

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

**March 5, 2015  
11:00 a.m.  
Kewadin Casino  
2186 Shunk Road  
Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan 49783**

**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**

**DNR STAFF PRESENT**

**Jason Fleming, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD), Lansing  
Tom Paquin, PRD, Newberry  
Dan Moore, PRD, Newberry  
Ron Yesney, PRD, Marquette  
Mike Sutton, PRD, Straits State Park  
Wayne Burnett, PRD, Straits State Park  
Rob Katona, PRD, Marquette  
Cpl. John Morey, Law Enforcement Division (LED), Gaylord  
Loretta Cwalinski, Finance and Operations Division (FOD), Gaylord**

**PUBLIC ATTENDEES**

**Tom St. Aubin, MUPSA  
Herb Lawson, Presque Isle Snow Trails (PIST)  
Dean Storms, PIST  
Dale DeClark, Jordan Valley Trails Council  
Dave Campo, PIST  
Jeff Persondek, Rosco-Higgins Trail Cruisers (RHTC)  
Bill Sbonek, RHTC  
Al Persondek, RHTC  
Rick Brown, MSA  
Karen Hautamaki, MSA  
Bob Leidlein, Track, Inc.  
Richard Krupp, Superior Sno Club  
Karen Middendorp, MSA Staff**

**Jay Wright, Chippewa Snow Chasers**  
**Harold Eltzroth, Edwardsburg Snow Club**  
**Cori-Ann Cearley, Munising Visitor's Bureau**  
**Rock Zahn, Rider, MSA Member**  
**Don Reed, Seney Snowmobile Association, MSA**  
**Bill Stegenger, Bader & Sons Company**  
**Terry Martin, Grand Traverse Area Snowmobile Club (GTASC)**  
**Donald Simon, GTASC**

## **WELCOME**

**Chairman Murray** called the SAW meeting to order at 11:03 a.m., March 5, 2015, in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. He welcomed everyone, introduced himself, as did the workgroup and attendees.

Mr. Bill Lucas was unable to attend the meeting today. Joe Kuchnicki with Moosejaw Trails in Harbor Springs is the newest member of SAW (replacing Al Greene after his recent passing); **Chair Murray** welcomed him and looks forward to Mr. Kuchnicki's contribution of knowledge and experience to the SAW.

## **MINUTES**

**Motion was made by Mr. Duke, seconded by Mr. Manson to accept the minutes from the December 4, 2014 SAW meeting. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

## **AGENDA**

**Chair Murray** would like to be able to add items and change the order of items for discussion on the agenda.

**Motion was made by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Britton that Chair Murray is able to add to and change the agenda order as necessary. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

**Chair Murray** would like to add (under Old Business) Trail 160 North of Ironwood Bridge, as Item #1. Also, Best Management Practice Policy and Research Request for Don Britton. Under New Business the addition of GPS Tracking Results.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**Progress on Oil Sampling – Mr. Fleming** discussed the maintenance program and oil samples. They have purchased 400 oil sample kits and will be handing them out soon.

There will be discussion by the Equipment Subcommittee to decide the maintenance schedule and any other recommendations after review of results. There will be two kits per machine. These were purchased through John Deere, Inc.

Under New Business, **Mr. Manson** would like to see MSA's plan for trail permit increase added to Agenda.

**Motion was made by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Britton that the agenda be accepted as amended. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

**GPS Status – Mr. Fleming** reviewed benefits of GPS information and to what a good tool it is to have – even for providing information to the public on the grooming activity. These will be available and ready for next season. **Mr. Kuchnicki** shared information on a GPS unit that is commonly used in Canada, which transmits information both ways, but was not impressed with the 'emergency' signal that he tested out. It was not 'texting' as he thought it would. He mentioned the benefits and cost comparisons with the model that Bruce Woods' club has been using. Mr. Manson has received a two week trial with the new unit. **Chair Murray** would like to see the results discussed in April at the Equipment Sub-committee meeting, and would like to see a recommendation to SAW for DNR to consider.

**Mr. Stegenger, Bader & Sons, Co.**, said that they have been using the on-board units on their new equipment through JDLINK™ system, which will throw codes for faults back to their business. Also, location, temperature of engine, etc. can be sent back to them. There is another one that was used in the Lower Peninsula tested on trails that were tree lined, and signals were still sent. **Chair Murray** asked him to send their information to Mr. Fleming in writing, or perhaps make a presentation to the Equipment Subcommittee.

**Munising Trails Update – Mr. Duke** reviewed the history of trouble on the trails over the last few years. At the beginning of this season, there were still several complaints on the trails, which were inspected by DNR staff and Mr. Lucas; still not compliant. There was a public meeting on January 29<sup>th</sup> regarding those issues, and the Visitor's Bureau was not aware that the contact person in charge was not complying. The Visitor's Bureau is now in charge of the trails, and the problems have since been rectified and are receiving nothing but positive comments and inspections. This has been a successful transition. Munising Visitor's Bureau has made those trails a success. Comment was added that a big thank you goes to Cori Cearley from the Visitor's Bureau for making this issue a priority. Cori mentioned there were others who deserved the thanks as well – this was definitely a joint effort.

**Mr. Moore** added that the continued documentation that was done was critical in moving forward with those corrective actions.

**Mr. Fleming** added a thank you to Cori as well. He said that communication and follow-through is so critical in getting things done, and decisions were made to move things forward and fix the problem with cooperation from many groups. He thanked Mr. Moore as well for his support and to assist in moving the process along.

**Trail 160 North of Ironwood Bridge** – **Mr. Yesney** said there hasn't been much progress regarding the broken down bridge; Gogebic club would be handling that to move forward, but it doesn't look like it will be very successful as they've had several other issues they are failing in. **Mr. Yesney** has stressed documentation in their failures and added that there needs to be better direction with FRD contacts on inspections and communication to improve that situation. There have been several internal issues that have separated club membership and stability. He said a failure to perform is definitely in order at this point. They also held a public meeting, good turnout with offers to assist, but there has not been much success after the fact. Brainstorming on solutions were shared.

**Mr. Manson** said he feels there should be a point made by Department staff now on the noise issue from loud sleds (more so to riders from Minnesota), because the noise problem is causing local homeowner dissension. Fines vary, but can cost up to \$250. **Mr. Manson** said he could craft an article to put on their Facebook page directed to loud snowmobiles causing Trail 2 to be shut down. Enforcement is important, and so is communication. **Mr. Murray** asked Mr. Yesney to move forward with a follow up news release on the concerns in that area and the loud snowmobiles.

**Mr. Brown** said that the Twin Lakes area has a big 'pipes' issue, but rarely sees law enforcement presence up there. He thinks the problem is getting worse. **Chair Murray** asked how to get more involvement from law enforcement. **Cpl. Morey** said that the west end has been active in law enforcement, but he will contact Lansing and pass that information along to see if there can be more involvement there. He added that the equipment for decibel testing is costly, and training is costly. Perhaps there could be a targeted/dedicated enforcement there. Cpl. Morey will get back with Chair Murray on any progress.

**Mr. Filley** wondered if there could be any legislation to make it illegal to use after-market exhausts. Main difficulty is easily distinguishing a modified exhaust.

**Mr. Fleming** added that there are limited dollars for law enforcement grants as well, and there are challenges on granting all the requests but they are working on it.

**Best Management Practice Policies** – **Mr. Manson** said that during the MTAC meeting there was a review of the logging practices and trails and how to minimize impact. This is a process that is moving along, but appears it is still in review. **Mr. Fleming** added that there will be a PRD and FRD combined meeting in April where this will be discussed.

**Research Grant Request - Trail 8 – Mr. Britton** requested \$50,000 to continue the research, and he would like a motion or input. **Mr. Yesney** feels that there should be a move towards purchasing, not necessarily research on properties. **Mr. Fleming** said that he will get the applications out; they are looking at purchasing easements.

**Motion was made by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Duke to recommend to the Department that the permanent easement sub-committee have the process and rules in place by June 1, 2015. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

**Chair Murray** would like to have this topic on the agenda for June SAW meeting, and a report to SAW.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Snowmobile Noise Control was covered previously.

**Cpl. Morey** added it would be a good idea to make contact with local judges on noise tickets to garner support. The snowmobile pamphlet needs to be updated and the complete law online as well; it's currently being reviewed.

**Equipment Purchase Pilot – Mr. Fleming** explained there is a subcommittee comprised of staff and SAW members who were involved in creating the process, and had a chance to review equipment requests. Their discussion included what to look at and compare to make decisions, as well as maintenance information along with trade-in values. Variables on equipment were looked at – one size does not fit all when it comes to grooming. There is a pilot project, which is still in process but will be discussed further in April. Discussion continued.

Comment was made that clubs need to be involved more on the purchase of equipment, going back to the way it used to be when clubs had more responsibility/accountability for purchasing equipment. **Mr. Manson** replied that those down payments/percentages are generally too large for most groups to come up with.

**Mr. Fleming** thought that having 'interns' do some cost analysis and make some phone calls would be prudent; review past purchases and repair data and compare and investigate.

Comment was made about getting shelter for the groomers that have to sit outside. Wouldn't it save the program money as well to provide funding for shelter? **Chair Murray** added the analysis that has been done revealed that annually a machine that sits outside is worth about \$5,000 less than one that is stored indoors.

**Alger County/Trail 422 (Miner's Castle) – Mr. Moore** described the trail from Grand Marais to Munising which leads to a (2000') stretch of trail to Miner's Castle where the snowmobile trail is on a county road. It is getting noticeably chewed up at the southern

portion of that trail. There was a \$5900 repair bill for pavement portions from the county that was not officially submitted to be paid last year; the county is in process of closing or rerouting the trail unless it is repaired. The option to reroute is not really feasible there either. **Mr. Manson** would like to see the invoice and share it with the Convention and Visitor's Bureau – to close that section of trail would not be a good idea, in particular for the road commission or visitor's bureau. **Chair Murray** would like to see this as an agenda item for the next meeting with follow-up. **Mr. Dickie** thought that on the south side of that portion of two-tracks perhaps could be looked at closer as an alternative. Mr. Britton also submitted an Alger County invoice for \$1000 to the groomers for an annual charge for grooming on county roads.

**Mr. Manson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Duke for SAW to recommend to the Department that the program not pay any county for road crossing permits. Motion for adoption carried unanimously.**

Mr. Fleming will work with Mr. Britton on moving forward with the Alger County issue.

### **NEXT MEETINGS**

June 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting will be held at BJs in Gaylord. Meeting will begin at 10:00 a.m.

October 13<sup>th</sup> meeting will also be at BJs in Gaylord, beginning at 10:00 a.m.

December 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting in the Munising area - location and time TBD.

Equipment Subcommittee meeting will be April 10th - members will be notified of that meeting location and time.

**MSA Trail Permit Fee Increase** – **Mr. Manson** said the MSA and legislative committee will be making SAW permanent within the law, outlaw wheeled vehicles on trails, redefining definition of 'snowmobile' and discussing fees – they're at the end of the ten year process and would like to get a jump on beginning with the next process. Executive Committee from MSA would like to see trail permits become \$60. They are expecting opposition but there are benefits – equipment, best trails, etc. The Legislature will probably be the sticking point. They also have a discount in mind for MSA members. Should be introduced around the first of April.

**Mr. Manson** made a motion, that the SAW committee support the concepts of a trail permit fee increase; however, motion was withdrawn. Discussion continued about permit fees and out of state riders. Will be addressed at next meeting.

### **STAFF REPORTS**

**Mr. Fleming** updated the group on the quarry trail in Rogers City – the language is continuing to be worked on in the agreement, which is still in discussion. Trail should be ready in the fall. In addition, Richard Kennedy, PRD, is also the ORV program contact in Lansing as well as snowmobile program, through the end of July.

**Cpl. Morey** said that the new updated snowmobile brochures are available – the current fatalities for this season is thirteen. He will make sure the website is updated with that information.

## **PUBLIC APPEARANCE**

**Mr. Krupp** said he'd like to create a place mat to hand out to local businesses with "What to do when I come upon a groomer." He'd like to have that ready by next season.

**Mr. Stegenger, Bader & Sons**, said they have purchased two Voelker locations. They'd like to keep the current employees, and there are plans to double the size of each of the businesses. They'd like to improve the working relationship with the groomers and the snowmobile program and wanted SAW to be aware of those positive changes.

**Mr. Personder, Rosco-Higgins**, said he'd like to see free trail permits for groomer operators. **Mr. Manson** replied it could be a consideration.

**Mr. Reed** wanted to discuss breakdowns that are unable to be repaired in a few days. Trails can go downhill after a few days in good weather and high usage if not groomed. Leased equipment for a short term is just not feasible. Could there be any recommendations? Problem worsens when others in neighboring areas are also broken down. This would be a good topic for the subcommittee in April.

**Mr. Brown** wanted to discuss tracks other than Soucy Tracks. There is a company in Indiana that manufactures tracks as well. He will send that information to Chair Murray or someone on the subcommittee.

**Mr. Lawson** wanted to discuss the railroad grade from Millersburg; he said there's several problems on that trail that need to be addressed. The historical bridge is closed, and signs are impossible to install due to bollards and stones; they also make it difficult to groom. **Mr. Fleming** would like them to get with their field contact and copy him and Richard Kennedy with those concerns. Maybe even send photos as well. There is continuing discussion regarding that bridge, as well as repairs. This has been a real challenge since it's a historical bridge.

**Mr. Campo** wanted to encourage all clubs to install signs with road names at every road crossing. They serve two purposes – one to assist in locating an injured person, and another to assist someone with a broken down sled. Perhaps the sign committee could look into it. It is suggested in the handbook, but not required. **Mr. Fleming** said it will be brought up at the pre-season meeting.

**Mr. Fleming** added that there are a few new employees in Lansing (funded by General Funds), that will be assisting with land issues in Michigan - looking at deed and trespass issues, including pathways.

**Mr. Britton** said he'd like to see more emphasis in the UP on signage. Using correct signs and using updated signs should be looked at. Also, the corner vs. curve signs should be resolved. Curves should not be signed. **Mr. Fleming** suggested putting together a small group to discuss that. Field contacts could correct that with proper inspections. There should be no chevrons on the trails either.

**Mr. Kuchnicki** said that rental sleds could also be in the discussion for trail permits. There seem to be more rentals of sleds than folks buying them.

**Motion was made by Mr. Duke, seconded by Mr. Britton to conclude the meeting at 3:46 p.m. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**