

**Minutes of the
Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council
October 29, 2013**

The meeting of the Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council (MSTAC) was called to order by Chair Frank Wheatlake at 10:00 a.m., on Tuesday, October 29, 2013, at the Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center, 104 Conservation Drive, Roscommon, Michigan 48653. The following members were present:

*Frank Wheatlake
Sandra Batie
James Dickie
James Duke
Thomas Dunn
Michael Foote
William D. Manson, Jr.
Greg Yager*

The following Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff were present: *Donna Stine*, Executive Office; *Ron Olson*, Chief of PRD, *Jim Radabaugh*, *Anna Sylvester*, *Todd Neiss*, *Miguel Rodriguez*, and *Victoria Lischalk*, Parks and Recreation Division; *John Morey*, Law Enforcement Division.

ACTION ITEMS

MOTION: Mr. James Dickie moved to approve the October 29, 2013 meeting agenda. The motion was seconded by Ms. Sandra Batie and carried unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. James Dickie moved to approve the July 9, 2013 minutes. The motion was seconded by Ms. Sandra Batie and carried unanimously.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Jan Herrick – Presentation re: Facilitative Mediation of DNR Users

CORRESPONDENCE

Mid-Michigan Community Pathway Group (MMCP)

Chair Wheatlake received emails from Steve Clark and John Matonich of the MMCP regarding the proposed trail system connecting the Pere Marquette Trail (Clare), Fred Meijer Heartland Trail (Alma), and the Shiawassee-Ionia Trail (St. John's) along the US-127 corridor. The emails stated that a letter was drafted by MMCP members and submitted by Steve Davidson, MMCP President, to the DNR stating that the connection was not named into the Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan. MMCP requested that the 40+ mile trail be represented in the Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan. Discussion followed with the understanding that not all trail connectivity or initiatives were identified specifically by name in the final Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan.

Chair Wheatlake requested Ms. Donna Stine follow-up and respond to the MMCP.

UPDATES

Biennial Trail Summit Funding

MRPA has an annual trails summit which will meet the trail plan requirement for the Biennial Trail Summit. Mr. Radabaugh and Ms. Stine are working with the MRPA trails committee to ensure all requirements are met. The summit will be held in Traverse City in January 20-24 2014.

Showcase Trail Plan (Belle Isle to Ironwood)

Mr. Radabaugh reports the Governor requested the DNR be the lead to develop a plan for the Showcase Trail. A plan has been drafted by a group of staff from MDOT, MEDC, MDARD and DNR. A draft of the plan was approved by the Governor's office in July and is posted on the DNR website, on the MSTAC webpage named the Michigan Showcase Trail.

DRAFT State Trails Implementation Plan

The Draft State Trails Implementation Plan was provided to the group for review. The State Trails Implementation Plan identifies the actions that the DNR will take over the next five years to ensure the state's continued recognition as the Trail State.

After review of the document any comments should be submitted to Ms. Donna Stine within two weeks. The document will be submitted to the Natural Resources Commission in December for public comment and action by the Director in January.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Presentation on Conflict Resolution – Ms. Jan Herrick

Ms. Herrick discussed the process of mediation and how mediation can be effective.

Outdoor Adventure & Discovery Center/Friends Group – Mr. Miguel Rodriguez

Mr. Rodriguez provided an overview of the plans and development of the Outdoor Adventure & Discovery Center and the opportunities for Friends Groups to partner with the DNR in the development and/or sponsor an exhibit.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

MSTAC

Chair Wheatlake discussed the Future of MSTAC and meetings for 2014. The committee has agreed on the following dates for the 2014 meeting dates: April 8, July 8 and October 28 at the Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center, 104 Conservation Drive, Roscommon. It is the preference of the committee to hold all meetings in person and not by conference calls.

All appointed members will expire January, 2014. Chair Wheatlake asked the committee to share with Mr. Jim Radabaugh their interest to continue with their membership. Chair Wheatlake will continue the conversation with Keith Creagh, DNR Director regarding the appointees of the committee.

MSTAC Order of Priority

Mr. Radabaugh reported for Ms. Stine. The discussion was introduced to the MSTAC at the last meeting as to the criteria to consider and comment to the DNR, who will then work on the frame work.

- *Track Progress of the Plan*
- *Conflict Resolution – Completed (Jan Herrick to present at the October 2013 meeting)*
- *Priority Process*
- *Survey Users*
- *Biennial Trail Summit*
- *Restructure Committee*
- *Volunteer Recognition – (PRD to present at the October 2013 meeting)*
- *Raise limit to \$500,000 limit from Trust Fund (Currently \$300,000)- (no change to funding will occur)*
- *Organize (assist) Trail User Types*

Non-Agenda Items

Clarification requested on the contact regarding the April 13, 2013, correspondence with the Houghton Lake Trailblazers Snowmobile Club correspondence. Mr. Radabaugh reported the club was contacted and directed to contact the Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup (SAW). As of this meeting date, the club had not contacted the SAW.

STAFF REPORTS

Planning Document Goals Matrix

The Planning Document Goals Matrix was provided to MSTAC Members at the July meeting. This matrix has all the various plans and how they are similar. There was a request from Dr. Sarah Nichols, ETS, to add the Michigan Tourism goals to the matrix to view the commonalities. The Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee is currently working at adding the information to the matrix and will be provided once the information is complete.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup (SAW)

Mr. Bill Manson reported the SAW meeting was held on October 15, 2013. Discussed the lacking of a crossing in Munising, there was a crossing and the Canadian National railroad removed all the crossings they thought were not permitted. They will put the crossing back in if the State of Michigan will pass a law that will relieve them of liability from anything that happens along their railroads. They are also requesting a five million dollar insurance policy; all other policies are two million dollars. Discussion will continue.

A dam at Cranberry Lake was going to be taken out which is also used for a crossing snowmobile trail. The DNR's Wildlife, Fisheries, PRD and Forestry Management Divisions met regarding the dam. The dam will be taken out and will be replaced.

The SAW recommended a "Bridge Ahead Warning" sign to be added sign manual. The DNR determined the signs will not be changed for another year. At this time the manual will not have any changes. There was discussion regarding correlation with the signs being taken away and the number of fatalities. The number of fatalities was 23 for 2013. There were nine on a marked trail 14 were not on marked trail which are roadways, forest roads or private property. Fatalities on a marked trail without alcohol were three; with alcohol were six. Not on a mark trail without alcohol were five; without alcohol were nine. There were five females and 18 males. Average age for females 50 years old and average males 52 years old. There were six in the U.P. and 17 in the Lower Peninsula.

Mr. Mason provided information regarding a Polaris presentation he attended. The function is more of a social media function and trip planner.

Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Workgroup (ORVAW)

Mr. Thomas Dunn reported that the ORV community had several bills passed and signed by Governor. The first and most important was

- PA 75, the ORV fee increase
There will be 2 stickers, one for use of the county roads for \$26.25 and a second \$10.00 fee for use of ANY part of the designated trail system.

Mr. Dunn requested that all clubs and organizations be prudent with their requests for expansion until it is known what kind of revenue this increase will generate. As with any fee increase we expect a 10% decrease in sales the first year. With the confusion of a two-tiered system it is expected many will only buy the \$26.25 license and take the chances of getting caught as both licenses will be the same color.

- PA 117, 116 and 119
Address MDOT roads to connect trail systems or communities that otherwise could not be reached.

There are 12 pilot projects in the U.P. Again, there is concern with costs as MDOT has already indicated around \$ 100,000 to start these projects. We are against using public funds to connect private trails using this provision.

Other bills passed include;

- Liability language to protect the organizations that maintain the designated trail against law suits.
- Opens all 83 counties of Michigan to opt into PA240 that allows them to open county roads to ORV traffic.
- Changes Event Fees to more closely follow Federal Rules.

Bills to watch:

- SB491 - Makes vehicles titled as ORV's NOT be allowed to be Secretary of State titled for road use unless manufactures provide a copy of add-on to make the vehicle licensable. Motorcycles have been exempted from this bill.

- SB 68 the “Polaris” bill that changes the definition of ATV’s to remove “Straddled By” and changes “under 50” to 50” and under to allow Razors to ride the 50” trail.

The next ORVAW meeting is scheduled for November 6, 2013, in Lansing.

Equine Trailways Subcommittee (ETS)

Ms. Sandra Batie reported on the August 28, 2013, ETS meeting. The Comprehensive Trail Plan and Public Land Strategy were discussed. Mr. Radabaugh provided an update on the proposed merger of the two trail proposal processes – FRD and PRD. Ms. Mary Nardo (DNR) and Mr. Matt Lincoln (DNR) discussed equine project priorities and funding opportunities for 2013 and 2014, including the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. Mr. Dennis Nezich (DNR) gave an overview of the management of state forest lands for timber production. Ms. Jan Herrick gave a review of mediation processes that can serve as models for trail conflict resolution. Various equine projects and requests were discussed.

Ms. Herrick’s term on the ETS came to an end fall of 2013. The replacement for the Southeast Lower Peninsula will be Ms. Gabrielle Hume. Ms. Herrick was the Vice-Chair of the ETS a new Vice- Chair will be elected at the next ETS meeting. Mr. Dick Kleinhardt’s term also ended, and at Mr. Kleinhardt’s request, he was reappointed. He represents the Northern Lower Peninsula.

A copy of the ETS report was provided to the committee.

Non-Motorized Advisory Workgroup (NAW)

Ms. Emily Meyerson reported on the NAW meeting held Sept 19, 2013, held by conference call. The main task was to look at priorities for trails. The workgroup came up with five priorities

1. The trails closes a critical gap between existing community and public lands
2. Has a local partner for support any of ownership, development or maintenance
3. Corridor uses public lands
4. Incorporate into a local master plan or state action plan
5. Provides economic benefits

Cross country ski group feel priorities should be on existing trails.

1. No new trails should be created
2. Invest in the local system – maintenance, grooming and signing
3. Gap analysis needs to be done – do we need more ski trails
4. Are trails in the right places?

The water trails groups feel priority should be to develop a program for a water trails. Do we need to designate water trails? The group would like to review inland rivers and the Great Lake. Michigan does have the first National recreation trail. The committee discussed the criteria to have in place to recognize those trails.

MNRTF

Mr. Radabaugh will provide the MSTAC members a summary of the MNRTF allocations.

U. S. Forest Service Recreation

Ms. Kristen Thrall provided an update on the forest service issues. Currently getting caught up on grants, there is currently no budget because of the sequestration.

Law Enforcement Division

Spl. John Morey reported there will be a delay in publication printing; will be sent to print in January or February 2014. No increase for safety education remained at \$1 per license. The ORV online education course is available as an option for training if a traditional course is not available. LAW is planning ORV instructor academy classes; Silver Lake State Park for staff, at the RAM Center, Franklin and in Munising funding will dictate the number and location of classes. There has been discussion with Oakland County Park system about the need to incorporate training facility in southeast Michigan. A panel of snowmobile instructors made revisions to manual is now available and given to the SAW. Fatality summary has been posted to the LAW webpage.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The event permit policy was to be discussed according to page 4 of the July 9, 2013, MSTAC Meeting Minutes.

- “Land Use rule change to not require a permit for events regardless of the number of participants, making the rule more like the federal government. There is no number requirement. The request is for the event.”

Discussion was held on the policy of event permits. The DNR is working with the policy and will report back to the MSTAC.

Information regarding improper snowmobile signage was presented to the members. Mr. Manson will bring the information to the SAW for review.

The DNR website for Trail proposals has not been updated since April 2012. Mr. Radabaugh will check into the updates.

Ms. Amy Trotter inquired of the interest of a presentation by Polaris. At this time the committee will wait to have any presentations.

MOTION: Mr. Mike Foote moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Sandra Batie.

Meeting adjourned at 2:43 p.m.

Next meeting scheduled for April 8, 2014 at the RAM.