

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

**Draft Meeting Minutes  
May 30, 2015**

**Great Lakes Sports and Recreation Club  
Escanaba MI 49829**

**PRESENT FOR THE WORKGROUP**

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

**ABSENT FOR THE WORKGROUP**

Amy Trotter

**PRESENT FOR STAFF**

Jason Fleming, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD)  
Rob Katona, PRD  
Darrel Welch, PRD

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**Chair Dunn** called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. **Tim Kobasic** extended appreciation to the Great Lakes Sportsman Association for hosting the event with a special thank you to Loretta and Joe for all their efforts, and the Lake Michigan Armory for providing food and beverages. **Chair Dunn** called for any additions to the agenda. **Don Helsel** asked to add Brief Discussion on 2015 Handbook; Trail Sponsor Recognition Signage; ORV/snowmobile meetings; Use Permit (staff report).

*Reimbursement:* The Normenco Club believes that Schedule C rates are not enough to cover the cost of fuel. The group feels there is a need to reassess the Schedule C rates to see if it is appropriate, and how it relates to contractor rates. Prevailing wage has an impact on the contractor language.

**Skip Schulz** asked for an update on snowmobile noise control program, which took place this year and how it could relate to ORVs. **Skip Schulz** also wondered how successful the program was from Law Enforcement Division (LED).

**Chair Dunn** asked for a motion to amend and approve the May 30 Agenda. Motion made by **Skip Schulz** and seconded by **Tim Kobasic**.

## **MINUTES**

The March 11, 2015 minutes were presented and reviewed. A motion was made by **Skip Schulz** to approve the minutes and seconded by **Tim Kobasic**.

## **BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

Free ORV Weekend was the first agenda item. The subcommittee included Don Helsel, Tim Kobasic, Jason Fleming (Resource Management Chief), and Maia Turek (Promotional Specialist). The surveys were almost complete for the first free ORV weekend on June 13-14. This is a test run to help assist with the much larger effort on August 22-23. **Don Helsel** added Pure Michigan as a partner to help get the word out on the event with a promotional video. The group will review the feedback on the first free ORV weekend and adjust the questionnaire and procedures as necessary.

Additional Revenue Subcommittee was the next to report. The group has put together a list of projects that go beyond the FY 15 appropriation for projects. The group, working alongside the recreational specialists, was able to identify \$2,420,450 to fund several projects across the state. The funds are available to do the work but the authority to spend is not. If a transfer does not happen in FY 15, then the projects will carry over into FY 16 as an expansion to the existing budget.

**Tim Kobasic** asked about the amount related to the Forest Island Decking Repair and improvements. Rob Katona, UP Trails Specialist, provided information on the issues related to the areas that are required replacement. Geotextiles was discussed as a possible answer to the need for additional long term cost for boards.

**Skip Schulz** asked about Recreational Trails Program and recreation improvement funding and what the funding breakdown was. There was also discussion on the counter program and additional questions about Pure Michigan's role in supporting ORV use.

Next on the agenda was the Land Use Order, which would allow the ability for ORV use near the entrance of Bewabic State Park to connect with the adjacent trail across US-2. The group supported the idea and was adopted by ORVAW. **Don Helsel** made the motion and it was approved unanimously.

**Lewis Shuler** went on to explain the event that the Cycle Conservation Club put on at Clear Lake was a success. Over 200 riders in state park, 104 campsites occupied. There was a very positive response from staff and the facility was occupied with people during a

time of typically low camper participation. Shuler wanted to thank Anna Sylvester for all of her assistance.

**Tim Kobasic** asked if there are other parks that could benefit from opening up to ORV use. J.W. Wells State Park was mentioned but it would be within the surrounding wetlands. The M-35 right-of-way could make it feasible. Fort Wilkins State Park and Gogebic State Park were listed as other potential options. **Chair Dunn** mentioned that LUODs require all Divisions to be signed off. There is also the Forest Management Advisory Committee, which also reviews the Forest Certification process as it relates to recreational use on state forest lands.

Next on the agenda was a Trails Section update. The plan is to post for a Trails Section Chief to replace Jim Radabaugh. There will be two regional trail coordinators, one for the Upper Peninsula and one for the northern Lower Peninsula. Also, there will be changes to the positions where there will be a motorized and non-motorized positions; one each for grants and for program work. The current trail analysts will report directly to the trail coordinator. **Tim Kobasic** mentioned that Director Kreagh talked about this at a video conference the previous day. He wanted to know if this would mean more “boot on the ground” efforts. Would there be more autonomy and less bureaucracy. Jason Fleming mentioned that having regional coordinators focus on trail efforts only, replaces the District Supervisors who already have to administer state parks and boating facilities. Also, by splitting the grants from the programs, there will be more individuals available to help with both motorized and non-motorized activities along with an additional southern Michigan trails specialist, which helps alleviate current trail specialists’ workload.

The next topic was to discuss the sign plan for installing the signage based on the approved standards. There have been several clubs asking for additional monies to remove the signs from the trees and to the posts, whereas others have been starting to do it as part of their yearly signing and brushing. A subcommittee will be formed to help with the installation plan.

The next topic on the agenda was 2015 Handbook. **Don Helsel** noticed several inconsistencies in the pamphlet. He pointed out for the last 2 or 3 years, the right of way language was missing. Also, the orange diamonds are still in the book. The ORV safety grant program has also been revamped as well as some language regarding Concealed Pistol License compliance. The group feels there should be ORVAW members on some type of a subcommittee to provide continuous updates of the ORV manual and be on the review and approval process.

Motion was made by **Don Helsel**, seconded by **Pat Brower** to have Helsel and Brower be a part of that group. Motion was approved unanimously.

Another topic involved the idea of placing a trail sponsor recognition sign in the sign manual. The idea was to remove the “snowmobile” portion of the sign to allow for flexibility. These would be for the sponsors to pay.

Motion was made to propose the change by **Tim Kobasic**, seconded by **Don Helsel**. Approved unanimously.

Continuing conversation was discussed about the need to map out joint use trails so that we are more consistent on the language.

Next topic discussed was the idea of having a spring and fall joint meeting between ORV and snowmobile clubs. The benefit of these meetings is that they are shared trails that could benefit from the communication between the two groups. Sometime in early April to get it up and running for ORV, and then in November from transitioning to snowmobile. Comments from Normenco representatives and Hiawathaland Trails, Jerry Reese thought the idea of managing the trail for dual use allows better leverage to use restricted funds and helps leverage the restricted funding source.

A motion was put forward to start a series of collaborative meetings with shared trail sponsors for two meetings a year, in early spring and late fall. DNR will facilitate the first two meetings, and do it regionally as amended. Motion made by **Don Helsel**, seconded by **Tim Kobasic**. Approved unanimously.

Next topic was around the issue of doing the sound testing for snowmobiles. Law Enforcement Division provided a history on the costs (approximately \$200 of having to replace belts on snowmobiles sound testing at 4000 RPM). The move to 3500 RPM allowed to test at a lower gauge while still checking for compliance. There were dedicated patrols this past year who wrote several tickets for noise violations in District 1. District 2 is looking to start doing similar checks. **Skip Schulz** asked how many people does it take to test and Peter Wright mentioned at the Western Upper Peninsula Citizens Advisory Committee that it requires three people. A question was raised if the Felch grade would be tested for sound violations and LED responded that if it is an area of concern, LED will look into it.

The last item on the agenda was a presentation with Hiawathaland Trail Association representatives Gerry Reese and Kevin Knaffla who presented a map of the central Upper Peninsula areas for allowing recreation ORV use. Hiawathaland Trail Association formed when a number of snowmobile and ORV sponsors got together to look for a way to connect the Central and Eastern Upper Peninsula together. They worked on gathering GIS information on all the recreational opportunities in the area. **Chair Dunn** mentioned that having a designated trail would help eliminate the amount of illegal riding taking place in the area.

There was discussion about how the Department could be involved as a placeholder of the information. Fleming explained that the Department is responsible for the data as it relates to designated trails and forest roads as well as having baseline information roads. Tying all of the recreation into one area is a good idea; however, it will take a fair amount of work and effort to generate and maintain the data. This would be a good conservation for the MTAC groups as a whole. There was discussion of working with Tom Weston, DNR,

regarding the Marquette Recreation Project that is going on to look at all recreational opportunities in Marquette County.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

**Next Meeting**

August 5, 2015 - Location to be determined