

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
OFF-ROAD VEHICLE ADVISORY WORKGROUP (ORVAW)**

**Meeting Minutes  
March 9, 2016**

**Ramada Inn, Lansing**

**PRESENT FOR THE WORKGROUP**

Thomas Dunn, Chair  
Lewis Shuler  
Don Helsel  
Skip Schulz  
Tim Kobasic

**ABSENT FOR THE WORKGROUP**

Amy Trotter  
Pat Brower

**PRESENT FOR STAFF**

Paul Yauk, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD)  
Rob Katona, PRD  
Amy Swainston, PRD

**PRESENT FOR FOREST SERVICE**

Kristen Thrall, USDA FS

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**Chair Dunn** welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. He asked the board members and guests to introduce themselves.

**MINUTES**

The March 9, 2016 agenda was presented. A motion was made by **D. Helsel** to approve the minutes and seconded by **T. Kobasic**. Motion for adoption unanimously passed.

Motion by **S. Schulz**, seconded by **T. Kobasic** to approve both meeting minutes for September 30, 2015 and December 3, 2015.

Discussion: limited notification given to members related to joint meeting with SAW. Tom working to ensure this does not happen and more advanced notification is provided.

Motion for adoption unanimously passed.

## **BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

### **Old Business:**

Workgroup / Subcommittee reports:

- Sign Subcommittee: **T. Kobasic/ R. Katona** updated the group on new sign installation and ORV identification markers. The group was looking for a way to differentiate the designated trail system from one end to the other. Initially group had five ideas and since has narrowed it down to two main concepts. The first concept is following an alpha system with separating primary and shorter trails with two-three letter designations similar to the snowmobile concept. The other concept is trail identification that follows an alpha system, primary trails would be one letter and the spurs would be two. Alpha system is recommended so as not to be confused with snowmobiles numeric system. They will present the outcomes at the next ORVAW meeting. The Sign Subcommittee requested a motion to support utilizing a Side by Side icon with the new trail identification markers on the restrict 65" width routes to avoid user confusion. The current restricted routes are rail corridors that do not permit full sized vehicles so the standard route with jeep icon will not work. Discussion followed on the look of a simplistic image of a UTV or the image presented.

**Motion T. Kobasic to utilize the icon presented on restricted 65" routes, seconded by D. Helsel. Motion for adoption unanimously passed.**

- ORV Safety Handbook: **T. Dunn / D. Helsel** were able to make contact with Law Enforcement Division regarding the ORV Safety handbooks. They discovered the content is reviewed and ready for print by September 1 for the next year. This means the 2016 edition was already sent to the printer. It is sent to Parks and Recreation for review, but staff present did not know who it was sent to. However the group was encouraged to provide input for the 2017 edition. They are looking to rearrange the content of the material, so the laws are listed first, and clarifying language related to roll over protection, goggles /eye protection and windshields on page 28. **D. Helsel** requested everyone to review the book; including trail maintainer sponsors and trails section staff to provide input to the committee.

**S. Schultz** inquired if they were also addressing the ORV Safety Training Handbook. Discussion followed regarding the Safety Course Material that

utilizes a nationwide guidance then inserts Michigan law into the format. Some input has been provided in the past related to topics such as winching, recovery and titling. Some of the material is not easily comprehended by some of the young participants in the safety course. Some of the ORV Safety instructors try and break the kids up by ages or require parents of younger students to be present so they can be taught the more difficult topics. Also, different material for younger students needs to be included based on older ASI plans. The subcommittee was encouraged in how other states do their training and provide input on this document as well. **R. Katona** mentioned that he will ask the **INOHVAA** Safety Subcommittee for their input as well.

There will be two ORV Safety Instructor Courses again this year. The first will be held at the Ralph A MacMullan Center in Roscommon April 29 – May 30. The Second will be held at Escanaba Fairground and DNR Pocket Park May 21 -23. The RAM Center training session is often filled, but more attendees are needed for the UP Course in order to demonstrate the need for a UP training session. Please encourage those interested to contact DNR's Law Enforcement Division, by calling 517-284-6055. A number of safety course instructors have dropped out due to the online training option. However, the class room attendance has continued to have good attendance.

<b>ORV Safety Certificates Issued:</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
Online Safety Course	1740	1687
Classroom Safety Course	2617	2193
Total Number of Certificates Issued	4357	3880

HB 5275: **R. Katona** gave a brief overview of the House Bill under review. As currently written it would authorize ORV use of state forest roads in the Lower Peninsula unless designated as closed, require a forest road inventory, provide for use of ORVs and horses to retrieve legally harvested game animals, require consultation with local governmental units on new road and trail restrictions. The Bill is sponsored by Representative Cole; co-sponsored by Representatives Glenn, Chatfield, Aaron Miller, Kelly, Canfield, Smiley, Pettalia, Hughes, and McBroom.

The DNR is in support of the House Bill; however, it does not address fiscal impacts. **R. Katona** is hopeful this will allow some expanded uses for connections between communities and looped trail systems since the Lower Peninsula roads are all closed unless posted open.

The Advisory workgroup has concerns over what will be considered a road or not a road, funding staff time for the inventory, and how roads will be defined for allowable uses. The group requests to be involved when inventory terms are

defined. **L. Schuler** will reach out to House Committee to encourage HB5275 to include funding language. At this time ORVAW delayed making a recommendation to support or deny the bill until after subcommittee modifications are finalized.

- USDA Forest Service (**USFS Staff**) **Kristen Thrall** will be filling in the Mio District due to vacancies. She recently attended the trail summit held in conjunction with the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association Conference in Traverse City. They continue to move forward on partnerships and easements such as in Lake County. The USDA Forest Service took another decline in the trails budget.

Question from the Advisory committee: Would it be possible for a group to reopen a closed campground if they took on the maintenance and operation of closed campgrounds? **K. Thrall** replied that the campground may be closed for a variety of reasons. It would be best to coordinate with the local USDA Forest Service District.

- DNR Law Enforcement (**LED representative absent**) none
- DNR Trails Staff Update (**P. Yauk, A. Swainston, R. Katona**)
  - **P. Yauk** Oakland County ORV Park Progress reported Groveland Township board unanimously supported the development of the ORV Park. The land is located near Mt. Holly and may encompass 400 acres. They are hoping to have it operational by 2018. It will be operated by the local unit of government and supported by user entrance fees, ORV registrations, and other community support. There has been a desire for more Off Road opportunities in Southern Michigan.

This new facility may be a great opportunity to bring organizations such as **NOHVCC** to host events. **Paul Y.** offered to submit a letter to NOHVCC board to solicit an invitation to host an event in Michigan.

- Staffing: Motorized Program Specialist: should be posted soon. **Paul Y.** it is under review by **DNR PRD Chief R. Olsen**. **P. Yauk** requested to have a representative from the ORVAW to be included on the interview panel. Paul reviewed the current staff and work locations as well as recently hired Jeff Kakuk: Western U.P. Trails Specialist. (See Trails Program Contact List at end of Minutes)
- **A. Swainston** reported that the ORV Kickoff Meeting will be just held in the Upper Peninsula. Lower Peninsula meeting cancelled due to low RSVP and little to no changes in program. UP Meeting will continue as planned. Those who could attend are welcome to join the UP meeting.

CCC was still collecting responses and had 10 people who would be able to attend the Lower Peninsula meeting. **L. Shuler** asked that we continue to hold the preseason meetings as they are important to the trail maintainers and they always look forward to them.

- o Changes to the program are grant applicants to include contingency funds to assist with unplanned maintenance needs such as large washouts, straight line winds or tornadoes. Request to use the contingency funds will need to be made ahead of the work performed and justification for reimbursement amounts can utilize MDOT schedule C rates. Special Maintenance projects will have a two year cycle versus the current one year cycle. To work around planning, design or weather that may be difficult to execute in one year. Both of these revisions should reduce the need for grant amendments needed mid-year or waiting 6 months to recoup costs.
- o Trail Improvement Fund applications will be turned into the local DNR Trail or Recreation Specialist May 1.
- o Some of the new Carsonite Posts are on their way to Gaylord and more will be shipping soon. R. Katona. How they will be installed is yet to be determined and number of drivers purchased for clubs to install.

**New Business:**

- 2016 ORVAW Meeting Schedule
  - o **T. Dunn** has approached SAW to set up a date for joint meeting. He has requested June 20 or the already scheduled June 21 meeting at the location they have identified.

Meeting date locations were identified for the remaining 2016 meetings

ORV AW– Wednesday	Time	Location
March 9	6:30 pm	Ramada
May 4 June 20 or 21	6:30 pm 10am?	@ SAW Location
August 10	6:30 pm	Ramada, Lansing
November 2	6:30 pm	Northern Lower Peninsula

- Recommendation for the second 2016 Free ORV Weekend. (**Dunn**) Last year the free ride was held the third weekend of August. **T. Dunn** felt this was a good time of year due to other expenses associated with kids going back to school. It allows one less expense for those who are planning trips late in the year. One hundred fourteen survey responses were collected on the second free ORV weekend. Sixty-three people reported having a permit and fifty respondents did not.

**Motion made by T. Kobasic Seconded by L. Shuler to recommend utilizing August 21 & 22, 2016 for the second free ORV weekend. Motion for adoption passed.**

- Conflicts with wheeled vehicle use during winter grooming season on groomed snowmobile trails. **D. Helsel and R. Katona** brought forward from SAW a suggested authorized trail Sign 18x12; reflectorized yellow advisory sign may be used on snowmobile trails where wheeled motor vehicle use is occurring. The sign gives notice to users that it is a groomed Snowmobile trail December 1 to March 31. Completely prohibiting all wheel vehicle use is not possible since some groomed trails are shared with other users at times for trapping, private property access, or seasonal county road. **S. Schulz** inquired about additional language added to the bottom related to property ownership. **R. Katona** responded that the SAW group wanted to keep the sign simple to fit the most situations as possible.

**Motion made by T. Kobisac Seconded by D. Helsel to support the use of the sign as presented. Motion passed.**

- Review reimbursement rate for brushing/signing, grading and sign upgrade/changeover. **(Shuler) L. Shuler** contacted **J. Fleming** group has not recently met. Due to the arrival of new style confidence markers, and number of years since rates were reviewed, it was asked to set up a subcommittee to look into what the rates should be. Discussion on the subcommittee would be to invite current trail maintainers to join at trail sponsor meeting.  
**Subcommittee members: Lewis Shuler, Don Helsel, Tim Kobasic, Rob Katona, Amy Swainston, Bruce Suydam, Eric Colling, Pat Brower ... trail maintainer workshop attendees who expressed interest.**
- Funding for trail easements for ORV on private land similar to snowmobile program trail easement fund. **(Helsel/Yauk)** When the current funding distribution for license fees were established, the thought of paying lease fees for trail access was not approved. Need guidance and options for changing the formula legislatively versus using maintenance funding. Need to determine how the breakdown would change to support the trail leases. Ensure we do not build more than what current funding is able to maintain. **S. Schulz** mentioned that an ORV registration could formulate a percentage into a permanent trail easement fund. There is a sunset on the current license fee increase in 2018. It was suggested that new legislation for the sunset could have a percentage dedicated to a permanent trail easement fund. Currently, there is nothing in place after the sunset date.

- Policy regarding changing trail maintenance grant sponsors for multiple sponsors wanting to maintain the same trail. **(Yauk/Katona)** Currently, DNR does not have policy for releasing trail maintenance sponsors except for failure to perform. Suggestions are needed to make best decision based on what is best for the trail. Not looking at taking away, but locations where a group may be overwhelmed. Discussion comments were related to locations that overlap with a snowmobile club to try coordinating meetings and work bees. The diversity in club members may get new members in the group.
- Extending ORV sponsor maintenance grants to two years. **(Kennedy/Katona)** Extending the special maintenance grants to a two year cycle will bring it to match other motorized grant programs. Routine brushing, signing, and grading would remain at one year. This is for the specialized projects such as beaver dam / culvert issues, bridges, or decks. This will cut down on the number of grant amendments for extensions.  
**Motion made by D. Helsel Seconded by L. Shuler to support a two year special maintenance grant cycle. Motion passed.**

**T. Dunn** informed the board that appointment dates were coming up for various members. All members present mentioned that they would like to stay on the board.

- **Public Appearance** None

**Meeting Adjourned 9:00 p.m.**

**Next Meeting** June 20 or 21, 2016 with SAW

**Handouts:**

**Suggested Authorized Trail Sign**

Advisory Sign: Optional, may be used on snowmobile trails where wheeled motor vehicle use is occurring



**Suggested Modified Route Icon:**

**Proposed Sign:**

**Current Sign:**

