

**Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup (SAW)**

**Meeting Minutes
March 1, 2012
DRAFT**

Jasper Ridge Inn, Ishpeming, Michigan

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Lee Murray, Chairman, At-Large Representative
Bill Manson, Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA), Region II Representative
Al Green, MSA, Region II Representative
Don Britton, At-Large Representative
Bruce Wood, Trail Sponsors Representative
Jim Duke, MSA, Region I Representative

DNR STAFF PRESENT:

Ron Olson, Chief, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD)
Jim Radabaugh, PRD
Steve Kubisiak, PRD
Richard Kennedy, PRD
Andrea Turner, PRD
Rich Hill, PRD
Tom Paquin, PRD
Cpl. John Morey, Law Enforcement Division, Gaylord
Ron Yesney, Forest Recreation Division, Marquette

PUBLIC ATTENDEES:

John Houk, Presque Isle Sno-Trail
Robert Hutchins, O.H.S.C.
Jim Dickie, MMSC, MSA
Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Ron Corbett, MMSC, MSA
Bill Taylor, Lewiston Fun Ones
Martin Cottle, Sault Ste Marie Snowmobile Association
Karyn Hautamaki, MSA
Bill Stegenga, Bader & Sons, John Deere
Keith Litchfield, Bader & Sons Company
Nancy Warren,
Al Warren,
Don Hendershot, Soo Trails SSM
Karen Middendorf, MSA
Josh
J Corbin
Lyle
John C

WELCOME

Chairman Murray called the SAW meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. He welcomed everyone and introduced himself, followed by introductions of the workgroup members, and all other attendees.

AGENDA

The agenda was accepted as submitted.

Motion was made by Mr. Britton, seconded by Mr. Green, to adopt the agenda for the March 1, 2012 meeting. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

MINUTES

The minutes of the December 8, 2011 meeting were acknowledged.

Motion was made by Mr. Duke, seconded by Mr. Wood, to adopt the minutes for the December 8, 2011 meeting. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Trail Program Transition Update

Chief Olson provided an overview of the transition of the forest campground and trails programs from FRD to PRD, effective January 8, 2012. The objective is to bring the recreation aspect under one area, maximize efficiencies. He highlighted the four DNR priorities. He referenced a number of things including a marketing promotion with Pure MI; aspiration to a "life long memory business" – creating memories of good time; goal to make Michigan "the trail state." He also referenced the recent Gold Medal award for State Parks.

Chief Olson thanked the members for allowing him to address them. If problems arise, work with local staff first so things are handled consistently.

Mr. Manson asked about field staff; will they be transferred to PRD and if so, when?

Chief Olson responded that the recreation specialists would be transferred by the end of March. Management will associate the fire officers with four PRD districts; more efficient and responsive.

Mr. Carrol, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club, stated the need to speed up new trail and bridge requests/projects. **Chief Olson** responded that they are working on cutting the timeline down and keeping the public informed of delays, etc; funding is an issue.

Mr. Green asked if the district supervisors for Cadillac and Roscommon had been named. The response was that Dan Mullen is the district supervisor for Cadillac, and Anna Sylvester is the district supervisor for Roscommon.

Mr. Houk, Presque Isle Sno-Trail, asked what the park rangers do in the winter; will we see PRD staff involved in the program. **Chief Olson** replied that they are looking at that - some PRD are seasonal employees.

Mr. Wood asked about the contact person – how many layers of contacts will there be? **Chief Olson** responded that he would like to keep it as “layer-less” as possible; would like clear channels. Communications will continue as is for now.

Chair Murray stated that he liked what Chief Olson had to say – we need to work through issues locally and not jump to the top. He referenced the recent issue involving a logging company and the importance of remembering there are two sides to every story. He commented that we share a common goal, and the need to trust the process and communicate.

Chair Murray thanked Chief Olson for his time.

2012 Meeting Schedule

The following 2012 proposed meeting dates were reviewed:

June 19 – Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center, Roscommon

October 16 – Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center, Roscommon

December 6 – Central UP, location TBD

Motion was made by Mr. Britton, seconded by Mr. Wood, to adopt the 2012 Proposed Meeting Schedule. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Motorized Trail Sign Handbook

Chair Murray spoke with Mr. Filley and reported on his behalf that he did not have any problems with Draft 6 of the *Motorized Trail Sign Handbook* (Handbook).

Motion was made by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Wood, to adopt Draft 6 of the Motorized Trail Sign Handbook. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Discussion followed regarding the Handbook timeline now that it has been approved.

Mr. Kubisiak responded that it would move forward rather quickly; he is working with staff to get the Handbook processed as a “form” and will have it posted to the website. The signing changes will be implemented next year and the sign order form will be modified for the clubs. The deadline for sign order is April 30.

Mr. Green asked on behalf of a sponsor, if there was a policy for the disposal of old signs/posts. **Mr. Kubisiak** responded that the DNR could assist with proper disposal locations. **Mr. Green** also asked if the additional cost/work for removing signs could be added to next year’s groomer rate. The SAW stated they do not believe additional funding is necessary. **Mr. Paquin** responded that PRD staff could use the posts for boundary markers.

Weekly Grooming Report Form

Mr. Manson commented that he has not met regarding the form. He will meet in the near future and will have something ready for next year. He expects to have a draft to the DNR by the end of April.

Grooming Standards/Inspection Form(s)

Mr. Britton reported that they met January 20. Mr. Yesney helped facilitate the effort and a review committee process was held. There was a question of consistency and a discussion regarding grooming regularity took place. **Mr. Britton** distributed a handout of

recommendations and stated that he was hopeful that the recommendations could be implemented next year.

Mr. Yesney stated that the grant sponsors need consistency. He suggested a procedure for the sponsor – make it clear.

Chair Murray gave an example from the previous week where a sponsor was told not to groom. **Chief Olson** pointed out that the further up you go in an organization, the further away you get from the problem/issue. Default to benefit of sponsor. If the problem continues, address it with a failure to perform notice.

Mr. Wood stated that we need have expertise on both sides. He has three questions that he asks groomers: 1) are there snowmobilers out there; 2) are there bumps in the trail; and 3) will the trails be better

He asked that DNR staff meet with people who know what is involved; meeting with Dan Moore and Mr. Yesney best DNR meeting he has ever had with the DNR.

Mr. Green appreciates Chief Olson's comment to resolve problems/issues at the ground level.

Discussion continued on the grooming schedule.

Mr. Manson stated that a groomer workshop is available at no cost – free.

Surplus Lines Tax

Mr. Manson read a letter from LARA. He reported that there has been an on-going battle with insurance regulations. The DNR will pay surplus lines tax for clubs next year.

Initial Grooming Outlay Formula

Mr. Manson recommended a change to the formula – maybe use a five year average based on the miles groomed.

Mr. Kennedy responded that much work would be needed to figure out a five year average, compared to amendments for a few clubs.

After discussion, it was decided that this was not really an issue.

Chair Murray would like to review the five year average of the five referenced clubs at the June meeting.

Bader & Sons Company Proposal

Mr. Leitchfield began the presentation by distributing the attached *2012 Groomer Program* handout. Discussion followed regarding the various options available.

Mr. Stegenga stated that the goal is to make program funds go further, lower repair costs. He commented that the suggested options are a win-win, as Bader will sell the tractors to farmers. He ended the presentation by saying the Bader is looking out for the program and thanked everyone for their time.

Mr. Duke stated that he felt the discussion had merit, advisory – would like to suggest/recommend a two year pilot program.

Motion was made by Mr. Duke, seconded by Mr. Manson, that the SAW in a advisory capacity, advise the DNR to enter into a pilot program with Bader & Sons for Option 1: Annual Trade (trade one year old units) and also Option 2: Rental (tractor only). Motion unanimously carried.

Mr. Leitchfield would like Mr. Kennedy to let grant sponsors know if they would be up for new replacement, depending on funding availability, by the end of April.

Chief Olson would like a subcommittee to review the information; Mr. Britton and Mr. Manson offered to assist.

Snowmobile Hill Climb Issue

Chair Murray introduced Nancy Warren. She stated that she does not belong to/represent any snowmobile group. **Ms. Warren** proceeded in showing a PowerPoint presentation of hill climbing. Hoping to have some resolution for next year.

Mr. Yesney will work with clubs on suggestions for solutions and will have recommendations for the June 19 meeting.

STAFF REPORTS

Forest Resource Division

Mr. Radabaugh gave a brief overview of the *Statewide Trail Network Plan Outline* (Plan) presented by Donna Stine, Executive Office, at the last MSTAC meeting. Mr. Yesney, Mr. Kennedy and two SAW members, Mr. Green and Mr. Wood, will be working on the snowmobile trails portion of the Plan.

Mr. Radabaugh reported that 15,000 more snowmobile permits need to be sold in order to meet revenues from FY11. Budget office has projected a spending holdback of 1.7 million for FY12.

Mr. Radabaugh stated that he met with Roger Storm regarding the Roger City Spur Quarry; currently in talks with attorneys for the railroad. Mr. Radabaugh suggested that clubs work with the quarry to get a short term reroute approved for snowmobile trail use.

Mr. Manson reported that Dan Wyatt, Department of Environmental Quality, suggested during the legislative ride that Jim Goodheart should attend the next SAW meeting as an ex officio.

Motion was made by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Woods, that Jim Goodheart be appointed as an ex officio, nonvoting member of the SAW. Motion unanimously carried.

Law Enforcement Division

Cpl. Morey reported that there have been 15 snowmobile fatalities to date. He also stated that the on-line safety program has trained 550 students. A 2012 Michigan DNR Snowmobile

Education Review Panel was formed to review snowmobile definitions.

Cpl. Morey gave a brief PowerPoint presentation on the present legal definitions of ATV/ORVs and snowmobiles. He followed up by asking the SAW members if changes needed to be made to the definitions. **Mr. Wood** responded that there are problems with the width of the machines; safety issues. **Mr. Manson** said he will look to MSA for definition suggestions.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Martin Cottle, Sault Ste Marie Snowmobile Association, asked for clarification on DNR definitions presented by Cpl. Morey. He also asked about the railroad grade just west of Brimley, Canadian Pacific ownership. Mr. Cottle also stated that it is important to keep the standards of grooming in mind – end goal is to have as smooth trail.

John Houk, Presque Isle Sno-Trail, asked about the railroad grade at Roger City. **Mr. Radabaugh** thought the sponsor could negotiate a short term reroute for the snowmobile trail with the quarry; will have Roger Storm contact Mr. Houk.

Robert Hutchins, O.H.S.C., reported problem with clear-cutting in Ogemaw County. They are cutting right up to the trail – would like a buffer zone between trail/clear-cut. **Mr. Kubisiak** commented that recreation staff attends the compartment review open houses and makes appropriate recommendations; he encouraged the clubs to attend the DNR-FRD compartment reviews for timber management.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Mr. Britton wants smooth trail, no bumps according to handbook.

Mr. Wood referenced a presentation a few years ago at which Jordan Valley was to divide a grant with Kalkaska - \$25,000 equipment reimbursement – didn't receive the "drag" they were promised.

Mr. Manson reported that he has forwarded complaints every Monday for the last month regarding Munising; when does a "failure to perform" get issued? When do we get feedback; need some checks/balances.

Mr. Kennedy also receives complaints and recommended they get in touch with the field contact. **Mr. Yesney** suggested that Mr. Moore work on a set of recommendations.

Chair Murray thanked Chief Olson – pledged to work together to improve the program

Meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Next Meeting

June 19, 2012, Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center, Roscommon, Michigan 48653