

FORC Trail Steward Meeting

April 20th, 2022

The FORC Board held a special meeting with Trail Stewards to discuss trail budgeting process and the needs for the 2022 season. The following Board members and Trail Stewards were present:

Aaron G	President
Shannon G	First Lady
Zachary B	Vice President
Mandy G	Race Director
Drew H	Web Director, Trail Steward for Illiniwek/Dorrance
Glen S	Treasurer (attended via telephone)
Dave B	Secretary
Brad M	Trail Steward for SCP
Dan H	Trail Steward for Dog Park
Scott	Trail Steward for Prairie Park
Brian	Trail Steward for Sunderbruch

Drew briefly discussed the status of the website, which is experiencing issues due to a problem with the host server. The largest problem is the inability to easily update the trail status. Aaron asked Drew to post a link which could be used to update trail status.

Aaron discussed the status of obtaining a new (used) trailer. At the last Board meeting Drew and Zach agreed to work together to locate and purchase a 2014 or newer trailer fitting criteria set by the Board with a budget of \$7000. They were unable to locate such a trailer. Aaron noted a new aluminum trailer can be purchased from a vendor in Fulton for ~\$9600; a steel trailer of similar size retails for ~\$7600-\$7800 but the aluminum will be lighter and therefore easier to pull. The Board agreed with moving forward to purchase a new aluminum trailer. Glen and Brad will visit the vendor and either purchase new off the lot or special order if one is not immediately available.

Aaron asked Glen to review his ideas for trail budgeting.

Glen started by noting over the last two years the Group spent about \$4382 per year on all the parks combined. This figure does not represent all monies spent as some costs were offset by donations. Glen's proposal is, for 2022 only, to allocate money as follows:

- \$4000 on materials (lumber, etc.) needed for trail maintenance/upgrades
- \$500 for signs, mainly at SCP and Sunderbruch as the other trail systems enjoy excellent signage or are too short to warrant the expense.
- \$500 for miscellaneous supplies needed for trail maintenance such as gas, oil, trimmer string, weed control and new chains.

- \$2000 has been donated, by neighbors, for Sunderbruch. One of the items these folks specifically requested is signs.

Glen suggested prioritizing effort on the trails in this order:

1. Replace deteriorating features and repair obvious safety issues.
2. Addition of new trails, in cooperation with salient land managers.
3. Correction of erosion/water drainage issues
4. Addition of new features

Dave interjected, and the Board agreed, item 3 should be with item 1 as a top priority.

Glen noted the Group has ~\$24,000 in the account after deducting money budgeted for the new trailer (\$10,000) and speakers (\$500). Mandy noted we've already bought the new speakers.

Glen estimates we receive between \$3500 and \$4000 in dues every year. He also pointed out if we exceed a gross income of \$50,000 this changes the way we file our taxes, so it's desirable to maintain income below that level. A question was raised regarding the costs for the pavilion. We actually paid nothing for that as all money used to construct the pavilion was donated.

The Stewards asked questions regarding how FORC money is spent in a typical year. Glen noted in 2021 we spent ~\$14,000, as follows:

- Insurance \$2700
- Races \$4400
- Trails \$4800
- Misc. \$2100 (Miscellaneous includes website host, porta-potties for events, etc.)

These figures mean our minimum operating expenses (NOT including trail work) are about \$9200.

The group asked Glen for a more detailed breakdown of the "miscellaneous" expenses, given the large outlay in that area. Glen agreed to bring that data to the May 2nd Board/Membership meeting.

While last year about 34% of the money we spent was on trails, in a typical year we are closer to 25% of our expenses for trail maintenance. The Stewards expressed they would like to see that figure rise. Glen stated his desire to maintain a minimum of two years' operating expenses in the bank (i.e. \$18,400) in order to absorb issues we might encounter such as canceled events (we typically bring in \$4000 or more for all our races. When a race moves to the rain date, that race's income drops dramatically as usually about 1/3 of the original entrants make the rain date). Mandy noted, when asked, this year's SIS grossed ~\$4200 and will, after expenses are paid, net ~\$2000.

The group noted there is an opportunity for additional income from merchandise. We sell at a low (15% to 20%) markup and we usually bring in \$3000 annually from merchandise sales. The suggestion to raise prices was discussed; no action was taken on this idea.

Aaron discussed alternate sources of income the Group could pursue. He asked if anyone was familiar with writing Grants, or knew someone who might be able to help. He also pointed out we can be approaching businesses as potential sponsors. Glen reiterated we are free to seek additional sources of income but we should be careful not to exceed a gross more than \$50,000 annually.

Rounding back to the discussion on trail maintenance and upgrade, Aaron pointed out we have to be building features people want to ride, and we must keep in mind these are (mostly) multi-use trails. Everyone agreed riders want features but we have to make the trails rideable. Too many features will keep less experienced riders away and we want riders of all skill levels on our trails.

Aaron asked the Stewards for their needs for 2022:

- \$1500 for SCP
- \$2000 for Sunderbruch
- \$3750 for Illiniwek/Dorrance (Drew has a two year plan totaling \$7500). This figure assumes no financial help from the Forest Preserve.
- \$1000 for Dog Park

This totals to \$8250 for 2022. When added to the \$9200 minimum operating costs, this adds up to \$17,450 and would leave us with less than a year's operating expenses. Glen raised the question, how much can we comfortably spend while maintaining our bank account. Until we know the results of the ScoCoPa Frenzy next month, Glen suggested we proceed as follows, with the understanding if we have a good race in May, we can add monies for each park:

- \$750 for SCP
- \$2000 for Sunderbruch (recall we received donations in that amount)
- \$1500 for Illiniwek/Dorrance
- \$500 for Dog Park

The Trail Stewards all agreed to this proposal. Mandy noted the SCP race grossed us \$3380 last year. Assuming we have a good race this year we will allocate more money to the individual parks as well as some to Prairie Park (Scott indicated he did not need cash from the Group at this time).

Drew brought up an issue chain saw owners need to keep in mind. He lost a good chain saw because he put gas with ethanol in the machine. This caused it to run too hot and burn the engine. This prompted a discussion regarding whether the Group should buy a chain saw. In the past the Board has shown reluctance to do so, for liability reasons. We recently purchased a pole saw, which has come in handy more than once, but it's not the same as a regular chain saw. We do have someone (Megan) conferring with our insurer to see if our policy covers chain saw use, and she will bring this information to Board so a final decision can be made.

Aaron closed with a couple of points. One, we know not everything will get done overnight but it will get done, so be patient. Two, be sure to turn your expenses in to get reimbursed.

The next regular Board meeting will be May 2nd, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. with the membership meeting to start immediately following at 6:30.

Respectfully submitted,
Dave Bowman, Secretary.