

OFF-ROAD VEHICLE (ORV) TRAILS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
Holiday-Inn Lansing West
7501 West Saginaw Highway
Lansing, Michigan
August 9, 2006

Chairman Ranney called the meeting of the Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Trails Advisory Board to order at 6:40 p.m. on Wednesday, August 9, 2006 in Lansing, Michigan.

Members Present:

Dick Ranney, Chair
Glenn Moll, Vice Chair
Jason Dinsmore
Larry Harrington
Sheriff Scott Strait

Member Absent:

John Bernard
Peter Wyckoff

Staff Present:

Steve Kubisiak, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management (FMFM), Lansing
Jim Radabaugh, FMFM, Lansing
Steve DeBrabander, FMFM, Lansing
Richard Kennedy, FMFM, Lansing
Paige Perry, FMFM, Gaylord
Pete Lundborg, Parks and Recreation, Mears

USDA Forest Service Staff Present:

Rose Ingram, Huron-Manistee National Forest, Cadillac

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Ranney introduced and welcomed Sheriff Scott Strait of Mackinac County. Sheriff Strait is the new law enforcement representative on the Board replacing Sheriff Terry Johnson of Antrim County. **Sheriff Strait** looks forward to working with the Board and thinks great opportunities lie ahead.

Mr. Ranney added the following items under Information: 1) ORV title statistics; 2) State Forest Management Plan; and 3) Ottawa National Forest Off-Highway Vehicle and Travel Management Rules.

MINUTES

Acknowledged Minutes of the May 10, 2006, ORV Trails Advisory Board Meeting.

Mr. Harrington made a motion, supported by **Mr. Dinsmore**, to accept the minutes of the May 10, 2006 Off-Road Vehicle Trails Advisory Board Meeting. Motion unanimously carried.

OLD BUSINESS

ORV Plan and Boilerplate Report Update – Mr. James Radabaugh, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management reported the Management Team of Forest, Mineral and Fire Management completed its review, and comments have been accepted by Chief Lynne Boyd. The draft ORV plan and Department comments will be discussed at the next Department Management Team meeting and is scheduled to go before the Natural Resources Commission for information in October, and action in November.

Mr. Radabaugh announced the Department completed the boilerplate report required under Section 807, PA 154 of 2005, to develop a comprehensive plan to expand current off-road vehicle trail mileage by at least 25% over the next four years. The plan was distributed to the Board and discussed. The report is posted on the DNR web site at <http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10366-81952--,00.html>

Forest Certification ORV Taskforce Update – Mr. DeBrabander, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management reported the taskforce completed and submitted recommendations to the Management Team of Forest, Mineral and Fire Management on June 8, 2006. The Management Team will identify a Department strategy to address ORV issues including use education, enforcement, and maintenance/restoration. There will be a follow-up audit in October.

NEW BUSINESS

ORV Grant Deadline Extension – Mr. Kubisiak, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management announced that due to delays in mailing the 2007 ORV grant applications to the clubs, the Department is extending the ORV grant application deadline to August 31, 2006.

Fuel Costs – Mr. Ranney expressed concern that current trail maintenance reimbursement rates do not adequately cover volunteer expenses. He cited rising fuel costs as an example. He reported some clubs are having difficulty maintaining and recruiting volunteers. He requested the Department consider increasing ORV trail and route maintenance reimbursement rates to take effect beginning in 2007.

Mr. Kubisiak reviewed current trail and route reimbursement rates and several funding scenarios. He said the Department recognizes the need to revisit the trail maintenance rates, but cautioned an increase needs to be justifiable and would have impacts on other program operations. He also noted the conference report for the Department's 2007 budget included boilerplate that requires \$980,000 to be spent on new trail development. That leaves \$639,900 available for trail maintenance for FY 2007.

Discussion ensued about maintenance standards, trail inspection process, penalties and payment process.

The Board was in general support of an ORV trail maintenance reimbursement rate increase provided the trail system is maintained to standard, and the rate is justifiable compensation to cover expenses. An increase of \$20 to \$30 per ORV trail mile, and a proportionate increase for ORV route were suggested.

The Department will take this suggestion under advisement as ORV grant applications are received, reviewed and evaluated based on program criteria, and available funding.

Economic Impact Study – Mr. Radabaugh distributed draft proposal objectives to estimate economic trends in ORV use on Michigan public lands and frozen waters. He noted this is part of a larger motorized trail study that will include snowmobiling. The study will update the economic profile of motorized trail use in Michigan. It will also evaluate trends, attitudes, and public acceptance of a range of current and potential trail program efforts and associated costs. The Department will be

working with Michigan State University. Board members were requested to send their written comments on the draft study objectives to Mr. Radabaugh.

Board discussion ensued about the need for a valid and un-biased study.

INFORMATION

ORV Title Statistics – Mr. Ranney distributed ORV title statistics from the Michigan Secretary of State (SOS). He reported that 313,840 ORVs are titled in Michigan. He read title statistics by vehicle type and reported 33,333 ORVs were titled in 2005.

State Forest Management Plan – Mr. Ranney announced the 2006 State Forest Management Plan is currently out for public review. The comment period is open until August 31, 2006. He read the open house meeting schedule.

Electronic copies of the 2006 State Forest Management Plan and meeting schedule are available on the Department web site at: www.michigan.gov/dnr. Public comments on the 2006 State Forest Management Plan may also be submitted electronically via email at DNR-2006sfmp@michigan.gov

Ottawa National Forest Off-Highway Vehicle and Travel Management Rule – Mr. Ranney distributed a brochure entitled Ottawa National Forest Off-Highway Vehicle Use and the Travel Management Rule A guide to the Travel Management Rule and its Implementation.

Ms. Ingram reported the Ottawa National Forest prepared the brochure to provide information about the national travel management rule and the implementation schedule for the Ottawa National Forest. She provided an overview of the USDA – Forest Service National Travel Management Rule. The rule provides a nationally consistent approach to travel management and provides a framework for local decision making with regards to motor vehicle use on roads and trails. This process includes designation of roads and trails on a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) The Rule requires public involvement and coordination with state and local government agencies. Forest personnel are currently reviewing roads and trails open to motor vehicle and Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) travel, and will prepare an initial MVUM. Open houses will be held in Fall 2006 to review the proposed road and trail system. A motor vehicle use map will be published in Fall 2007 that will display roads and trails open to motor vehicle travel.

Ms. Ingram added the Hiawatha National Forest is also scheduled to complete their MVUM by Fall 2007 and the Huron-Manistee National Forest by Spring 2008. Updates will be provided at future meetings.

STAFF REPORTS

US Forest Service – Ms. Ingram reported public comments will be accepted on all three of the Michigan National Forest Plans until the end of the month, and invited interested parties and individuals to comment.

Mr. Dinsmore announced the Michigan United Conservation Club has filed an appeal on the Hiawatha National Forest Plan on the basis that it does not do enough to protect early succession habitat important to wildlife and fish. He urged concerned sportspersons to provide comment to the Forest Service.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Pat Brower, 2 Trackers 4WD Club referenced forest certification and suggested future ORV user surveys include questions to determine the root cause of illegal damage and activities.

Ernie Brooks, Marine City reported an incident that occurred on the Leota Trail system earlier this year when he hit a fence with his ATV. He believes the fence is too close to the trail and the metal fence posts are a safety hazard and should be removed. He reported rough trail conditions and believes more maintenance is needed. He said the St. Helen Motorsport Area needs better signs and maps at the trailhead.

Mike Olmstead, Local Coordinator, Jeep Jamboree, Warren read a statement concerning an incident that occurred on Drummond Island during the jeep Jamboree this year. He said that meeting the conservation officers in the field is not the issue, but rather timing of the encounter. He believes the issues of concern should have been addressed and resolved among the managers of the event, and the appropriate Department officials at a more suitable venue and time. Primary areas of concern are: 1) consistency in regulations and interpretation by law enforcement; 2) improving enforcement relations; and 3) ORV licensing. He supports a daily ORV license.

Todd McLain, Grandville expressed concern with ORV trail expansion and believes the Department can't control or enforce the trails they have now. He believes parents have a responsibility to teach responsible ORV use to their youngsters.

Mark Burns, President, Great Lakes Four Wheel Drive Association supports increasing trail maintenance reimbursement rates. He would like to have copies of all meeting documents. He said none of the State Forest Plan open houses are in the Detroit area. He thinks Rock Port State Park would be a great ORV area. He said someone in the Department needs to champion the cause to build an ORV park in southeast Michigan. He complained about ORV maps. He does not believe ORVs do as much environmental damage as timber harvest and said many full size vehicle users are leaving the state to recreate.

Jim Kitson, Great Lakes Four Wheel Drive Association, Davisburg agrees the economic study should be done by competent people. He suggested ORV users be polled. He said he and many other full size vehicle owners leave the state to recreate and he believes Michigan is losing tourism dollars.

Paul Mulder, Great Lakes Four Wheel Drive disputed Mr. Kubisiak's snowmobile trail figures and believes only 20% of the designated snowmobile trail system is located on private lands. He believes the comments Mr. Harrington made at the last meeting regarding ORV use in the Upper Peninsula are inaccurate. He asked if Department staff is reviewing damage sites identified through the Forest Certification process, and questioned why the draft Forest Management Plan references the draft ORV plan if it has not been adopted yet. He referenced the May NRC meeting minutes and expressed concern with comments made by Resource Deputy Mindy Koch regarding ORV use on county roads.

Tom Craig, ATV Off-Road believes ORV safety education and training is important and supports mandatory training for everyone. He recommended a vehicle license plate and statistics be collected by vehicle type through a survey. He questioned the definition of illegal ORV damage and believes the damage left behind by loggers is appalling.

Mr. Dinsmore made a motion to adjourn, supported by Mr. Moll. Motion unanimously carried.
Meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm.

Next Meeting:

November 8, 2006, Lansing Holiday-Inn West

Public Present:

Lewis Shuler, CCC
Jim Kunath
Ernie Brooks
Paul Mulder, Great Lakes 4WD Assoc (GLFWDA)
Pat Brower, 2 Trackers 4WD Club
Mark Burns, GLFWDA
Tom Craig, ATV Off-Road Club
Mike Olmstead, Jeep Jamboree USA
Jerry Brower, Great Lakes LandRover Club
Jim Kitson, GLFWDA
Todd McLain