

Alpena County Heritage Route Team Meeting Notes

Date: 7-17-07

Time: 1:30 PM

Location: Alpena City Hall

Present: Greg Sundin (City of Alpena), Eric Cline (City of Alpena), Rich Sullenger (City of Alpena), Jeff Gray (NOAA), Heather Homan (NOAA), Beaver Donakowski (Alpena County), Ken Gauthier (Sanborn Township), Doug Vam (Sanborn Township), Kevin Schaedig (MDOT), Beverly Bodem (Senator Stamas), Dennis Bodem, and Denise Cline (NEMCOG).

The purpose of the Alpena team meeting was to solicit ideas for a new Heritage Route project for the Alpena team to undertake. Denise Cline updated the team on the progress of the Alcona County Team. They have purchased new signage for their designated trail. The Harrisville City Council has approved funding to pave a section of the trail that crosses green space. She also presented a brochure that she designed for the Alcona team which has photos of historic structures along the trail as well as a description of each. Inside the brochure is a map of the trail that shows distance, suggested walking direction, amenities, and historic points. Even though a brochure design committee is said to be working on a uniform brochure for the whole route, the Alcona team needed their brochure finished this summer. They obtained funding from the Community Foundation to create it and purchase signage.

Jeff Gray presented more details on the idea discussed at the last meeting of extending the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Trail through Alpena, Alcona, and Presque Isle Counties. Such a trail system would consist of a series of sites rather than an actual physical trail system. This would include such things as museum exhibits, outdoor interpretation, outdoor kiosks, digital tours, information guides, and improved access at the sites. Indoor exhibits could be located at such places as the Maritime Heritage Center, area lighthouses, and the Jesse Besser Museum. Outdoor interpretation locations could include marinas/boat launches, area parks, lighthouses, and rest areas/overlooks. The sites would promote the maritime heritage of the area including shipwrecks, lighthouses, life saving stations, historic industries, ports, maritime exhibits, and historic vessels. Jeff noted that with the other projects going on in the area (i.e. Integrated Assessment, DNR Park Planning, and History, Arts, & Libraries Tourism Initiative) that it seemed like the right time to undertake such a project. He was involved in a similar project in Wisconsin. The group can look at the Wisconsin project at www.maritimetrails.org.

Staff at the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary has already reviewed the requirements for an MDOT Enhancement grant and this project would fit into the historic preservation portion of the program. Jeff noted that the Department of History, Arts, and Libraries or NEMCOG could apply for the grant funding on behalf of the groups because it is a multi-county project. Governmental representatives at the State and Federal level are already aware of the project. Transportation Enhancement applications are averaging a 37% match currently. There was a brief discussion of using other grant opportunities to provide the match. Rich Sullenger noted that, with a project such as this, even if all of the grant funding wasn't approved, the project could be adjusted accordingly.

The first step in the process is to determine the interest of the three counties and identify potential partners. Denise Cline asked Jeff Gray if he can attend the Alcona County meeting in August. Presque Isle County is currently not meeting regularly, however Denise will speak with Laura Ingles about the

possibility of organizing a meeting with Presque Isle County. The group discussed other funding possibilities as well as the maintenance of the sites upon completion of the project. Both the City of Alpena and Sanborn Township voiced initial support for such a project. Denise Cline noted that, if all three counties support the project and if MDOT funding for Heritage Route assistance for NEMCOG is approved for the next fiscal year, she can direct her time toward working with staff from the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary toward the development of this multi-county project.

The US 23 Heritage Route Management Plan might have to be amended to include this project. It could be brought before the Management Council in September. The Alpena team will meet again in August to review a more detailed plan with partners and products identified.

Meeting adjourned 2:30 PM.