

Minutes
Snowmobile Advisory Committee
Ralph A. McMullan (RAM) Conference Center
Roscommon, Michigan
June 26, 2008

The Snowmobile Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting was called to order at 10:00a.m. by **Chairman Wheatlake**.

SAC Members Present:

Frank Wheatlake, Chairman, Business and Community Representative, Reed City

Bill Manson, Region III, Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA), Grand Rapids

Orville Olsen, Representative at Large, Ludington

Jim Duke, Region I MSA, Munising

Lee Murray, At-Large, Hopkins

Bill Lucas, Region II, MSA, Cadillac

Rich Filley, Trail Sponsors Representative, Grayling

Department of Natural Resources Staff Present:

Lynne Boyd, Chief, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management (FMFM), Lansing

Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, FMFM, Lansing

Steve DeBrabander, State Trails Unit Manager, FMFM, Lansing

Bill O'Neill, Lower Peninsula Field Coordinator, FMFM, Gaylord

Mike Paluda, Upper Peninsula Field Coordinator, FMFM, Marquette

Cpl. Andrew Turner, Law Enforcement Division (LED), Lansing

Sgt. Jon Wood, LED, Lansing

Tom Reichard, Grants Management, Lansing

Jim Wood, Grants Management, Lansing

Maureen Houghton, Grants Management, Lansing

Introductions were made by the SAC, Department Staff and the public. A special acknowledgement from the Committee was given to Mr. Duke for his receipt of the "Outstanding snowmobiler of the year" award at the IASA meeting.

MINUTES

The Minutes from the May 2, 2008 SAC meeting were reviewed.

A Motion was made by Mr. Duke and seconded by Mr. Lucas to accept. They were unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Law Enforcement Grants - Mr. Wood reviewed Grants office process when working with County Sheriffs in the administration of this program. **Mr. Manson** was concerned about why all available grant funds were not allocated to the County Sheriff's who applied. **Mr. Wood** will provide a report to the SAC that will include; sheriff's grant request, grant amount awarded, and actual expenditures. **Mr. Wheatlake** asked Mr. Manson to meet with the various county boards of commissions to talk about the law enforcement grant program process and funding available to them. **Mr. Manson** suggested his MSA members can talk with their County Sheriff's to get the grant program information out. **Mr. Murray** and **Mr. Lucas** requested to be invited to the Grants office summer meeting with the county sheriffs.

Mr. Wheatlake asked the audience if there were any questions for the Grants staff. **Mr. Reed** asked for each snowmobile grant sponsor to be averaged the amount for grooming instead of using statewide averages to alleviate amendments for additional grooming funds. Mr. Wheatlake will think about this suggestion.

Mr. Wheatlake asked Mr. Reichard about the progress on the program audit and when he may see a product. **Mr. Reichard** said in about three months.

Fiscal Year (FY)2008-2009 Snowmobile Grant Handbook - Mr. DeBrabander announced the handbook was sent out June 23, 2008. He reviewed the highlights of the major changes. Comments were provided by MSA and **Mr. Manson**, who compiled the SAC comments on the handbook. **Mr. Duke** had concerns that the provisions for major repairs remained unchanged, and that some clubs had contacted him asking for the removal of the 75/25 cost share provision. **Mr. DeBrabander** explained the Department could not support that change and the reasoning was explained in a memo from Department staff to the SAC.

M-65 Update - Mr. Radabaugh had talked with Ms. Rose Ingram, of the USDA Forest Service. **Ms. Ingram** verified that the initiative to completing the approvals resides with Iosco County Parks. **Mr. O'Neill** will contact Ms. Ingram regarding contacting Iosco County Parks and requesting to be on their next agenda to discuss the issue and timing for approvals. **Mr. Wheatlake** requested the committee be kept in the information loop with email updates.

Black Mountain Snowmobile Trail Reroute Update - Mr. DeBrabander reported the engineering/design has been completed. This is currently under FMFM review and should be submitted to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) within a week for the application for wetlands permit. **Mr. O'Neill** will find out time table for the project, funding status, and who will be contracting

the work, FMFM or snowmobile club; and communicate information to Mr. DeBrabander to email response to SAC.

New Trail Sponsor Grooming equipment Eligibility (define “Participate”) - **Mr. Wheatlake** tabled this discussion and requested Mr. Manson take the lead in discussing with fellow SAC members.

Rogers City South Spur Update - **Mr. DeBrabander** reported that a field meeting with the new quarry owners will take place the week of July 21, 2008 with FMFM staff.

Mr. Houk offered to assist the Department in anyway he could to help facilitate a meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

FY 2007-2008 Snowmobile Fund Transfer Request - **Chief Boyd** reported the request to transfer \$400,000 from the FMFM operating budget line to the Grants budget line for equipment has occurred. Moving forward to FY 2009, this will be a permanent budget change in fund appropriation from the operations line to the grant line.

FY2007-2008 Fuel Rates - **Mr. Radabaugh** reviewed the grooming reimbursement and fuel adjustment formulas. He reported that average self reported fuel cost for grooming this past season was \$2.02 or 8 cents more than the \$1.94 per mile reimbursement rate. Mr. Radabaugh referred the SAC to the grooming reports and the 604,134 total miles groomed this past season. He indicated it would be \$48,330 to cover the additional average fuel cost the clubs.

Mr. Manson moved and Mr. Lucas seconded to pay all clubs the additional 8 cents per mile groomed. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Duke compared 2006-07 to 2007-08 trail usage. He reported decreased use in some areas and that it would be helpful to have trail counters and data to support where we should emphasize grooming efforts. During a discussion among committee members it was decided ten counters are needed. Mr. Paluda and Mr. O’Neill will canvas FMFM for a current counter inventory and provide information to Mr. Manson. They will also provide Mr. Manson with any data obtained from FMFM counters.

FY 2007-08 Fund Balance Allocation - **Mr. Radabaugh** reported the unencumbered grant balance is \$936,000, including the \$400,000 transfer from FMFM operations line. The encumbered balance for trail grooming that can be rolled back in the grant line is \$849,000. Total balance available for special maintenance projects and grooming equipment is \$1,785,000.

Revenue Estimates for Possible Snowmobile Fee Increase - **Mr. Radabaugh** went over the document prepared by Budget staff on potential revenues generated from a \$10 trail permit fee increase. **Mr. Wheatlake** reviewed recent discussions with the Legislature regarding fee increase for this and other Department programs. A recommendation is anticipated from the Legislature in September 2008. **Mr. Manson** discussed MSA's efforts with the Senate and House members regarding the potential support for trail permit fee increase.

Equipment Leasing Update – **Mr. DeBrabander** reviewed recent discussion between the Department and representatives of Bader Inc. **Mr. Keith Litchfield, Bader Inc.** was introduced and gave a brief overview of the Municipal Lease Program and Preventative Maintenance Program. He encouraged groomer operator training for improved maintenance and program cost benefit. Discussion continued among SAC who saw benefit of looking into leasing grooming equipment. **Mr. Manson** recommended allocating \$300,000 towards a lease program. **Mr. Wheatlake** asked Department staff to review program equipment inventory and needs; review state procurement options for existing state contracts; and to provide the SAC this information by the end of July 2008 for their discussion and recommendations to the Department. **Mr. Wheatlake** asked Mr. Reed to come up with four groomers and four drag options to establish statewide standards for grooming equipment.

STAFF REPORTS

Mr. O'Neill reminded everyone about the Mullett Lake trail meeting this Saturday, June 28, for public comment on the two seasons of operations with snowmobiling speed limits and hours of operation. He also discussed Mr. Martin's request to address a forest road with many rocks that is used for designated snowmobile trail. This is being addressed with the local Management Unit to determine a course of action.

Mr. Paluda mentioned the washout on the Bill Nichols Trail near the Firesteel bridges is being addressed after engineering review. He spoke about the trail proposal for the Ameritch/Humboldt trail and a 1/8th mile portion of the corridor as "no man's land" because no title can be located. This is being pursued by the Department with Canadian National Railroad. An easement in the Munising area will need bridge funding to accommodate a trail reroute. H-58 is being reconstructed and paved with concerns expressed about what to do with the snowmobile trail that used to go down this road, they may have found an alternate route through lands owned by Forest Land Group.

U.S. Forest Service - no one present - no reports. **Mr. Lucas** said he would contact Forest Service for updates on Baldwin 56th Street and Iosco County M-65.

Law Enforcement - **Cpl. Turner** reported that the previous question on training using snowmobile money was investigated and is unfounded. He also said a

discussion with Grants Management has verified that County Sheriff's may apply during the next round of equipment grants for 800Mz radios. He stated there were three non-resident fatalities this past season.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Rod Altman, Presque Isle Snow Trails offered grooming tips so snow doesn't go onto roads.

Mr. Gallagher, passed around photos of snow plowed/dumped onto groomed trail by the road commission. **Mr. Lucas** offered to take the photos to the road commission to discuss. **Mr Wheatlake** encouraged the trail sponsors to meet with their road commissioners or for MSA to get on the agenda at their annual state meeting.

Mr. Marzean requested SACs help in getting timely response from DEQ. He also expressed concerns about ¾ mile of a trail damaged by timber sale. Mr. O'Neill will look at the provisions for the trail in the logging contract. **Mr. Marzean** asked for a SAC meeting to be scheduled in August. **Mr. Wheatlake** said he would discuss that suggestion at the end of the meeting.

Mr. Tellefsen has similar issues with timber contractors on trails he grooms.

Mr. Lubahn asked about getting registration for vintage snowmobiles. **Mr. Manson** indicated past efforts were not supported.

Mr. Carroll asked Mr. DeBrabander questions about the numbering system for trail proposals in the database that is currently under development. **Mr. Carroll** asked about how his club can get approved to use grant contingency funds. **Mr. DeBrabander** explained the intent of the contingency funds and process for approval; also the appeal process if denied. **Mr. Carroll** expressed appreciation of the appeal process. He asked about pre-engineered bridges as a solution for new bridges. **Mr. DeBrabander** explained that FMFM does use pre-engineered bridges as short term solutions. However, it is necessary to address engineered bridge abutments for the permanent structures required on the trails. **Mr. Carroll** suggested leasing equipment now for next year.

Mr. Martin can't keep up with special maintenance and asked about getting special maintenance funds to deal with wheeled motorized vehicle damage on the trails. **Mr. Radabaugh** will ask Ms. Perry to work with Mr. Martin and the ORV trail sponsor to come up with solutions and apply for appropriate program funds to address the situation.

Mr. Reed requested a red-lined copy of the Snowmobile Handbook to see where changes were made. Mr. DeBrabander will provide him a marked copy. **Mr. Reed** indicated the trail grant sponsors want the major repair 75/25 cost share

dropped. **Mr. Wheatlake** indicated that we will continue with the existing process and see if it works or if some are being wronged, which is not the intent.

Mr. Litchfied suggested the snowmobile program look at purchasing extended warranties as a solution to major repair concerns.

Mr. Wheatlake is concerned about increasing fuel costs. He advocates providing receipts for fuel and reimburse documented expenditure. The legislative committee looking at fees to support programs is looking at nominal fee increases. Recommendations will occur in September 2008.

Mr. Filley asked how many trail permits were sold this year. **Mr. Radabaugh** indicated the Department is waiting for MSAs final sales statement, due in July, but it looks like approximately 195,000 permits were sold. **Mr. Filley** expressed concerns relating to the states suffering economy and declining trail permit sales and suggested that sponsors look for ways to increase efficiency and conserve funds. He also wants this Committee to look at program expenditures and spend within the revenue stream coming to the program.

Mr. Wheatlake concluded public comments and asked the Committee regarding suggestions for the next meeting date. The consensus was October 23, 2008.

Motion made to adjourn the meeting by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Murray.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:47p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next SAC meeting is scheduled for October 23, 2008 at the RAM Center in Roscommon, located at 104 Conservation Drive.

PUBLIC PRESENT

Edwin Carlson, Chippewa Snow Chasers
Larry Marzean, Alpena Snow Club
Doug Lubahn, Ogemaw Hills Snow Club
Lowell Kage, Rosco-Higgins Trail Cruisers

John Houk, PI Snow Trails
Carl Tellefsen, St Helen Snow Packers
Don Reed, MSA Pres-Seney
David Low, Western MI Snow Council
Denny Zoet, Western MI Snow Council
Al Green, Cadillac Winter Promotions

Bud Martin, Ogemaw Hills Snow Club
Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snow Club

Dale Brelsford, Chippewa Snow Chasers
Bob Eller, Alpena Snow Club
Jim Kelts, Ogemaw Hills Snow Club
Rodney Altman, Presque Isle (PI) Snow Trails
Kaye Houk, PI Snow Trails
Rolland Rieger, PI Snow Trails
Jim Dickie, MSA VPres/Mid-MI Snow Council
Bradley Potter, Western MI Snow Council
Richard Stehle, Benzie Manistee Snowbirds
Dan White, Ogemaw Hills Snow Club
Bill Stegonga, Bader & Sons Co., John Deere

Keith Litchfield, Bader & Sons Co.,
John Deere

Tom Gallagher, St Helen Snowpackers
Bud Longroy, St Helen Snowpackers