

**DRAFT MINUTES  
SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING  
Sydney's Restaurant  
400 Cedar Street  
Munising, Michigan  
December 10, 2009**

**Acting Chairman Manson** called the meeting of the Snowmobile Advisory Committee (SAC) to order at 9:01 a.m., Thursday, December 10, 2009 in Munising, Michigan. He extended apologies from Chairman Frank Wheatlake as he is unable to attend.

**Members Present:**

Bill Manson, Region III, Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA), Grand Rapids  
Bill Lucas, Region II, MSA, Cadillac  
Lee Murray, At-Large, Hopkins  
Richard Filley, Trail Sponsors Representative, Grayling  
Jim Duke, Region I MSA, Munising  
Don Britton, At-Large, Marquette

**Members Absent:**

Frank Wheatlake, Committee Chairman

**Ex-Officio Members Present:**

Anne Okonek, USDA, Hiawatha National Forest

**DNR Staff Present:**

Lynne Boyd, Chief, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management (FMFM), Lansing  
Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, FMFM, Lansing  
Steve DeBrabander, State Trails Unit Supervisor, FMFM, Lansing  
William O'Neill, Lower Peninsula Field Coordinator, FMFM, Gaylord  
Mike Paluda, Upper Peninsula Field Coordinator, FMFM, Marquette  
Capt. Tom Courchaine, Law Enforcement Division (LED), Marquette  
Lt. Andrew Turner, LED, Lansing  
Cpl. John Morey, LED, Gaylord  
Loretta Cwalinski, Secretary, Office of Land and Facilities, Gaylord

**Mr. Manson** introduced himself and he welcomed everyone. The Committee, DNR staff and the public audience introduced themselves.

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the October 27, 2009 SAC meeting were acknowledged.

**Motion was made by Mr. Lucas, seconded by Mr. Duke, to adopt the October 27, 2009 meeting minutes, as corrected. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

**Mr. Manson** added one agenda item under New Business regarding the legal definition of what is a snowmobile.

**Mr. Lucas** added green diamond trail markers under New Business.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**Trail Counter Update** – **Mr. DeBrabander** provided a staff inventory as to where all Department counters are located, their condition, and the various manufacturers of the counters. There are two models - laser and ground pressure units. Based on input from the field staff, the ground pressure counters are more accurate. The data is available at the local field offices.

**Mr. Paluda** mentioned the Bill Nichols Trail out of Baraga - it has the longest running data available which shows a decline in the last two years after an increase over the last 20 years.

**Ms. Okonek** said Hiawatha National Forest also has counters along with data. They use the data for trend analysis.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Snowmobiling Survey** – **Dr. Chuck Nelson, Michigan State University** discussed the survey process and presented the findings. The final review is with the Department and will be out shortly. He also shared a handout of the PowerPoint presentation.

In summary, the survey was completed by mail which looked at trends in the winter of 2007-2008. **Dr. Nelson** provided comparisons of data collected from the winter of 1996-1997 with winter of 2007-2008. He noted some challenges in Michigan, but said that there's been a trend for safer snowmobiling, but youth need to be educated more. Economic benefits, by money spent on an average snowmobile trip, showed how critical snowmobiling is to the economy, especially in the Upper Peninsula. Findings from the survey showed that there was overall satisfaction with the snowmobile program – trails, design, grooming, and law enforcement. Overall snowmobiling has declined in Michigan, but it is due primarily to the economy. He added that DNR Law Enforcement has done an excellent job investigating accidents, and has made a positive impression as well.

**Mr. Paluda** asked if Dr. Nelson could do some forecasting for ten years from now.

**Dr. Nelson** said that when the economy improves, the program will improve. It will be a struggle to get economic numbers up, but the Department should continue the quality program and it will all improve.

**Mr. Manson** asked how often the survey should be done – **Dr. Nelson** suggested every five years. Discussion continued.

**Mr. Manson** asked when the general final report will be ready for the public - **Dr. Nelson** said it should be done and ready by January.

**Motion was made by Mr. Murray, seconded by Mr. Lucas, that SAC supports the snowmobile survey be taken at five year intervals. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

**Pre-engineered Trail Bridges - Mr. Britton** had a handout from UP Fabricating Co, Inc. on various bridge designs and engineering. He's not saying this is the only company to go to, that other contractors should be approached as well. He thinks their club saved a year with this pre-fabricated process, and possibly \$8000 to \$9000 of the design costs. Discussion continued.

**Mr. DeBrabander** said that pre-engineered bridges are acceptable as long as they meet the weight bearing length and width criteria.

**Mr. Murray** said he feels the grant sponsors need to be educated in this area at the pre-season meetings. It was also noted that the Recreation Specialists should be informed of this process.

**Mr. Britton** added that there should be a list compiled of the available bridge contractors.

**Definition of a Snowmobile – Mr. Manson** said the MSA office has had many calls asking about ATV's that have been modified with skis and tracks. He asked if they meet the criteria of a snowmobile, and read the definition from the law.

**Lt. Turner** answered that ATVs with tracks that replace the normal wheels don't meet the criteria. LED's position on the issue is that if a vehicle is equipped with a track **AND** a ski, then it would fit the definition of a snowmobile. They are working on getting information and clarification out to field staff. Four wheeled ATVs & ORVs without skis would not meet the definition of a snowmobile.

**Mr. Filley** asked about a motorcycle with a track and ski – yes that does meet the criteria.

**Ms. Okonek** said when they talked with their USFS law enforcement, they defined anything that was able to travel over snow as a snowmobile – and she believes they are allowable on federal land trails. She said she will take that information back to the Forest Service for clarification. She did say that wheeled-motorized vehicles are not allowed on the Forest Service trails. Discussion continued. **Lt. Turner** will work on providing correct definitions and information to SAC.

**Green Trail Markers – Mr. Lucas** discussed trail signs for access to gas stations and food stops, and even routes through towns. Green diamonds are currently being used, but there have been problems recently with trail clubs using different colored signs to direct snowmobilers to various establishments, that are not approved by the Department. He would like to see Green Trails and to have it put in the sign manual.

**Mr. DeBrabander** said the intent of green diamonds is for when trail systems go into a town. They are not to be used to get to a town or get to one business or resort.

**Mr. Manson** wanted to know if that was acceptable to use green diamonds to get to a town or resort. It may not be groomed, but it is an access to businesses.

**Mr. DeBrabander** said that the signs are to actually be orange to the town for a designated trail, green through the town, then back to orange. Discussion continued.

**Mr. Manson** would like to see a review of the signs because some clubs would like to see them pointed to various businesses. No more colors but would like to see consistency. He also would like to see a simple statement in the manual about how and when to use the markers.

**Motion made by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Murray, that SAC recommend Green Diamond routes be allowed as ingress and egress through towns and businesses, with proper land control. In addition, posts and diamonds will be provided by sponsors or businesses, not by the program. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

## **STAFF REPORTS**

**Forest, Mineral and Fire Management, Grant Update** - **Mr. Radabaugh** updated the grant situation. As of December 1<sup>st</sup>, there have been \$7 million in grants issued, and will use the balance for repairs and to amend the grooming grants as necessary.

**Mr. Manson** added that with the trail permit and registration fee increase, the program will break even this season. Discussion continued.

**Mr. Radabaugh** reviewed the program services report. This deals with the two programs – ORV and snowmobile. It explains the whole grant process - dates for activities and requests; the breakdown of criteria for law enforcement, equipment funding and safety education. He also reviewed the various sponsor's list of specific grants to clubs for equipment requests and approved equipment.

**Mr. Manson** asked for an explanation on the Montmorency County law enforcement grant money.

**Lt. Turner** explained that Montmorency County Sheriff Department did not spend what they had requested last season, and based on the three year average they were granted less than requested for the 2009-2010 season.

**2009-2010 Fuel Reimbursement Adjustment** - **Mr. Radabaugh** advised there was a one cent increase over last year in fuel reimbursement. Labor and routine reimbursement will remain the same. As of December 1<sup>st</sup>, grooming per mile will be \$4.22.

**Jordan Valley Trail Council Update** – **Mr. DeBrabander** talked about Jordan Valley's trail alignment discussion from the last SAC meeting. The trail council requested SAC to deviate from how clubs qualify for equipment. The SAC decision was not to deviate from the rules. Jordan Valley has decided to split off to another club, and be called Jordan Valley South. Sixty-two miles has been split off to the new trail sponsor.

**Law Enforcement** – **Lt. Turner** reported that on January 30<sup>th</sup>, there will be a one day snowmobile safety instructor certification class held at the Ralph A. MacMullan (RAM) Conference Center. They will hopefully certify up to 25 instructors. There was a press release that went out yesterday as well. There is no cost for the certification, lunch is provided.

Second item, **Lt. Turner** said **Cpl. Morey** is working in an advisory capacity with Fresh Air Education based in Ontario – that company has developed an online snowmobile education course and has several states that have signed on, but we have not yet. Hopefully this course will engage the younger person on the computer, and the youngster can take the test with an instructor without any outside assistance.

**Capt. Courchaine** said they will be having a meeting next week about the sound enforcement issue, and finalize overall enforcement issues. **Mr. Manson** asked to have that available by e-mail to SAC as well for distribution. He also would like information on the one day class to hand out.

**Cpl. Morey** wanted to add that when collecting information on snowmobile fatalities, they do note if the person had snowmobile safety or not.

**U.S. Forest Service – Anne Okonek, USDA, Hiawatha National Forest** said Rick McVey, Ottawa National Forest had nothing to report. Carol Boll with Huron-Manistee National Forest has the designs to replace two bridges. A 30 mile stretch from Oscoda to Alcona will be worked on next summer. Old M-65 Bridge crossing the Au Sable River is ready for construction, just waiting for Oscoda County Parks and Recreation Board to complete agreements/easement with Consumers Energy, the telephone company, and a private landowner. As for the Hiawatha National Forest, they are pleased for the snow they've received in the last few days. All the gates are open, signs are up and ready for snowmobilers.

**Mr. Manson** said that the M-65 Bridge is moving along and have targeted next summer for work to be done.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Mr. Jim Dickie, MSA** directed his question to law enforcement about a call from an irate fisherman asking about a two mile stretch to get from his house on the road to a lake, but he has to purchase a trail permit to do that. What could be the answer for him? Discussion continued.

**Mr. Manson** thought maybe have him contact the local DNR officers and sheriffs to see if they can work with any of those particular individuals. **Capt. Courchaine** said to call the local DNR office and speak with the Lieutenant.

**Mr. Al Green, Cadillac Winter Promotions** referenced the local law enforcement grants; he feels he sees a trend that if they get only 85% of what they spend, he thinks he will see a downhill spiral.

**Lt. Turner** explained that the expenditures include local and state grant monies. Whatever grant money is allocated, will be handed out. When revenue increases with the fee increases, the grant amounts should increase accordingly.

**Mr. John Houk, Presque Isle Snow Trails** asked Mr. DeBrabander what is the status of the proposal through the quarry. Mr. DeBrabander stated FMFM had a meeting with the Office of Land and Facilities (OLAF) to discuss the meeting with the quarry

representatives. The Quarry wants the Department to give up all rights to have a trail on their property. OLAF will draft a response.

**Mr. Houk** asked why the existing grade for the trail can't be used.

**Mr. DeBrabander** said there is Homeland Security issues, and fencing concerns. It would not work at this time.

**Mr. Houk** also asked about the \$3 dollars extra for the permit fees, where does it go. It goes to the Secretary of State.

**Mr. Keith Litchfield, Bader & Sons, John Deere** reviewed safety items on the groomer tractor. Maintenance should be a priority. He said they will be out demonstrating groomers this month and would encourage clubs to contact him.

**Mr. O'Neill** reported that Robin Pearson, Recreation Specialist for the Eastern Lower Peninsula is retiring this month. Her duties will be split for now, as she will not be replaced right away. Contact Dayle Garlock in Gaylord if necessary.

**Mr. Green** directed a comment to Mr. Radabaugh and wanted to make sure it was in the minutes. He said that he has tried to get the corridor between Mesick and Bentley but has been unsuccessful in getting land control from MDOT Rail Freight Division.

**Ms. Boyd** briefly explained the recent abolishment of the SAC. The Executive Order stands as is, so far. A second Executive Order has been issued. The Trails Council now consists of nine members; five need to be motorized trail users, and three are to be from the snowmobile community. The DNR and DEQ will be combined into one department (DNRE). She added that staff will continue to work with the clubs and the MSA to the best of their ability. FMFM staff is working on appointment recommendations to the Council for the Governor. The Council will be appointed by January 17, 2010.

**Mr. Radabaugh** stated he appreciates all the work SAC has done, all the time committed, and all that it has done for the program. To the groomers, he hopes the program continues to get better and that they will continue to work for a successful program for whatever changes happen in the future.

**Mr. Manson** said that Mr. Wheatlake will still be in touch with the group as well.

**Mr. Filley** wanted to thank staff also.

Last meeting of the SAC adjourned at 12:22 p.m.

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**Public Present:**

Jim Dickie, MSA	Bob Bowers
Bill Stegenge, Bader & Sons John Deere	Keith Litchfield, Bader & Sons John Deere
Dave Becker, St. Helen Snowpackers	Jake Barton, St Helen SnowPackers
Rodney Altman, PI Snow Trails	Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snow Club
Karen Middendorp, MSA	Bruce Wood, Jordon Valley, MSA

Norman Rockwell, Ogemaw Hills Snow	John Hurry, Ogemaw Hills Snow
Dave Demetrakes, Ogemaw Hills Snow	Donald Witig, NWMRC, MSA
Judy Wing, Cadillac Winter Warriors	Al Green, MSA/Cadillac Winter Promos
Jen Green, Cadillac Winter Promotions	Stephen King, MI Snowmobile Magazine

**Eastern Lower Peninsula – Recreation Specialist Report  
December 2009 – Robin Pearson**

**Trail Proposals:**

Improved Connector route between Topinabee and Pellston: DNR staff at the Gaylord office is working with the local Snowmobile Club to provide a better connector route between the North Central State Trail in Topinabee area and the City of Pellston that will decrease the number of miles traveled on county roads. This preferred route is still in the planning stages.

**Trail Projects:**

Bridge & Culvert Evaluation: Contracted engineers completed an evaluation of several bridges and a couple of culverts along the North Central State Trail. DNR field staff is awaiting results of this report to determine what if any work will be needed to repair, restore or replace any of these crossings.

New Decking on Unnamed Creek: Top of Michigan Trails Council (TOMTC) volunteers replaced decking on bridge along the North Central State Trail at the end of October and plan to replace missing railings also.

**Trail Issues:**

Definition of a Snowmobile: DNR is researching just what can be defined as a snowmobile to better clarify what types of vehicles are allowed to be on a designated snowmobile trail once the season opens. Lots of new recreational vehicles and accessories have been introduced over the years including attachments for 4-wheel drive vehicles that add snowmobile type tracks to drive on snow. DNR is researching the current law on this topic and hope to provide some clarification soon.

**EASTERN UPPER PENINSULA RECREATION SPECIALIST REPORT  
DECEMBER 2009 -- DAN MOORE**

**Trail Proposals:**

There are two proposals still in the approval process in the EUP. The Letson Road Alternate Route (Schoolcraft County Snowmobile Association) and the Trail 452 Extension (Paradise Area Snowmobile Club). We are currently awaiting Unit comments/approval on the Letson Road Alternate. Unsure of the status on the Trail 452 extension. Part of the hold up on this proposal is the fact that this is on a seasonal county road and while the county has given the club the ok to groom this trail, they have not and will not sign any kind of permit.

One proposal, the Sunken Lake Trail, has been approved and is waiting on funding. A big expense here will be two bridges that are needed. One will be joint funding between snowmobile, ORV and timber. The second will be split between snowmobile and ORV or it will be gated in the non snow season.

**2009-2010 Grooming Status**

All EUP sponsors now have their signed grants. A couple of sponsors are still working

on last minute landowner issues.

The Curtis Club will have one temporary re-route out to a county road for approximately 1 mile, then back onto the existing trail. This is the result of timber trespass on private land and the landowner asked the club to move the trail until the any litigation is completed. Once that is done, he will allow the trail back onto his property.

The other is on Drummond Island and Sault Unit staff have located an existing skid trail/old logging road that can be utilized to get around a piece of private property. Most of my time is currently being spent on Boating Access Site and Campground issues.

## **Western Lower Peninsula Recreation Specialist Report December 2009 Todd Neiss**

### **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 has begun, expected completion date December 12, 2009. Funding for bridge

construction acquired via the Recreation Trails Program (RTP) Grant program.

#### **Morrissy Creek ORV/Snowmobile Bridge** ( Wexford Co., T24N, R9W, Sec 13). Bridge will

have 14' clear span width to better accommodate grooming equipment. Construction has begun, expected completion date December 12, 2009. Funding for bridge construction acquired via the Recreation Trails Program (RTP) Grant program.

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

Bridge will have 12' clear span width as initially designed. Construction has begun, expected completion date December 12, 2009. Funding for bridge construction acquired via the Recreation Trails Program (RTP) Grant program.

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

Final design completed by C2AE. Funding for construction has been secured. Construction pre-bid meeting scheduled for October 19, 2009, construction bids due October 28, 2009. Construction award is pending. Construction scheduled to occur on May 1, 2010, and finished by July 31, 2010.

#### **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). Benzie-Manistee

Snowbirds is working with Nordlund and Assoc. and the DNR on this project.

Construction is funded. Schedule for construction is to accept bids in February 2010, award contract in April 2010, and complete culvert project by June of 2010.

**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:

**Trail Proposals** approved within my jurisdiction as of 11/17/2009 are: Hopkins Loop (Allegan Co.), Allegan/Dorr Relocation (Allegan Co.), Dorr/Hopkins relocation (Allegan), Wayland Trail relocation (Allegan Co.), Barry relocation (Barry Co.), 4 Flags reroute (Cass Co.), Terminal Rd/Cass Co. reroute (Cass). Trail Proposal Status can be found at the following link:

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/RTPDStatusSummaryReport\\_259157\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/RTPDStatusSummaryReport_259157_7.pdf)

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

Todd Neiss WLP Recreation Specialist

**Western Upper Peninsula Recreation Specialist Report,  
December, 2009 – Ron Yesney**

Issues:

- a) **Wakefield:** Gogebic Range Trail Authority (GRTA) is looking at ways to get between Ramsay and Wakefield. The old trail #2 followed an old Chicago Northwest Railway (CNW) RR grade from Ramsay westerly. In 2007, the City of Wakefield sold the CNW RR grade to a private individual who wouldn't permit the trail. I was told via phone just before Deer Season that the club had found a reroute. I'm waiting for them to send me the maps and land control documents. DNR staff will be working with GRTA on developing the proper documentation and submitting a trail proposal.
- b) **North Country Snowmobile Club:** During this past summer, all of the club's leadership resigned. A meeting was held by the community to help find new people to take over the club. New leadership is in place and the club is moving forward.
- c) **RR Grades in the Keweenaw:** A 2009 Recreation Improvement Fund grant has been secured to fund railroad grade title search and analysis on abandoned RR grades in the Keweenaw. The work is being performed to help determine ownership on several old grades with potential for trail use.
- d) **Moose Country Trail #5:** Trail 5 north of Champion (Burma Trail) will likely need to be rerouted for 2010-2011. I am in receipt of a letter from Woodland Road LLC indicating that they will be building a road from Champion/Humboldt northerly toward

Big Bay. This road is being developed to enable trucks to haul ore from a proposed mine near Big Bay to a processing mill in Humboldt. The road will be displacing the snowmobile trail but Woodland Road LLC indicates in the letter that they plan to pay for all cost associated with developing a new trail. The new trail will involve building new bridges over the Yellow Dog River and Mulligan Creek.

Trail Proposals:

- a) **Eagle Mills:** Hiawatha Snowmobile Club submitted a trail proposal to reroute trail #8 near Negaunee. The proposal was approved on 12-4-09.
- b) **Sno-Valley Proposal:** The Sno-Valley snowmobile club has submitted a proposal to reroute trail # 3 south of Agate falls. This reroute will get the trail out of a farmer's field and off of a county road and into nearby woods. The trail will utilize existing logging roads. The permits are in place, the proposal has been submitted, and it is now under review.
- c) **Copper Harbor:** A trail proposal was submitted to reroute snowmobile # 3 as it passes through Copper Harbor. A landowner pulled his land control permit from the club because he is selling his land. The new trail was slated to use city streets to get through town. This proposal was not approved due to concerns with having snowmobiles on community streets. Thankfully the club (Keweenaw Trail Services) was able to get permission from the landowner to use the trail for one more year. During the off-season Keweenaw Trail Services will be working to find a better reroute.

\*For more information or questions on any of these projects, feel free to contact me at **906-228-6561**.....Ron