

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY WORKGROUP (SAW)**

DRAFT

**June 19, 2012
10:00 a.m.**

**Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center
104 Conservation Drive, Roscommon, Michigan 48653**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Lee Murray, Chairman, At-Large Representative
Al Green, Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA), Region II Rep., Cadillac
Bruce Wood, Trail Sponsors Representative
Rich Filley, Trail Sponsors Representative
Jim Duke, MSA, Region I Representative, Munising
Bill Manson, MSA, Region II Representative, Grand Rapids
Don Britton, At-Large Representative

DNR STAFF PRESENT

Steve Kubisiak, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD), Lansing
Erik Eklund, Budget Manager, Lansing
Corporal John Morey, Law Enforcement Division (LED), Gaylord
Jackie Blodgett, PRD, Lansing
Jason Fleming, PRD, Lansing
Loretta Cwalinski, Forest Resource Division (FRD), Gaylord

DEQ STAFF PRESENT

Jim Goodheart, Department of Environmental Quality, (DEQ), Lansing

PUBLIC ATTENDEES

Dan Daggy, Pere Marquette Snow Chasers
Kary Hautamaki, MSA Region 1
Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Bill Stagengy, Bader & Sons
Mike Beard, Bader & Sons
Jon Kren, Rosco-Higgins Trail Cruisers
Lowell Cage, Rosco-Higgins Trail Cruisers
Don Grafton, Houghton Lake Snow Groomers Assoc.
Bradley Potter, Western MI Snow Council
Paul Jernberty, Trail Riders
Jim Dingman, Trail Riders
Norman Rockwell, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Bud Martin, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Robert Hutchins, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Shawn Marcus, Voelker Implement Sales

Jim Debo, Houghton Lake Trail Blazers
Jim Dickie, MSA
Jim Kelts, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club

WELCOME

Chairman Murray called the SAW meeting to order at 10:01 a.m., Tuesday, June 19, 2012 in Roscommon, Michigan. He welcomed everyone and introduced himself, followed by introductions of the workgroup members, and all other attendees.

AGENDA

Mr. Wood added under Old Business -- Jordan Valley Trails Drag Grant.

Motion was made by Mr. Duke, seconded by Mr. Britton, to adopt the revised agenda for the June 19, 2012 meeting. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Weekly Grooming Report Form

Mr. Manson advised that their committee has not met yet, but would like the topic to be on next agenda for meeting in October.

He added that they would like to clarify some of the information requested for ease of reporting, and accurate information to calculate costs better. The five groomers will have the more detailed form for more concise data. There will be two forms. One updated, the other one created from that. They hope to have the new forms out by August 1st to give to staff for review.

Chairman Murray asked that a draft be presented to SAW beforehand.

Bader & Sons Company Proposal

Chairman Murray referred to the last meeting and that they would like to make a decision on Bader's proposal. They would like DNR to move forward on pilot program.

Mr. Kubisiak noted that Ron Olson, Chief of Parks and Recreation Division (PRD), would like the division to be involved with providing financial review of the proposal. This analysis is at a high level comparing advantages and disadvantages looking at annual purchase, lease, and rental.

Ms. Blodgett presented the financial information with a PowerPoint as well as with handouts. She added that she would like to have an e-mail sent out to everyone to make sure all their reimbursements have been sent in and completed. Mr. Britton and Mr. Manson will be working closely on the equipment grants this year with PRD. They would also like to meet in late July with Mr. Britton and Mr. Manson to discuss the equipment program.

Mr. Wood asked that if this proposal should move forward, would each club be required to use Bader & Sons only? Bader is the only company that has made this proposal.

Mr. Manson said there are only two clubs that could be part of this proposal because there are only two 2011's. He also asked about 2010 tractors. There would be an initial trade in value for it. Discussion continued.

Mr. Stegenga wanted to clarify something before going further. The models that were currently listed are not available – the new tractors would not be \$15,000, they would be the cost of an upgrade to a 4 tier engine. The cost would be \$30,000 one time, then back to \$14-\$16,000.

Mr. Wood asked about the horsepower upgrade and trade-in information. **Mr. Stegenga** clarified that various clubs prefer different horsepower, but he said it made more sense to jump to the next category. Discussion continued.

Chairman Murray wanted to add that there is \$700,000 available for equipment that can be spent this year, but there could be more pieces of equipment supplied if the program went into annual trade-in program.

Chairman Murray would like to have an alternate added to that committee that will meet in July or August to review equipment requests. He asked for a volunteer. **Mr. Wood**; volunteered.

Mr. Wood feels the concept is good, but there just isn't the money at this time in the program.

Mr. Manson feels that some of the money could be taken to begin the program. Trail permits cost will not go up for the next five years. He feels we should begin even if it's four units.

Chairman Murray would like a recommendation on specific tractors to be in this pilot program resulting from the July/August meeting.

Mr. Britton added that the Munising situation needs to be decided. **Mr. Manson** said there should be a recommendation before the end of the meeting today (this is a separate issue). There could be a special meeting called if necessary.

Mr. Marcus, Voelker Implement Sales, wanted to add that they are looking into something on a club by club basis, but he wasn't aware of this meeting until this morning. **Mr. Manson** advised that when they get something together; get it to the SAW and Mr. Kubisiak, and to not wait until the SAW's next meeting.

Snowmobile Hill Climb Issue

Chairman Murray explained that at the last meeting, Ron Yesney was charged to investigate the issue. This item was tabled until the next meeting.

Initial Grooming Outlay Formula

Chairman Murray explained that at the last meeting, Richard Kennedy was asked to calculate a five year average for the initial grooming outlay for 5 clubs in the Upper Peninsula. This item was tabled until the next meeting.

Grooming Specifications

Mr. Britton said that the information is basically the same, he does not have a trail inspection form but it's kept basically the same – simple to include comments on signage and grooming. They are proposing that inspections be done at least twice a year.

Chairman Murray asked if they could work with Mr. Britton on those meetings.

Motion was made by Mr. Britton, seconded by Mr. Duke, to have the Snowmobile Trail Standards part of the pre-season meeting. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Mr. Britton would like to have an answer by the next meeting.

Jordan Valley Trails Council (JVTC) Drag Grant

Discussion began with the circumstance of the formation of the Kalkaska Snowmobile Club. **Mr. Wood** said that JVTC did not receive the drag they were promised when their equipment was sold and the proceeds returned to the program. He said that in exchange for the proceeds going back to the program there was a promise to provide the JVTC a drag for their Piston Bully. He said that there is an incorrect statement of receiving the drag. An e-mail correction was sent by Richard Kennedy stating that JVTC did receive a grant for a drag in 2011. **Mr. Wood** would like it noted that they did not get a drag for their Piston Bully as promised.

Chairman Murray asked if there were specific tractors mentioned. **Mr. Wood** said his presentation specifically was for the Piston Bully. JVTC would still like to have their drag.

Mr. Kubisiak said he will discuss that issue with Steve DeBrabander and review the October 2009 meeting minutes.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Eklund presented information with a handout discussing Snowmobile Funding Update. Last time this information was presented was in 2010.

Mr. Manson asked for clarification in the funding update handout on page 6 concerning a \$1,200 payment from the permanent snowmobile trail easement fund in FY 2011. **Mr. Kubisiak** said he believes the expenditure is related to the administrative rules for the easement fund but will research and advise Mr. Manson.

Chairman Murray asked if the appropriated \$700,000 can be spent for Trail Easements - yes it can. He also asked what the Department of Technology expenditures are – those would be for computers and Information Technology expenses. Also, the column for the FY12 Supplemental Appropriations (PA 64 of 2012) \$86,400 total is for the retirement program for employees, and the Civil Service charge of \$27,100 is for Department hiring guidelines.

Statewide Trail Plan

Mr. Manson reported the SAW is working with the Michigan Snowmobile Association and has appointed a five person committee to develop the snowmobile portion of the statewide trails plan for the MSTAC. He presented a list of objectives/guidelines to work on. **Mr. Manson** said they are up to about 12 pages of information currently and that they plan to provide a draft to the department by mid-September.

Off Season Storage of Groomers

Mr. Green informally talked to many clubs, and found that over 50 percent have their equipment stored outside in the off season. Most of those clubs were not interested in going out and finding those covered or enclosed structures if the program is not willing to fund it. Minimum storage units start at \$5000 and could easily get up to \$20,000. He wants to know how to proceed. Protecting the equipment should be a priority.

Chairman Murray asked Mr. Stegenga if he could give an estimate of value lost from groomers sitting in the elements – all else equal. **Mr. Stegenga** said he feels the value lost could easily be \$5,000.

Chairman Murray asked Mr. Green to write up his findings and share at pre-season meeting. **Mr. Stegenga** suggested covering the grooming equipment with a tarp, and that in itself would be very helpful.

Mr. Britton reported on the Munising situation – There were many complaints reported last season concerning poor trail conditions. Mr. Green and Mr. Britton met with the Munising Visitors Bureau, rode in the groomers and observed grooming operations. Both grooming tractors are in poor condition and do not appear to be properly maintained.

Mr. Manson wondered why the field contact allowed this to happen. The club was put on notice to improve the situation but now they don't have appropriate equipment to do the job.

Mr. Duke said he believes the subcontractor hired to do the grooming for the visitors bureau have more than three years left on their contract.

Mr. Wood said that there is a problem with the contract with the grant sponsor, and that something should be done. Inspectors of those trails should be held accountable as well. He feels that to let the equipment and trail quality go down is not the program's fault, and the club should be accountable. Discussion continued.

Chairman Murray asked Mr. Fleming to take a look at this situation and advise. It was also noted that Dan Moore sent a letter to the visitors bureau putting them on notice that if they don't show improvement they could be out of the program.

Mr. Manson wants to know what the SAW stance is – get the equipment fixed?

Mr. Green has a proposal from Bader & Sons to offer a rental tractor (that JVTC had) and take the old one from Munising and repair it.

Motion was made by Mr. Britton, seconded by Mr. Green, to recommend to the Department to authorize Munising Visitors Bureau to trade in their John Deere 7630, 100 percent tractor and purchase a 7130 demo groomer from Bader & Sons Company. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Estimate on tractor repair was just short of \$50,000, it has approximately 2300 hours. Trade in value is \$82,000 the way it is today. **Mr. Wood** added that the JVTC leased unit for trade would work well in Munising.

Mr. Dingman wanted to say that a lot of clubs need new equipment, and suggested to perhaps give Munising one of the club's older ones and a club needing a new one, give the JVTC unit to them instead. Do not reward the Munising sponsors with a new tractor.

Mr. Manson wanted to know, what happens if their old equipment is not replaced? He believes Munising Visitors Bureau should be held responsible. Discussion continued.

Motion was made by **Mr. Britton** for the program to take a used machine that is being traded and put it in place of the Tucker.

Mr. Manson suggested selling Tucker outright.

Motion was made by Mr. Manson supported by Mr. Duke, that the Department and the current SAW members that are involved with the Munising Visitors Bureau grooming issue sit down together to decide the best procedure for the Tucker equipment whether that be sale and lease, trade in and lease, trade in and buy...whatever the best scenario should be, and to make a decision. Motion for adoption carried. Mr. Wood abstained.

Law Enforcement Division

Specialist Morey updated the SAW on the student safety manual; which should be ready to go to print this fall. He added that there are more Michigan specific updates added.

Mr. Goodheart, DEQ spoke for a few moments about their role as enforcer of violations in floodplains, wetland areas, erosion protection, etc. They don't want to be an obstacle but a coordinator for any needs the Department and/or clubs would have. He handed out a District Coordinator contact list for DEQ offices throughout the state.

U.S. Forest Service

Mr. Manson referenced the Huron-Manistee agreement - MSA did appeal decision on May 21, opt alt 3 instead of alt 4. Mr. Meister did appeal. The Judge has decided to send to mediation between appellates, cost will be split four ways. MUCC has also taken the same position. Mr. Meister did not want hunters or snowmobiles near his property.

Mr. Britton wondered why the section in the handbook about payment delays has been taken out (since 2005/2006). Kubisiak will look into that and advise. Payment delayed for 45 days. Questions were raised as to when a field contact, or Richard Kennedy goes on vacation or on sick leave—why is there not a backup? Mr. Fleming will meet with Richard Kennedy and Mr. Kubisiak.

Mr. Manson would like Ms. Blodgett to come to the October SAW meeting with an update on who does what.

Mr. Kubisiak handed out a news release that went out yesterday regarding the upcoming changes in motorized trail signs. He referred to the “Stay Updated link” on the DNR website. You can subscribe to receive news releases on a variety of topics.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Norman Rockwell, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club, would like to discuss major repairs. They had a major oil leak, but did not qualify for “major repairs” status. In addition, they needed two tractor tires; they acquired three bids, and purchased the tires just before December 1. A club in the UP was noted to have had Soucy tracks replaced every three years, so he inquired about “major repair” status, for the tires. Those would have been considered, but department denied the request because their club did not follow procedure. Mr. Rockwell is hoping someone could look at that closer and reconsider.

Mr. Fleming suggested perhaps taking a look at the process, and will follow-up with the field contact.

Mr. Wood suggested reimbursing the club for tire costs over the \$1,000 deductible if it is legally possible.

Meeting adjourned at 2:32 p.m.