

Summary of Meetings #14 – #25
High Peaks Strategic Planning Advisory Group
Virtual Meetings – May-October

HPAG MEMBERSHIP

Dr. Jill Weiss, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Chris Morris, OPHRP Statewide Trails Program Planner
Joe Pete Wilson, Supervisor, Town of Keene
Rocci Acquire, Adirondack Council
Pete Nelson, Adirondack Wilderness Advocates
Charlie Wise, The Mountaineer
Seth Jones, Adirondack Mountain Club
Theresa Cheetham-Palen, Rock and River Guide Company
James McKenna, Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism
Shaun Gilliland, Chair, Essex County Board of Supervisors
Sandi Allen, Retired DEC Counsel
Pat Barnes, DOT Region 1 Director
Rick Weber, APA Deputy Director
Mike Pratt, ORDA CEO, (Alternates: Emma Lamy, Sustainability Officer and
Kris Cheney-Seymour, Nordic Program Manager)
Rob Davies, DEC Director of Division of Lands and Forests
Joseph Zalewski, DEC Region 5 Director

HPAG DEC Staff Support

FACILITATOR: Mary Roy, Strategic Planning/Performance Management Office
Director
Karyn Richards, Special Assistant to the Commissioner
David Winchell, Public Participation Specialist
Erin Hancyck, Public Participation Specialist
Laura DiBetta, Director of Outdoor Recreation
Peter Frank, Bureau Chief, Forest Preserve and Conservation Easements

Goals for Managing Public Use in the High Peaks Region

- *Ensure public safety within communities, along roadways, at trailheads, and in interior areas*
- *Protect natural resources and recreation infrastructure*
- *Provide a quality recreation experience*
- *Supporting local economic vitality*
- *Make decisions based on science using the best available data*

HPAG Charge

Undertake a collaborative process to provide a strategic framework to address public use in the High Peaks Region of the Adirondack Park which will:

- *Include short, medium and long-term recommendations (strategies, actions and tactics) to achieve the goals of the initiative*
- *Incorporate, expand, and/or modify recommendations made to date*

- *Identify additional data necessary to inform the HPAG recommendations*
- *Identify priorities for the implementation of recommendations*

The High Peaks Advisory Group (HPAG) continued to meet remotely during the COVID pandemic. The last meeting summary posted on the DEC Website was for the May 7, 2020 meeting. During the late spring and summer months, HPAG continued to meet with the goal of shaping their Interim and Final Reports to the DEC Commissioner. The following summarizes their progress during this time.

HPAG MEETING – May 13, 2020

Meeting goals:

- Complete review of interim recommendations (human waste, parking enforcement, visitor use limits, trail management).
- Confirm concurrence on interim recommendations by HPAG members.
- Review, revise introduction and transmittal letter for HPAG Draft Interim Report to the Commissioner (HPAG Interim Report).

Achieved during meeting:

- Draft recommendations for HPAG Interim Report were concurred upon by all members present.

NEXT STEPS agreed to:

- **Final Look:** All members take a final look at the draft recommendations for HPAG Interim Report; DEC will incorporate input into a final markup.
- **HPAG Interim Report Transmittal Letter and Introduction:**
 - DEC revises draft transmittal letter; HPAG reviews letter and introduction and bring comments to 5/27 meeting.
- **Finalize Report 5/27**
 - HPAG agrees upon revisions to transmittal letter and introduction.
 - Make final tweaks to recommendations.
 - Concur upon process for sign-off on report transmittal.
 - Concur upon 6/9/20 meeting approach to initiate HPAG Final Report to the Commissioner (HPAG Final Report).
- **Transmit HPAG Interim Report to DEC Commissioner**
- **Scope HPAG Final Report**

HPAG MEETING - May 27, 2020

Meeting goals:

- Review and complete HPAG Draft Interim Report Transmittal Letter and Introduction.
- Review the revised education recommendation.
- Concur on recommendations in HPAG Draft Interim Report.

- Discuss next steps for HPAG Interim Report (Commissioner review, release, public communication).
- Discuss approach for HPAG Final report in June-July (if time allows).

Achieved during meeting:

- Reviewed latest content of HPAG Interim Report.
- Agreed on all recommendations except those for Education; to be revised and recirculated for review/agreement.
- Agreed to advance HPAG Interim Report for final editing and sign-off by HPAG members.

NEXT STEPS agreed to:

- **Complete HPAG Interim Report** and transmit to the DEC Commissioner.

The HPAG Interim Report was transmitted to the DEC Commissioner on June 1, 2020. The website for HPAG is <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/119187.html>. The direct link to the HPAG Interim Report is:

https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/hpagintrmrpt.pdf.

HPAG Meeting – June 10, 2020

Meeting goals:

- Review Status of HPAG Interim Report
- Discuss public information approach for HPAG Interim Report
- Agree on target date for transmitting HPAG Interim Report to the DEC Commissioner
- Discuss scope of HPAG Final Report:
 - Potential expansion of HPAG Interim Report recommendations to long-term aspects and beyond interim recommendation topics.
- Discuss Approach for developing HPAG Final Report (meeting objectives, etc.).
- Discuss summer HPAG meeting schedule.

Achieved during meeting:

- Agreed on target date for HPAG Final Report – fall 2020.
- Agreed on HPAG meeting frequency through summer into fall:
 - June: meet June 24, 2020
 - July: meet July 16 and 28, 2020
 - August through December: schedule 3 meetings per month; cancel later if needed.
- Discussed scope of HPAG Final Report:
 - Agreed to explore expansion of HPAG Interim Report recommendation subject areas including balancing strategic elements and detailed recommendations.

NEXT STEPS agreed to:

- **Update status of HPAG Interim Report**
- **Discuss public information** approach for HPAG Interim
- DEC to **brief HPAG on current conditions in the High Peaks**
- **Discuss more efficient approach** to reviewing/editing/finalizing HPAG Final Report

HPAG Meeting – June 24, 2020

Meeting goals:

- Briefing on current conditions in the High Peaks region.
- Agree on future HPAG meeting schedule
- Review and prioritize topics for HPAG Final Report
- Initiate development of first HPAG Final Report topic

Achieved during meeting:

- Discussed preliminary HPAG Final Report Topics:
 - Transportation and related public safety
 - Quality visitor experience
 - Data collection and analysis
 - Trails
 - Natural resource protection
 - Resource needs to have actionable results
- Prioritized long-term planning as the first priority; parking and safety as the second priority; workgroups were formed for these (2) topics.
- Agreed that diversity/inclusion needs to be considered as a topic for the HPAG Final Report.

NEXT STEPS agreed to:

- **Determine** remaining HPAG Final Report topics and sub-groups to address them.

HPAG Meeting – July 16, 2020

Meeting goals:

- Agree on HPAG Final Report topics.
- Form workgroups for each HPAG Final Report topic.

Achieved during meeting:

- Agreed to the following HPAG Final Report topics:
 - Limits of Acceptable Change
 - Immediate Needs
 - Impacts to Wilderness and Ecology
 - Impacts to Visitors

- Public Safety, Transportation and Traffic Safety
- Community
- Formed workgroups for each of the HPAG Final Report topics and decided workgroups to report out in August.
- Decided to discuss diversity/inclusion in August, as a HPAG Final Report topic.
- Decided to cancel August 28, 2020 meeting to allow time for workgroups to meet and form initial recommendations.

NEXT STEPS agreed to:

- **Reports** from the Long-Term Planning and Public Safety, Transportation and Traffic Safety Work Groups.
- **Discuss** HPAG Vision, Mission and Goals Statement.
- **Update** on E-Shuttle and Data Group efforts.

HPAG Meeting – August 6, 2020

Meeting goals:

- **Reports** from the Long-Term Planning and Public Safety, Transportation and Traffic Safety Work Groups.
- Agree on additional **Work Group topics**.
 - Identify Interim Target Deliverables and Dates for Draft Report Sections
 - Draft schedule/targets for Work Group deliverables
- **Discuss** HPAG Vision, Mission and Goals Statement.
- **Update** on E-Shuttle and independent Data Group efforts.
- **Discuss schedule** for development of HPAG Final Report.

Achieved during meeting:

- Discussed importance of larger vision/bigger picture and how it needs to be addressed in HPAG Final Report.
- Discussed importance of Visitor Use Framework (VUM) in defining a process for moving forward with long-term planning.
- Discussed the need to establish thresholds for capacity and desired conditions (limits of acceptable change).
- Discussed the importance of considering interior management issues to inform front country issues/recommendations.
- Discussed future meeting schedule and need to devote time to individual work group discussions/draft recommendation development.

NEXT STEPS agreed to:

- Continue individual Work Group efforts to draft recommendation for each topic area.
- Develop HPAG Final Report outline (structure).
- Develop HPAG Final Report development milestones.

HPAG Meeting – August 18, 2020

Meeting goals:

- Continue to discuss need to articulate/recommend a vision for the High Peaks region in the HPAG Final Report.
- Develop HPAG Final Report structure.
- Agree on HPAG members who will start drafting HPAG Final Report content.
- Develop HPAG Final Report milestones.

Achieved during meeting:

- Shared ideas on **HPAG Final Report structure**; agreed:
 - Each work group issue topic section should have a similar outline.
 - Limits of acceptable change to be articulated early in report as an organizing principle
 - Immediate needs section should cross reference HPAG Interim Report.
- Agreed HPAG Final Report should recognize what has already been done and articulate what is needed, recognizing it takes time/resources to get it done, including data.

NEXT STEPS agreed to:

- Draft Work Group issues recommendations and share with HPAG members for review.

HPAG Meeting – August 18, 2020

Meeting goals:

- Agree on Work Group sections template.
- Prepare Report development schedule.

Achieved during meeting:

- Agreed determining the limits of acceptable change is central to addressing the carrying capacity of the recreation areas and the safety and welfare of the communities.
- Reviewed preliminary thinking of Work Groups in developing recommendations.

NEXT STEPS agreed to:

- Work Groups to draft sections in outline format and share with HPAG members.

HPAG Meeting – August 26, 2020

Meeting goals:

- Review Work Group draft sections.
- Review HPAG Final Report structure.
- Discuss HPAG Final Report items Dialogue not fully concurred upon.
- Discuss next steps for ongoing advisory committee.

Achieved during meeting:

- Continued discussion on **HPAG Final Report structure**.
- Review **Work Group draft section content** which had been prepared.
- Decided **immediate needs section will be separate** from Work Group Issue Recommendations and will be comprised of immediate needs each workgroup identifies for each topic in the Report.

NEXT STEPS agreed to:

- Continue to review and revise Draft HPAG Final Report sections.
- Continue dialogue Around Report Items Not Fully Concurred Upon.
- Discuss Next Steps for Ongoing Advisory Committee.

HPAG Meetings – September 22, 2020 and October 1, 2020

Meeting goals:

- Review revised HPAG Final report sections, as drafted by Work Groups:
 - Establishing Limits of Acceptable Change
 - Impacts to Wilderness and Ecology
 - Impacts to Visitors
 - Trails
 - Community
 - Public Safety Transportation Traffic Safety
- Review Steps Leading to Completion

Achieved during meeting:

- **Reviewed HPAG Final Report Sections** drafted by HPAG members.

NEXT STEPS agreed to:

- Continue drafting of HPAC Final Report sections
- Agree on HPAG Final Report Structure
- Agree on Recommendations Template

HPAG Meeting – October 14, 2020

Meeting goals:

- Agree on Report Structure
- Agree on template for reporting Work Group recommendations

Achieved during meeting:

- Agreed on **Report Structure**; assigned drafting of sections to HPAG members
- Agreed on **template for reporting Work Group recommendations**

NEXT Steps agreed to:

- Begin populating HPAG Final Report Structure with content drafted by HPAG members.