scenic Trail
6. Gita Urban-Mathieux - USGS National Geospatial Program
7. Tiffany Stram - GIS/IT Specialist, Ice Age Trail Alliance, Cross Plains, WI
8. Reese Hirth - NPS, Geographer
9. Elizabeth McCartney (USGS) National Digital Trails Project, USGS
10. Michelle Beiler
11. Rick Gmirkin - Ala Kahakai NHT
12. Stu Gregory

2. Announcements & Information from Audience

- a. National Trails Workshops announced for 2020: May 18-21 in Ghost Ranch, New Mexico and October 26-30 in Morganton, North Carolina.
- b. Chelsea Bodamer is departing from her Outreach and Youth Programs Coordinator role with the Partnership for the National Trails System.
- c. Other news or announcements?

3. Discussion Topic

Presenter – Russell Hirschler, Executive Director of the Upper Valley Trails Alliance

21st Century Way to Attract Trail Users: On-Line Trail Finder

We will share a new online trail database: Trail Finder - a cooperative, web-based database showing publicly accessible trails throughout New Hampshire and Vermont (with a separate, similar program in Maine). The project aims to connect people to publicly accessible trails, increasing the public's access to healthy outdoor recreational opportunities in their own communities. Unlike other open source databases where any public information can be added, Trail Finder uses only information that is approved by the landowner and trail manager. Collaboration among conservation landowners, trail groups, and towns are contributing trails data, including landownership and allowable uses, in a single, GIS web-based platform. The project works with organizations, towns, and willing landowners to digitally map existing trails and record public access and allowable trail uses. Trail encourages people to get outside, be active, and connect with amazing conserved lands. We will explore the extra incentives and fun features in Trail Finder.

Notes:

- Trail Finder: <https://www.trailfinder.info/>
- Upper Valley Trails alliance
- Center for Community GIS - supports mapping and GIS needs of public interest groups, large and small
- CCGIS has developed and collaborated on trail finder websites across the country
- Trail Finder - variety of partners, focus on NH and VT; MaineTrailFinder - sister site in Maine
- Other CCGIS-developed sites covering NC, SC, IN, IA, NY
- Primary population: visitors to and residents of NH and VT
- Secondary pop: trail managers who are looking for ways to share info about their trails (location, what to expect, etc).
- VT/NH - 4 season uses of trail; multiple different trail types; needed support of users of multiple trail types
- Why Trail Finder? - common problem: May not know what trails are out there when visiting an area; it is challenging to know what content to trust on the Internet when so much is posted by

- those with partial understanding or without permission.
- Not all landowners and trail managers have the resources or ability to promote and market their trails and organizations
- Currently actively redesigning the website, but the components of the website are the same.
- Finding trails spatially on maps or through activity, etc.
- No fee for creating account and not necessary to sign in to use Trail Finder.
- Broad interest in promoting trails
- partial, outdated, limited, hard to find, conflicting info about trail
- User expectations for fast, easy access to info on the internet
- How has TF helped? - articulated the need; built collaborative partnerships; engaged trail managers; implemented web-based solution; promotions/outreach.
- Content is curated and 100% manager approved.
- Different aspects to each post for a trail - overview, photo, map, quick facts, download, weather, connecting trails.
- Managers can post alerts - both permanent and temporary.
- Results - people are learning about outdoor opportunities; trail managers have a new voice; stakeholder groups have access to a new resource and don't have to reinvent the wheel; comprehensive GIS data being generated and used in other planning arenas.
- 30% growth annually
- Promotion: Find local trails, explore new places, etc.
- Testimonials
- What did it take to do this? - partnerships; must be capable of understanding how trails, technology, audience, volunteers all intersect
- Created a robust RFP process for developing the website.
- Budget was \$40000
- Challenges - it takes time to develop partnerships; time consuming; managing expectations is import; managers have interest but limited time; fundraising.
- How can these systems evolve? - events calendar; trailside services; tracking trails; badge earning; blog/stories.

4. Future Meeting Dates & Topics

- October 15, 2019** - Greg Matthews, COU Coordinator USGS, Digital Trail Project Platform Update
- November 19, 2019** – Brian Deaton and Sarah Rivera, Mapping the Pony Express Commemorative Re-Ride
- December 17, 2019** – No call this month, enjoy the holidays!

We always welcome suggestions for additional topics for discussion or presentations. Please contact Ryan Cooper, Peter Bonsall, and/or Derek Nelson with your suggestions!

NTS GIS Email Address: ntsgis@nps.gov

NTS GIS Network Email List: ntsgis@webmail.itc.nps.gov

NTS GIS Network Website: <https://pnts.org/new/national-trails-system-gis-network/>

NTS GIS Network Mission:

We established the NTS GIS Network as a way to connect the diverse array of National Trails System staff and partners who use GIS systems and products in their work. One of our goals is to facilitate the sharing of information and tools that help us do our jobs more efficiently and innovatively. Because the national trails system is managed as a collaboration of agencies and partner organizations, the NTS GIS Network is open to anyone.