

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

**MINUTES approved at June 23, 2015 meeting**

**June 23, 2015  
10:00 a.m.**

**BJ's Restaurant  
990 North Center Avenue  
Gaylord, Michigan 49735**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

**Lee Murray, Chairman, At-Large Representative  
Bill Manson, MSA, Region III Representative, Grand Rapids  
Jim Duke, MSA, Region I Representative, Munising  
Don Britton, At-Large Representative  
Rich Filley, Trail Sponsors Representative  
Joe Kuchnicki, MSA, Region II Representative  
Bill Lucas, At-Large Representative**

**DNR STAFF PRESENT**

**Jason Fleming, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD), Lansing  
Tom Paquin, PRD, Newberry  
Ron Yesney, PRD, Marquette  
Cpl. John Morey, Law Enforcement Division (LED), Gaylord  
Loretta Cwalinski, Finance and Operations Division (FOD), Gaylord**

**PUBLIC ATTENDEES**

**Bob Leidlein, Track, Inc.  
Mike Beard, Bader & Sons  
Bradley Potter, Western Michigan Snowmobile Council  
Mark Sellner, MSA Member  
Dan Moore, MSA Secretary**

**WELCOME**

**Chairman Murray called the SAW meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., June 23, 2015 in Gaylord, Michigan. He welcomed everyone, introduced himself, as did the workgroup and attendees.**

**MINUTES**

**Motion was made by Mr. Lucas, seconded by Mr. Britton to accept the minutes from the March 5, 2015 SAW meeting. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

## AGENDA

### Items to be added under Old Business:

- Trail 160 north of Ironwood Bridge, Mr. Lucas (reference page 4 of March 5, 2015 minutes)
- Research grant for Trail 8, Mr. Yesney
- Munising Grooming, Mr. Duke

### Items to be added under New Business:

- Mesick River Crossing, Mr. Lucas
- Sub-committee appointment, Mr. Kuchnicki
- MSA Trail Permit fee increase

Motion was made by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Duke, to accept today's agenda. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Motion was made by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Britton, to allow Chair Murray to take agenda items out of order at his discretion. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

**Oil Sample Updates** - Mr. Fleming reported there's been discussion regarding oil samples, and currently is waiting for a report from Richard Kennedy. Chair Murray said he was hoping to have results so sponsors could move forward with any repairs; some samples have been sent and some clubs are just receiving them.

**Alger County ROW and Road issues** - Mr. Yesney reviewed the Alger County invoices sent to sponsors for right of way permits. Since SAW approved a motion to not pay those invoices, he'd sent a letter to Alger County advising them of such. In return the county has decided to go back to previous costs of \$200 that have been paid in the past. Mr. Yesney would like to discuss the continued payment of \$200, due to the motion made not to pay any. The county feels \$200 per sponsor is fair; they gravel the right of way approaches. Mr. Britton added that they also do some minor brushing. Mr. Fleming said those costs are not unreasonable and have been paid with no problem. Mr. Manson said the motion needs to be addressed now. Discussion continued on road taxes, other counties jumping on board, etc. The permit is called a Right Of Way Operations Permit.

Mr. Moore added some history that there's one permit in the eastern UP, with no fee charged from MDOT.

Mr. Yesney suggested that perhaps there could be one permit per county, and not individual invoices sent to each of the sponsors. Mr. Manson said if it's not a road crossing permit it may be easier to work with than to refuse to pay for the right of way work that is done.

Mr. Britton feels it's probably a good idea to continue paying the right of way permit fee in those two counties - Marquette and Alger. They have a good working relationship with the counties, and there is extra work that is being done. Mr. Fleming agreed - looking at all the facts, it's best to continue paying it. Chair Murray said perhaps it could be negotiated with the counties at \$200 per grant sponsor per county, but to also agree there will be no further increases for five years.

**Chair Murray** would like Mr. Yesney to have a conversation with the counties and see if they can negotiate \$200 a sponsor, if they'll agree to no increase for 5-10 years and if it's all agreed upon, to come back to the fall meeting with that information. Negotiate with Marquette and Alger counties for \$200 per sponsor as well. In addition, to not pay more than \$1000 per county if other sponsors are added.

**Permanent Easement Update** – **Mr. Manson** said that the question was that by June 1 the process would be completed, but after looking at Mr. Fleming's handout of the Snowmobile Trail Easement Fund, he noticed the numbers are different. Not all of the \$8 is going into the fund; he believes there's more money in the fund than what is showing. Jacklin Blodgett would be the one to work with on any of these discrepancies. **Chair Murray** asked if Mr. Manson would continue to research the disconnect and advise in October. Discussion continued. **Mr. Fleming** will have something to review for the October meeting, but will update SAW as they move along.

**Research Request for Trail 8** - **Mr. Yesney** updated that Trail 8 has been researched as to ownership of the railroad grade – a PRD Real Estate Analyst has done a thorough analysis, and ownership is clear. Those specific property owners will be getting letters when payment is available to purchase those easements. Discussion continued on who would actually approach landowners; concern was noted over DNR staff making that contact. **Mr. Fleming** added that there would be an application available to the sponsors, which will be posted, hopefully this summer. Process can begin when the applications become available.

**Mr. Yesney** added that they'd like to pick up those sections of Trail 8 as multi-use. He would like to see Trust Fund dollars and ORV funds pursued, along with the easement fund.

**Motorized Use Permit Update** – **Mr. Fleming** just received a copy of the Use Permit, and he does not really see any changes in the final document. He noted that more changes will be for the ORV users, but the guideline has not changed much. Both Forest Resources and PRD Chiefs will be sending out a memo soon, which SAW will also receive.

**GPS Update** – **Mr. Fleming** said that they continue to receive calls from various GPS companies. They'd like to try a variety of systems to see how effective they are and overall workability and satisfaction. **Mr. Filley** asked if they were approached from Geotab – he handed out flyers for the GPS unit and said he thinks it's a viable product. He has a sample unit, and explained the usage and its many benefits. Cost is \$100 to own the unit, and an additional fee of \$27 annually for the service.

**Mr. Yesney** added that one benefit is there's not as much paperwork to do since GPS information is available electronically. Many other states have gone to electronic reporting which has been an advantage.

**Trail 160 north of the Ironwood Bridge** – **Mr. Yesney** sent out letters, regarding the recent motion, that funding was available. He created a working agreement based on approvals, and said he'd like to get a response but is still waiting to hear back from the landowner - it sounds like it is being received positively.

**Mr. Fleming** also clarified the process on writing any letters for non-compliance, which will be coming from him. There needs to be open communication between the sponsors and field contact.

**Research Grant Trail 8** – Mr. Britton said that this topic was covered previously.

**Munising Grooming** – Mr. Duke Munising Area Visitor's Bureau has chosen a new groomer and he looks forward to a new season with positive results. Hiawatha Trails Association (HTA) will be in charge, Schoolcraft holds the grant. He noted concern that HTA can handle all the trails using the equipment they have, and who is grooming for them.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Appointment of Mr. Kuchnicki to Equipment Sub-Committee** – Chair Murray would like to make that official.

**Alanson to Mackinaw Hazards** – Mr. Kuchnicki said that there are numerous boulders in the right of way which is a big concern to many people; his field contact has instructed him to mark every hazard that is not natural. The boulders in this area could present a dangerous situation, and he feels they should be marked as hazardous. It appears MDOT has placed the boulders. Mr. Kuchnicki will communicate with Tony Histed, Fire Officer in Indian River and work on a resolution.

**MSA Trail Permit Fee Increase** – Mr. Manson updated that he has experienced pushback from legislators due to the DNR's fee license package increase, so that will not move forward this year.

**Manistee River Crossing** – Mr. Lucas reviewed the problems they've had in getting this bridge fixed, and discussed alternates to the crossing. Senator Darwin L. Booher, 35<sup>th</sup> District, was in attendance and had said his file is two inches thick and wants to see this accomplished in two weeks. The only way north or west from Mesick is either 115 (narrow use bridge across the Manistee), and 31 North has to cross the Manistee also but with high traffic which is dangerous. The existing railroad bridge is the best option. MDOT and DNR would need to discuss land control and come up with the best option. Several groups have been involved in that discussion as well. It's been quite the conundrum. Mr. Fleming will update the group in October.

**Groomer Purchase** – Mr. Fleming gave an update that the equipment sub-committee met recently and came up with a list of approximately \$2 million in equipment needs awarded. There will not be a need to ask for an additional transfer of funds which is good news. Ten groomers, ten drags – three in the western UP, three to four in central UP, one in the southwest portion of the lower peninsula, three in the northern lower. Letters should be out this week to the sponsors awarded the equipment. Chair Murray noted appreciation to the sub-committee and their progress; they were very instrumental in getting a better maintenance program.

**Tucker Training Program** – Mr. Leidlein advised that they will sponsor a training program, potentially at Moose Country. It is currently being coordinated with Richard Kennedy, hopefully the time frame of early October. Chair Murray would like to be notified of the training - it was well-received.

Mr. Lucas asked about the status of the Tucker replacement at Grand Marais – Tucker has picked it up and they're looking it over; Tucker in Minnesota has extended that warranty into this season.

**Mr. Lucas** would like to see another training program in the Lake City area again; Voelker's training was very successful.

**Mr. Yesney** would like to see the invitations and also attend. He feels the field contacts should be involved and could benefit from the training as well. Richard Kennedy will send those letters – Mr. Fleming will pass along the interest.

**Grooming Analysis** – **Mr. Fleming** had a handout that Richard Kennedy provided of the analysis with one note mentioned - Munising's mileage is not noted correctly. That will be corrected. **Mr. Kuchnicki** said that there appears to be a piece of equipment missing from their club. Also, **Chair Murray** asked why Schoolcraft is spending so much money on fuel. Mr. Fleming will look into those items and advise.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

**Law Enforcement Division** – **Cpl. Morey** advised that Lt. Andrew Turner has transferred to Rose Lake, and Tom Wanless is now the Lieutenant for Recreational Safety, Education and Enforcement Section. Steve Orange is the Sgt. in the Section now. There were 37 recruits that graduated recently and have begun their steps to becoming Conservation Officers. In addition, Cpl. Morey said there's been no updated numbers on snowmobile fatalities. No additional information has been shared about the decibel issue from Lansing staff; however, **Mr. Duke** said that Lt. Skip Hagy, Newberry District office, has information on the meters and training as well. **Mr. Manson** would like to know when there would be a plan put together from Lansing staff regarding training and enforcement of the decibel issue.

**Mr. Yesney** did put together a news release last season, but Mr. Manson would like to see a fresh take on that as well. **Mr. Yesney** added that this fall he will get another news release out with updated information. He sees trespass and noise issues as the top concerns in that area in particular. The news release should encompass the whole state.

**Best Management Practices** – **Mr. Fleming** said there's no update yet

Carmeuse is still finalizing the last details for the Rogers City trail and should be done this season.

**Chair Murray** mentioned sign concerns – will there be a subcommittee to revisit these signs again? Bridge Ahead signs needed to be discussed again. The new subcommittee for signs will be Mr. Fleming, Mr. Duke, Mr. Lucas, Mr. Britton, and Mr. Yesney. Mr. Yesney said that it would be good to have training for sponsors and field contacts in the signage area – he shared some of the information that was discussed at a recent meeting he'd attended which had good ideas to improve signage for Michigan.

**Mr. Kuchnicki** added that Daniel Pratt, Gaylord Fire Officer, has been very helpful and an asset with signage.

Also discussed was the increase in people renting snowmobiles, and the revenue lost to the program for the trail stickers. **Chair Murray** asked if there should be any follow-up with rental businesses and the trail permit fees. Not a popular discussion for business owners who rent sleds. Discussion continued. **Mr. Manson** will do some research in other states and see if there are any differences, and will gather data for comparison. **Chair Murray** would like to see

this moving forward for making some kind of a decision – should there be an increase for rental sleds? **Mr. Manson** volunteered Mr. Duke to assist (Ron Corbett can also provide information), Mr. Fleming will assist as needed, and **Mr. Moore** added that IASA could also provide some information.

## **NEXT MEETING**

Next meeting will be October 13, 2015, here at BJs Restaurant, at 10:00 a.m.

**Mr. Fleming** reported on a few of the Trails Section positions that will be in the interview process and changing in the near future, however; he will stay in this position for the next eighteen months, but also have someone else in transition for his current position with the SAW.

**Mr. Kuchnicki** mentioned a section of trail on Brutus Road regarding issues on the corners and groomers going around the corner – the current reroute could be of concern.

**Mr. Lucas** updated everyone on a proposal for the Mesick section at the Manistee River, access to forest service land to get to Manton, south side of Manistee River. He also reported that sign costs have been reduced by about a third since the last sign reduction.

**Mr. Kuchnicki** brought photos of the bridge in Indian River and a recommendation of perhaps something more durable could protect the bridge. It doesn't appear that having a groomer cross the bridge was taken into consideration.

Meeting adjourned at 1:57 p.m.