

Northern Regional Trail Advisory Committee

Meeting Summary of January 29th, 2026 (Draft)

WI Department of Natural Resources – Spooner Northern Region HQ

810 W Maple St. Spooner, WI

Members Present:

Dana Heller, Barron County; Pete Schneider, Barron County; Lindley Mattson, Bayfield County; Susan Tollander, Burnett County; Sue Smedegard, Burnett County; Karen Lotts, Chippewa County; Paul Krumenauer, Chippewa County; Don Mrotek, Sawyer County; Doug Johnson, Polk County; Tony Nowak, Polk County

Others Present

Tony Weigand, Barron County Recreation Officer; Dalton Bygd, Barron County Trails Coordinator; Clint Meyer, Douglas County Forestry; Clem Larson, NWRPC; Pat Anderson, WI DNR

Approve Agenda

Motion by Schneider to approve agenda, seconded by Heller - Approved

Committee Introductions & Recognition of Guests

Members and Guests were introduced.

April 24th, 2025, Meeting Summary

Motion by Heller to approve the summary from April 24th, 2025; seconded by Johnson – Approved

Financial (Larson)

Larson gave a quarterly update on the NoRTAC budget. \$3,617.6 in budget, as of January 1st, 2025. Membership dues will be sent to counties in the few weeks.

SRC/AWSC update (Smedegard)

SRC meeting next week in Arbor Vitae. Bridge inspection presentation. AWSC Bill to increase cost of trail pass voted out of committee and headed to the legislature. Record setting month of December for trail passes. Convention takes place in Green Bay in March. Roundtable discussion scheduled. New Vice President and Secretary for AWSC.

Issue Briefs/Future Agenda Items/Topics for 2026

Larson identified Survey results as a future agenda item. Survey has been running for a few years now, and it is a good time to look at the results a little more in depth. Johnson has drafted a letter to send to the ORV Council, on behalf of NoRTAC, regarding how trail surfaces should be chosen by trail managers. Motion to send letter made by Schnieder, 2nd by Heller- approved. Krumenauer brought up topic of Emergency response signage. Larson requested all County Trail coordinators send a photo of current signage to get a better idea of what each county is using. He will compile them and we can have a discussion at future meeting.

County Updates Relating to Trail Development/Maintenance and Other Projects or Points of Interest

Barron (Weigand) – Jeff Wolfe’s Counterpart at the County. Jeff took employment as chief at St. Croix Falls. Has been learning a lot after taking over Jeff’s position. County Split job into 2 positions Rec Officer & Trail Coordinator. (Bygd) new in position as Trail Coordinator but has been in Forestry for the past 10 years. Looking forward to networking with other counties. (Schnieder) now appointed member of committee, not an alternate. (Heller) County approved Recreation Plan. City of Rice Lake doing strategic planning. Identified itself as a hub for the area, due to hotel accommodations and commerce. ATV/Snow being incorporated to promote. County also went through strategic planning process.

Burnett (Tollander) – North Fork bridge replacement project in Crex Meadows. Lowest bid \$92k over budget. Trails in great condition after a little clean-up early in season. Working with clubs to update the County’ recreation plan.

Chippewa (Krumenauer) – 1 bridge replacement trails closed, no Winter ATV. Snowmobile trails were open for a few weeks, then closed. Lots of ice.

Douglas (Meyer) – Applied for summer trail development but were denied. Used County resources to open 7 miles from Solon to Amnicon. New bridges. Wild Rivers trail 300-foot bridge closed over Amnicon River. DNR inspected, closed, and re-routed. Not safe to walk on. Bridge project near Superior. Along Highway 105 over Pokegama River. Will start when ground thaws. Lots of cleanup after storm. All trails are now open.

Polk (Nowak) – Trails open for last couple weeks, closed when it got warm and rained, in decent shape now. Washouts on Cattail when it rains hard, will be doing some repairs. Sawmill trail needs a culvert replacement, will be applying for grant. Gandy Dancer State Trail bridge has been hit several times. DNR removing bridge. In engineering phase now and DNR will not repair if it gets hit again.

Sawyer (Mrotek) – Trails open and in great shape. 2 snowmobile fatalities this year. Sheriff's snowmobile ride last week. No official opening/closing dates. 80%-90% of trails on public land.

Bayfield (Mattson) – Member counties discussed trail opening protocol.

- Bayfield - trail opening protocol. Trails cross private property, do not want them open during hunting season. Who makes decision? Reach out to each club for update on conditions, not getting actual reports on conditions.
- Burnett - trail coordinator reaches out to all clubs, association president and decision is made. If partial, use a major highway as a dividing line.
- Douglas - decision is trail by trail, clubs report to county coordinator. Partial opening must have a destination. Most of county swamp/river crossing.
- Barron County is all or nothing. They look at the neighboring counties, too.
- Polk County never has an easy decision.
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- Rusk no ATVs after grooming starts.

Trails cross private property owners do not want them open during hunting season. Grandview trestle project approved 600 ft., 102 years old, \$235k. Summer ATV maintenance not going well, going to have county do some bulldozing.

DNR (Anderson) – Has taken new position within DNR, still filling former role until replacement found. RTP deadline changed to March 1st. Thanks group, no complaints from clubs or riders. When applying for bridges or culvert on forest or state properties the earlier you can get in the better. Have to go through internal engineering. Discussed protocol for reroutes in regard to GTS. Clubs should send changes to trail coordinators, then trail coordinators end to GTS. Should have an idea of RTP funding by August. Stewardship has still not been funded or reauthorized.

Next Meeting Date

The next NoRTAC meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 30th, 2026.

Adjourn