

Minutes

Norwich Trails Committee and volunteers monthly meeting

7 pm, December 1, 2021

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82651305884>

Attendees:

Norwich Trails Committee (NTC) members present: Craig Layne and David Hubbard. *Absent:* Cody Williams.

Volunteers and members of the public: Patti Cera, Stephen Flanders (scribe), Eric Friets, Jim Faughnan, Bob Fiskin, Peter Griggs, Elisabeth Hammer, Doug Hardy, Nick Krembs (facilitator), John McCormick, Sean Ogle, Jon Olsen, and Gerry Plummer

AGENDA

1. Approval of agenda

Krembs called the meeting to order at 7:00. At Hubbard's request, Krembs agreed to add an agenda item on the Norwich Nature Area as part of (4.).

2. Comments from those present: There were no comments about things not on the agenda.

Trail infrastructure

3. Update from the UVTA¹: Ogle summarized recent work with drainage on the Ballard Trail. A discussion ensued about mitigating icing on the "Stairway to Heaven" steps. Ogle said that he would monitor that situation.

Ogle reported that the trail usage statistics at Gile Mountain have been consistent in recent years, cresting in the autumn. (See graphic in Appendix.)

4. Reports on recent trail blockages and actions taken or planned:

a. November 14th – Work on Gile Mountain: Krembs alluded to the [story on the Norwich Trails website](#) that covered this work.

b. Norwich Nature Area: Hubbard enquired whether a Norwich Trails volunteer might be available to help clear buckthorn from the area with a chainsaw. Krembs volunteered to mobilize some help.

5. Trail kiosks

a. Next kiosks: Upper Brown Schoolhouse Road, Heyl Trail (two locations) – Flanders reported that Faughnan has been making kiosks mostly from materials on hand and that the Trails line item in the Conservation Commission budget should cover the remaining ones envisioned.

b. Future kiosks: Burton Woods Road, Cossingham Trail, Tucker Trail – Flanders recommended waiting for further developments to identify authorization status for these trails. Faughnan invited others to participate in kiosk siting decisions.

6. Trail kiosk signage

a. Approve material to be shown for Upper Brown Schoolhouse Road, Heyl Trail: Krembs asked whether there were any comments or concerns about the signs included in the agenda discussion material. None were offered.

¹ Upper Valley Trails Alliance
Norwich Trails

7. Appalachian Trail Corridor

a. NTC position on Barred Owl/Joshua Trail:

Krembs turned the discussion of next steps on this topic over to Hubbard and Layne, who asked input from those present.

Friets observed that absent open mountain-biking terrain on the north side of the corridor, there was no longer a strong justification for riders to pass through as originally envisioned. Hubbard pointed out that the long-established Barred Owl Trail could be configured to accommodate both foot and mountain-bike traffic. Layne concurred.

Layne reported that he will be meeting landowners on the south side of the “Five Points” intersection with a goal to meeting USFS criteria for a corridor crossing there, pertaining to landowner permissions.

After seeking further input from those present, Layne moved and Hubbard seconded that the Norwich Trails Committee authorize Layne and Hubbard to draft and send a letter to the USFS, advocating for a single, multi-use crossing along the Barred Owl route and for a multi-use crossing at Five points. Hearing no objection, the two agreed by consensus to write such a letter.

Reference was made to correspondence recently received from Christopher Mattrick, District Ranger,² suggesting that he would consider further input before making a decision on trail crossings by mid-winter.

Financial

8. Planning for FY 2022-23 budget: Parking—Action on NCC proposal to Norwich selectboard:

Layne reported that the interim town manager has advised him that it would be best for the parking expansion at Gile Mountain and elsewhere not be part of the NCC budget—probably in the DPW budget. He will discuss that project in the NCC budgetary briefing and will advocate for the briefing to occur in December.

Flanders highlighted three options to achieve budgetary approval: a) have it built into the town budget, b) have it approved by the selectboard as a separate warrant article, or c) petition for it to be a warrant article.

Other

9. Trail maps for sale at Dan & Whit’s:

Krembs reported that, based in input in November from Byron Haynes, Flanders had assembled a two-side summary trail map to supplant a September 2007 version by Jonathan Frishtick, showing more recent trails. Plummer reported that he had some ideas for development of next-generation maps for the website and ancillary material. After some discussion on the matter, the topic was deferred to the January meeting.

10. Items for January meeting—Krembs summarized items for discussion in January:

- Kiosk locations and signage
- Update on AT Corridor correspondence to the USFS
- Update on status of budgeting for trail parking
- Update on next-generation mapping for the website
- Further discussion of a map for sale

11. Adjourn

Krembs adjourned the meeting at 8:20.

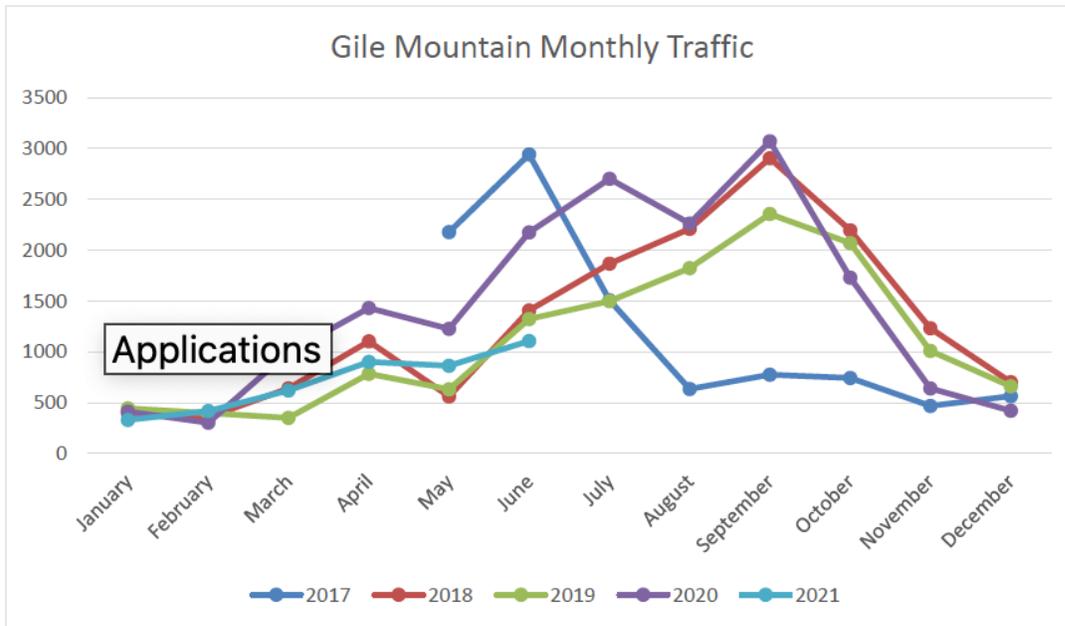
² U.S. Forest Service: Rochester and Middlebury Ranger Districts, Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forests

Appendix: Gile Mountain Trail statistics

The following graph was provided by Sean Ogle and reflects passage in both directions. The counter has not been independently checked for accuracy by an independent observer.

Gile Mountain Traffic Analysis

Traffic Counter has been in the same location on the Gile Mountain Trail for almost four years. Note that the counter records individuals passing the device both up the trail and back to the parking lot, so the number of visitors to the trail is about 50% of the numbers below.



	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Monthly Avg
January		403	446	414	331	399
February		357	397	303	419	369
March		641	451	995	620	677
April		1103	783	1431	901	1055
May	2179	563	631	1225	862	1088
June	2941	1407	1322	2176	1107	1791
July	1508	1868	1500	2702		1895
August	636*	2210	1823	2263		1733
September	777*	2904	2355	3070		2277
October	742*	2195	2070	1731		1685
November	469*	1231	1009	642		838
December	565*	701	662	421		587
Yearly Total	12387**	15583	13449	17373		14473

* - Turnpike Road 'closed' for repairs

** - Estimated for 12 months