

Next Generation “Strengthening Our Niche” Work-Group Meeting Notes of April 4, 2011

Present

Will Andresen, Tom Bergman, John Garske, Lee-Ann Garske, Kelly Klein, Gemma Lamb, Jim Mildren, Lily Palmer, Jim Rouse, Velda Sclafani

Priority Project Updates

Will Andresen updated the work-group on the five priorities identified at the January meeting and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to hear an update of activities on those items. He also mentioned that letters of support for trail related projects have been submitted to Ironwood Township, City of Ironwood and City of Bessemer grant projects.

Kelly Klein stated that many economic development grant programs will require or at least encourage projects that are regional in nature such as this.

Jim Mildren stated that plans are underway for the second Go Ride R Range Ride, to be held Sunday, May 22nd.

Priority 1: Support/Energize the Iron County side of the project

This group will be working with the Mayors from the Hurley and Montreal to request that they appoint a representative to sit on a committee to make a recommended trail that will connect the two cities with the regional trail and perhaps along the Montreal River or other areas in the community. This newly appointed committee will then bring back their recommendation to the two cities councils who will be requested to include them in their comprehensive plans and parks and recreation plans to enable them to apply for grant funding.

Priority 2: Support the Railroad Grade Technical Working Group

John Garske stated that the Railroad Trails Acquisition Committee will be meeting on April 12th to identify the scope of the project but that the Michigan DNR has set aside \$500,000 for the acquisition of the railroad grades and are currently working through the appraisal and environmental review processes for the acquisition project.

Priority 3: Create a map of existing and proposed trails in the region

Lily Palmer indicated that Coleman Engineering created a combined Mountain Bike and Ski GIS map of the Wolverine Trail system that will be helpful for future design improvements of the trails.

Priority 4: Create a mountain bike trail Mecca in the area

Tom Bergman stated that efforts are underway to find funding for design and infrastructure improvements of existing mountain bike trails in the area. Assistance is being provided from the International Mountain Biking Association and from other communities. Will Andresen indicated that a grant is currently being submitted to Specialized for design improvements.

Priority 5: Create a regional identification for cross-country skiing

Will Andresen, Tom Bergman, Tim Fitzgerald and Kelly Klein met to discuss how to help create a regional identification for cross-country skiing. They identified two strategies: First, work to assist the area schools and clubs with bringing more school-aged children (especially grade school children) to the sport by applying for grants to obtain additional ski equipment. The group felt that many young people are being exposed to the sport and that there are three strong area ski clubs, but we are not connecting them to these clubs. They will be working on identifying and addressing any obstacles that are preventing families from bringing their children to these clubs and events.

Second, they will be working on an economic impact study of cross-country skiing and/or silent sports. This economic impact study will then be shared broadly with the community that could be used to encourage additional local support for the sport.

Next Meeting Date

Monday, May 2, 12:00 Noon, Board Room of the Iron County Courthouse