

**JOINT MEETING OF THE  
OFF-ROAD VEHICLE TRAILS ADVISORY BOARD  
AND  
SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**The Ramada Lansing Hotel & Conference Center  
7501 West Saginaw Highway, Lansing, Michigan  
August 5, 2009  
6:30pm**

**Snowmobile Advisory Committee (SAC) Chairman Wheatlake** called the joint meeting of the Off-Road Vehicle Trails Advisory Board (ORV) and the SAC to order at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, August 5, 2009, in Lansing, Michigan.

**ORV Advisory Board Members Present:**

Dick Ranney, Chair, ORV Users, National City  
Sheriff Scott Strait, County Law Enforcement, Hessel  
Larry Harrington, At-Large, Crystal Falls  
John Bernard, ORV Users, Harrisville  
Amy Spray, Natural Resources Conservation and the Environment, Lansing

**Members Absent:**

Peter Wyckoff, Natural Resources Conservation and the Environment, Brighton  
Glenn Moll, Vice Chair, ORV Users, Newberry

**Snowmobile Advisory Committee Members Present:**

Frank Wheatlake, Chairman, Business and Community Representative, Reed City  
Bill Lucas, Region II, Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA), Cadillac  
Don Britton, At-Large, Marquette  
Richard Filley, Trail Sponsors Representative, Grayling  
Jim Duke, Region I MSA, Munising  
Lee Murray, At-Large, Hopkins

**Members Absent:**

Bill Manson, Region III, MSA, Grand Rapids

**Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Present:**

Lynne Boyd, Chief, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management (FMFM), Lansing  
Steve DeBrabander, State Trails Unit Supervisor, FMFM, Lansing  
Steve Kubisiak, Recreation and Trails Program Coordinator, FMFM, Lansing  
William O'Neill, Lower Peninsula Field Coordinator, FMFM, Gaylord  
Cpl. John Morey, Law Enforcement Division (LED), Gaylord  
Lt. Creig Grey, LED, Roscommon  
Dan Moore, Recreation Specialist FMFM, Newberry  
Robin Pearson, Recreation Specialist FMFM, Gaylord  
Paige Perry, Trail Analyst, FMFM, Gaylord  
Amanda Matelski, Trail Analyst, FMFM, Cadillac

**USDA Forest Service Staff Present:**

Rose Ingram, Huron-Manistee National Forest, Cadillac  
Anne Okonek, Hiawatha National Forest, St. Ignace  
Rick McVey, Ottawa National Forest

**Welcome/Introductions**

The members of the ORV Trails Advisory Board and Snowmobile Advisory Committee, DNR staff and the audience introduced themselves.

## **Minutes**

Acknowledged the June 16, 2009, Snowmobile Advisory Committee minutes.

**Motion was made by Mr. Duke, seconded by Mr. Lucas, to adopt the minutes of the June 16, 2009 meeting. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

Acknowledged the May 6, 2009, ORV Trails Advisory Board meeting minutes.

**Mr. Ranney** noted a correction on page 2.

**Motion was made by Mr. Bernard, seconded by Mr. Harrington, to adopt the minutes of the May 6, 2009 meeting as corrected. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

## **Joint Discussion Topics**

**Shared Use – Mr. DeBrabander** reported that at previous SAC meetings issues relating to ORV use on snowmobile trails have been raised resulting in this joint meeting. He thanked the groups for coming together to discuss issues of mutual concern and said we are seeking some additional information to determine how big these issues are, so that's why we wanted to meet to discuss. He provided background on three primary areas of concern then opened the floor for discussion.

Primary areas of concern:

1. ORV use on snowmobile trails during the snowmobile season -- Primary concerns are damage to the groomed snowmobile trail surface by wheeled ORV's and safety with respect to mixing high speed snowmobiles and slower moving ORVs.

**Mr. Murray** said he has not personally seen a problem recently, but believes tires can damage groomed snowmobile trails.

**Mr. Lucus** is concerned with private land trespass and said some snowmobile trails have been closed because of ATVs.

**Mr. Filley** said his club grooms 10 miles of shared use trails and has not seen a lot of winter ORV use, but doesn't think that snowmobiles and ORV's mix well and should be discouraged.

**Mr. Duke** said he agrees with Mr. Filley and thinks snowmobile trails should be closed to ORV's in the winter.

**Mr. Ranney** noted a posting on the ATV Off-Roads website that discourages ATV use on groomed snowmobile trails in the winter. He also noted that some people like to ride in the winter time.

**Mr. Harrington** said he has not seen a problem on the Iron County multi-use trail that is open to snowmobile's in the winter and ORV's year around.

**Mr. Bernard** said he has seen some damage on dual use snowmobile trails.

**Sheriff Strait** said he fields a few complaints each year, mostly full size trucks accessing public land for hunting. He also said he fields a few private land trespass complaints each year. He thinks it should be defined when ORV's can be used.

**Mr. Lucas** noted many snowmobile trails are located on seasonal county roads and are open to motor vehicle traffic year around.

**Ms. Spray** said she would be interested in educating hunters about the issue of driving on groomed snowmobile trails.

**Mr. Wheatlake** asked if vehicles could be restricted on snowmobile trails on state land.

**Ms. Boyd** said that could be done through a Director's Order.

**Mr. Wheatlake** asked how the Forest Service handles ORV use on snowmobile trails in the winter.

The Huron-Manistee and Hiawatha National Forests have a seasonal use restriction from December 1 to March 31. The Ottawa National Forest does not have a seasonal use restriction.

2. ORV use on snowmobile trails during the non-snowmobile season – Primary concern is damage caused by ORV's resulting in the need to grade the trails smooth before the snowmobile season.

**Mr. DeBrabander** noted the ORV program has funded grading projects and believes this is working well.

**Mr. Ranney** noted Iosco County has an ORV grant for grading. They grade the trails several times during the summer and then again in the fall to get the trails ready for the snowmobile season. He said it works well and suggested designating more joint use trails.

**Mr. Britton** noted ORV funds can be used on designated snowmobile trails on public lands, but could not be used on private land.

3. ORV trespass on snowmobile trails located on private lands during the snowmobile and non-snowmobile seasons.

**Mr. DeBrabander** reported over half of the designated snowmobile system (approximately 3000 miles) is located on private land. These lands are leased exclusively for snowmobile trail use during the winter season. Trespass can result during both the snowmobile and non-snow season because in many situations there is no indication when the trail leaves public land and enters private land. He said both ORV riders and snowmobiler's may believe they can use the trail in the summer time. He noted that currently the entire ORV trail system (approximately 3,400 miles) is located on public land. The Department will be looking to expand the ORV trail system onto private land in the future.

**Mr. DeBrabander** asked for input from the Forest Service.

**Ms. Okonek** reported they are receiving significant ORV damage to snowmobile trails on the Hiawatha National Forest. She noted many of the snowmobile trails are located in wetlands. They are frozen and groomed in the winter, but closed to motor vehicles during the summer. However, ORV riders continue to vandalize and drive around the gates to gain access to the trails. They are planning to relocate the snowmobile trails out of the wetlands and develop multi-use trails on higher ground. She expressed concern with the lack of consistency regarding seasonal use restrictions between the state and federal forests.

**Mr. DeBrabander** asked what caused them to implement seasonal use restrictions on the snowmobile trails.

**Ms. Okonek** said, trail damage.

**Mr. McVey** said they are not seeing heavy ATV use on the snowmobile trails in the Ottawa National Forest. They do not have seasonal use restrictions on their snowmobile trails.

**Mr. DeBrabander** said he would like to hear what the audience has to say during public comment.

**Mr. Wheatlake** said the concept of multiple use trail compatibility and legality is a huge topic and said the Governor and the DNR Executive Office are considering establishment of a statewide trails council that will be inclusive of all trail interest groups.

**Motorized Trail User Survey Update** – **Dr. Charles Nelson, Michigan State University** distributed a handout and highlighted preliminary snowmobile survey findings and status of ORV survey to date. See attached.

**Appointment of Motorized Sign Committee** – **Mr. DeBrabander** reported that at the last ORV and SAC meetings staff presented recommendations to combine the motorized trail signing program. The DNR would like to appoint a committee to finalize the sign program. The committee will consist of a representative from the ORV board, the SAC, trail user groups, Forest Service, FMFM, and LED. Mr. Filley will represent the SAC. Mr. Moll will represent the ORV board.

#### **Information Items:**

**Western Upper Peninsula Citizens Advisory Council Resolutions** – **Mr. Kubisiak** referred the members to two resolutions from the Western Upper Peninsula Citizens Advisory Council. The Citizens Advisory Council was formed to give citizens more input into the DNR regional programs and policies. He summarized the resolutions and reported they are currently under review by the DNR Executive Office.

**Hopkins Trail Proposal** – **Mr. Murray** introduced Mark Evans. **Mr. Evans** is the Supervisor for Hopkins Township and is working with Allegan Snowmobile Club to establish a new 14 mile trail connector that will connect the existing trail into Hopkins. The proposal includes a staging area and will provide access to food and services. He is looking for support from the SAC.

**Mr. DeBrabander** said the proposal will be entered into the data base and will go through an expedited review.

**Mr. Reed** said the MSA supports the proposal.

**Mr. Evans** thanked the SAC.

#### **Staff Reports** – (information only by exception)

**U.S. Forest Service - Rose Ingram** reported she met with Mr. Lucas and Mr. Dingman on the 56<sup>th</sup> Street trail proposal. She believes they may have found a viable re-route. The Forest Service is working with the Trail Riders Club to resolve concerns with the M-20 parking lot and develop a snowmobile staging area on private land. They are moving forward with Alcona County to construct a new multi-use trail. The motor vehicle use maps for the Manistee side of the forest are close to completion. There will be two maps. She announced the Huron-Manistee National Forest will be celebrating their 100 year anniversary this Saturday at Lumberman's Monument in Oscoda.

**Ms. Okonek** said she is pleased to report the Moss Lake Motorcycle trail had its grand opening last month. Over sixty people attended. It is a challenging trail and she is receiving lots of compliments. The trail received financial support from the ORV grant program. She thanked DNR, ORV board, and the Sandstormers Motorcycle and ORV Club.

**Mr. McVey** reported they are working with the UP Thunder Riders on the Buck Lake reroute and several other reroutes in the Ottawa National Forest. The environmental analysis is complete on two ATV trail connector route proposals that would connect to the state trail system. A final decision is expected this fall.

**Law Enforcement Division - Corporal Morey** confirmed the SAC members received the 2008-2009 snowmobile fatality report. He is currently spending approximately 95% of the ORV education program funds and researching the possibility of providing on-line education opportunities.

**Lt. Grey** reported last year there was a major marijuana arrest on state forest land in Gladwin County. The marijuana field was discovered and reported by a hunter. Several suspects were arrested. This is the first major arrest linked to the Mexican drug cartel in Michigan. **Lt. Grey** reminded everyone that when they are out recreating in the forest and they see anything suspicious, they should leave and call 911.

**Forest, Mineral and Fire Management – Mr. Kubisiak** referred the ORV board to a draft of a Director's Order for Muskallonge and Clear Lake State Parks to authorize the use of ORV's within these state parks to access designated ORV trails. He noted the proposed order is similar to the one recently approved by the DNR Director for Twin Lakes and Baraga State Parks. The order will go to the Natural Resources Commission for information in September and is eligible for approval in October.

**Motion was made by Mr. Harrington, seconded by Sheriff Strait, to support the proposed order to regulate ORV use at Muskallonge Lake State Park and Clear Lake State Park. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

**Mr. Kubisiak** referred the ORV board and SAC members to a press release acknowledging the Normenco Sportsman's Club for their volunteerism to help clean-up trash dumped along the Felch Grade multi-use trail in the Upper Peninsula. He noted this goes above and beyond usual trail maintenance and the club should be commended.

### **Public Appearance**

**Mr. Longroy, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club** expressed concerns with wheeled vehicles on groomed snowmobile trails. He said last season he encountered hunters parked on the trails.

**Mr. Dingman, Trailriders** asked when he could proceed with purchasing his snowmobile trail grooming equipment. **Mr. DeBrabander** said a few details are being worked out and eligible clubs will be notified within a week to ten days. **Mr. Dingman** thanked Ms. Ingram and Mr. Lucas for meeting with him.

**Mr. White, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club** said he has not encountered problems with wheeled vehicles on snowmobile trails in the national forest but has seen problems on state land. He had questions about the status of the M-65 snowmobile trail project. He was referred to the Iosco County Parks and Recreation Commission.

**Mr. DeVore, Great Lakes Four Wheel Drive Association** expressed concern with the proposed ORV trail license fee increase and thinks ORVs should be licensed by vehicle type. He supports multi-use trails and volunteered to be on the sign committee.

**Mr. Mulder, Great Lakes Four Wheel Drive Association** stated 2008 Public Act 240 opened county roads to ORVs year around. He said according to state law ORV and snowmobile operators are prima-facie negligent if they get into an accident on a public roadway. He said he contacted the Michigan Department of Transportation and they confirmed that any sign posted on a public roadway must conform to the Michigan Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MMUTCD). He believes the term public way applies to forest roads and all signs must conform to the MMUTCD. He believes ORV and snowmobile trail signs are illegal and should be removed. **Ms Boyd** said the DNR is not a road authority and does not agree with his opinion.

**Mr. Reed, MSA** said multi-use access to public land is important to everyone and with this comes the responsibility of user groups to work together.

**Mr. Dickie, MSA** said we all need to work together to solve problems. He requested the MSA logo be included on trail sponsor recognition signs. **Mr. Wheatlake** said his request is duly noted.

**Mr. Brooks** is critical of ORV law enforcement grants, and believes trail patrols are not occurring during the weekends when they are needed. He also does not believe ORV damage sites are being patrolled.

**Lt. Grey** responded that trail patrols and resource damage sites (RDRs) are worked into the DNR's ORV enforcement work plans. He noted conservation officer's work in partnership with county sheriff departments in some locations. **Mr. Ranney** said trail users need to police their own and should call the Report All Poaching line when they observe violations.

**Mr. Manner, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club** is looking for commitment from the ORV community and grant program to help maintain snowmobile trails damaged by ORV's.

**Mr. Martin, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club** said they spent eighteen thousand dollars on repairs to snowmobile trail number 6 in 2005. He is concerned with ORV damage on snowmobile trails.

**Mr. Wheatlake** thanked everyone for their passion and said the committees have a lot of work to do. It was the consensus of the members that this meeting was productive and that the two committees must work together to solve issues of mutual concern.

**Mr. Britton** said he believes the future of Michigan's public trail system will involve the establishment of permanent multi-use trails.

**Mr. Ranney** thanked everyone from the snowmobile and ORV community for attending the meeting and suggested there be a joint meeting at least every two years.

**Mr. Murray moved to adjourn, second by Mr. Harrington. Motion unanimously carried.**

Meeting adjourned a 9:35 pm.

### **Next Meeting**

ORV Trails Advisory Board -- November 4, 2009, at the Ramada Lansing Hotel & Conference Center  
Snowmobile Advisory Committee – October 27, 2009, at B.J.'s Restaurant, Gaylord

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### **PUBLIC PRESENT**

Lewis Shuler, Cycle Conservation Club of Michigan (CCC)

Sue Thrushman, ATV Off-Road Club  
Bob DeVore, Great Lakes Four Wheel Drive Association (GLFWDA)  
Paul Hittie, GLFWDA  
Paul Mulder, GLFWDA  
Greg Yager, CCC  
Bill Gilbert, MI ORV Safety Assoc.  
Dave Cullort, Hart of the N. Snowmobile Council  
Tim Thurman, ATV Off Road Club of MI  
Bradley Potter, Western MI Snow Council  
Keith Litchfield, Bader & Sons John Deere  
Mike Olmstead, Jeep Jamboree/GLFWDA  
Cody Dean, What Lies Beyond Jeep Club  
John Lang, CCC  
Jim Dingman, Trailriders  
Bud Martin, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club (OHSC)  
Dan White, OHSC  
Denny Manner, OHSC  
Don Carroll, OHSC  
Norman Rockwell, OHSC  
Melissa Preston, ATV Off Road Club of MI  
Robert Preston, ATV Off Rd. Club of MI  
Karen Middendorp, MI Snowmobile Assoc. (MSA)  
Bill Taylor, Lewiston Fun Ones  
Mark Evans, Hopkins Twp. Supervisor  
Ernie Brooks, ORV  
Jim Kunath, ORV  
Tom Barnes, MAT  
Tom Gallagher, MSA & MI Recreation Vehicle Riders Assoc.  
Bud Longroy, OHSC  
Melanie Mulder, GLFWD & ATV Off Road  
Bruce Suydam, ATV Off Road Club of MI  
Tom Doty  
Chuck Heyze, CCC  
Jim Dickie, MSA  
Don Reed, MSA  
Thomas Dunn, AMA D-14  
Doug Gillman, ATV Off Road Club of MI  
Judy Gillman, ATV Off Road Club of MI  
Rod Locatis, ACSC-GA (Allegan Snowmobile Club)  
Jim Conley, ACSC  
Nancy Locatis, ACSC  
Rick Locatis, ACSC  
Chuck Nelson, Michigan State University  
Carl Telletsen, St. Helen Snow Packers  
Dave Becker, St. Helen Snow Packers  
Bob Babinar, St Helen Snow Packers

## Michigan Motorized Trail Study Update

Dr. Chuck Nelson

August 5, 2009

### Snowmobile Study

The sample was selected from two sources, the retail sales system (RSS) for snowmobile trail permits from winter 2007-08 and paper records for preprinted trail permits for 2007-08. There were total of 200,530 MI snowmobile trail permits sold for winter 2007-08. Part of sample selected easily by using RSS, part selected at considerable expense by hand selecting from paper records. The proportion selected matched proportion sold by each method. Three waves of 1,000 mail surveys each were sent out across the winter (January, February, March). The questionnaire was developed in a way that allows comparison in many areas with the winter 1996-97 study and was reviewed by DNR and SAC. Three waves were used to get most recent trip data from across the winter season, rather than a single wave which was used in the previous study.

### Preliminary Results

- Of 3,000 mailed to 2007-08 MI snowmobile trail permit holders
  - 131 bad addresses
  - Of remaining 2,869 a total of 1,092 responded (38%)
- Average snowmobiling household had 2 sleds
  - Median model year of sled is 2001(8 years old)
  - Fits with significant decline in sales of new sleds in MI
    - April 1996 – March 1997 sold 26,410 (per ISMA)
    - April 2008 – March 2009 sold 5,040 (per ISMA)
- 2.0 million MI snowmobile days winter 2007-08
  - 85% resident, 15% non-resident
    - 59% of all non-resident days in WUP
  - 16% WUP, 19% EUP, 23% NELP, 28% NWLP, 14% SLP
  - 45% on overnight trip, 43% day trip less than 100 miles, 12% day trip 100 or more miles
  - Based on third wave of respondents, winter 2008-09 very similar in snowmobile days
- \$489 million MI snowmobile spending winter 2008-09
  - \$244 million travel spending
    - 23% vehicle, 23% snowmobile, 18% grocery, 18% restaurant/bar, 14% lodging, 5% other (including other sporting goods)
    - Travel spending by region
      - 17% WUP, 20% EUP, 19% NELP, 22% NWLP, 20% SLP
  - \$245 million equipment spending during past 12 months
    - 59% snowmobiles (new & used), 20% other equipment (trailers, clothes, etc.), 13% snowmobile repair/maintenance, 8% snowmobile insurance, < 1% storage

Much more information to come with full report presented at December 2009 SAC meeting.

### ORV Study

Survey done in 3 waves (spring, summer fall) using sample from 181,659 MI 2008-09 ORV license year purchasers. Because a proportion of ORV licenses not purchased through the RSS system, needed to go to Silver Lake State Park (sell approximately 20,000 annually and are NOT on RSS system) to select representative sample. Park staff was very helpful and gathered more than 300 MI ORV willing ORV license purchaser name/address during June 27 – July 6. First wave of survey (1,000) sent out June 15 and received 265 completed surveys and 31 bad addresses. Data is being entered and second wave went out August 1 including 150 purchasing license from Silver Lake SP. Full report in 2010.

Todd Neiss WLP Recreation Specialist  
Report for August 5, 2009 SAC & ORV Mtg.

BRIDGE STATUS

**Little Manistee ORV/Snowmobile River Bridge** (Lake Co., T19N, R13W, Sec 11)

Bridge will have 14' clear span width to better accommodate grooming equipment. Construction contract award is pending.

**Morrissy Creek ORV/Snowmobile Bridge** ( Wexford Co., T24N, R9W, Sec 13). Bridge will have 14' clear span width to better accommodate grooming equipment. Construction contract award is pending.

**Syers Creek ORV/Snowmobile Bridge** (Lake Co., T19N, R13W, Sec 11).

Bridge will have 12' clear span width as initially designed. Construction contract award is pending

**Prudenville ORV/Snowmobile Bridge** (Roscommon Co., T22N, R2W, Sec 31)

Final design completed by C2AE. Construction contract award is pending.

**Fur Farm Snowmobile Bridge** (Clare Co., T20N, R5W, Sec 21), and

**Townline Crk ORV/Snowmobile Bridge** (Roscommon Co. T21N, R4W, Sec 31). Design awarded to Williams and Works. Phase 500 (construction cost estimates) have been provided to the DNR & DMB for review. A RIF/RTP grant was submitted in June 2009 to potentially obtain funds for construction.

**East Twin Creek ORV/Snowmobile Bridge** (Lake Co. T19N, R12W, Sec 8).

**West Twin Creek ORV/Snowmobile Bridge** (Lake Co. T20N, R12W, Sec32).

Design awarded to NDG. Cost estimates have been provided to the DNR & DMB. A RIF/RTP grant was submitted in June 2009 to potentially obtain funds for construction.

**Chase Crk East ORV/Snowmobile Bridge** (Wexford Co. T24N, R9W, Sec 23)

**Flower Crk ORV/Snowmobile Bridge** (Missaukee Co. T24N, R8E, Sec16)

Design awarded to C2AE. Cost estimates have been provided to the DNR & DMB. A RIF/RTP grant was submitted in June 2009 to potentially obtain funds for construction.

**Betsie River Tributary Culvert** (Benzie Co., T25N 14W Sec 26). Project being evaluated by DNR and Benzie-Manistee Snowbirds to determine need for this culvert. Culvert is located along a low use spur trail to Crystal Mtn. resort.

**Bear Creek Bridge** (Manistee Co., T24N, R14W, Sec 22). Recently acquired rail trail corridor (former Gentz property) will need a bridge to span Bear Creek. Local DNR staff working with Benzie-Manistee Snowbirds to determine appropriate funding source to begin design/construction process.

TRAIL ISSUES:

A 20' section of the Pere Marquette Rail Trail Grade in Osceola county (near Sears, MI) is washed out due to beaver activity. Currently, the trail would be impassable to sleds. DNR field staff is obtaining estimates, and working with DNR engineering to re-establish the grade prior to the 2009-2010 snowmobile season.

As of July 29, 2009, the following snowmobile trail proposals within my jurisdictional area have been approved: Four Flags reroute (Cass Co.), Vineyard Valley (Van Buren Co.), Territorial Road (Van Buren Co.), and Lupton Trail (Ogemaw Co.).

If you have any questions, please contact me at (231) 775-9727, ext 6045.