

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
JOINT SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY WORKGROUP (SAW)
and OFF-ROAD VEHICLE ADVISORY WORKGROUP (ORVAW)**

MINUTES

December 3, 2015

1:00 p.m.

**Foggy's Restaurant
Christmas, Michigan**

ORVAW MEMBERS PRESENT

Tim Kobasic, Sportsmen's Off Road Vehicle Association of the UP

Skip Schulz, UP ORV Trail Development Association

Donald Helsel, UP ORV Trail Riding Community

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Chair Murray welcomed everyone and called the joint meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Introductions were made of the ORVAW members. **Mr. Kobasik** reminded everyone that there are only three group members present, and anything discussed will be taken back to the other members for discussion. Thomas Dunn, Pat Brower, Lewis Shuler and Amy Trotter were absent from the meeting.

Easements

Mr. Fleming addressed the attendees and opened with information regarding the similarities of trails and concerns regarding funding for the trails and easements.

Mr. Schulz inquired about the gas tax information, under the Recreation Improvement Fund. He said that it has been difficult to get ORV funding – it is primarily snowmobile and non-motorized funding. **Mr. Fleming** said that this is a budgetary issue and whatever the usage is on trails, funding should be shared.

Mr. Yauk said that Trust Fund dollars is an option as well, and other sources are being considered. He also added that trails and boating access sites are not included in the Land Cap.

Snowmobile/ORV Use Conflicts – Drummond Island – Mr. Manson explained the difficulties on Drummond Island regarding 4-wheel drives and the damage done on the trails and the inability to repair that damage. There is also a concern with trespass/encroachments by ORVs that needs to be rectified. Jeeps in the past stopped usage during snowmobile season, but recently have been continuing that activity on groomed trails.

Mr. Schulz offered information on size-width changes, and **Mr. Manson** suggested that there be a time frame that ORVs could be on those trails, which would be outside of the official snowmobile season.

Mr. Katona mentioned a group meeting originated by Wildlife Division to discuss those very issues on the island, and it was clear that winter riding by some vehicles is very popular. They did come up with some solutions, and it appeared that everyone at the table agreed on the recommendations, which have been taken to the NRC for review.

Mr. Reed added that the jeeps are going off trail and trespassing on private lands which jeopardize the trail system. Maintenance concerns will be an additional issue for discussion as well.

In Hiawatha National Forest there is a seasonal designation for usage which does help. There is ORV restoration funds available for repairs for out of season usage as well.

Mr. Katona said that years ago when the ORV trails were designated there, hunters made a show of force to remind everyone that most of that land was purchased with hunting dollars. It is also very clear that the economic value of the trail users is important. Discussion continued with issues on all trails as well, not just Drummond Island.

Chair Murray is asking for a solution; limit or prevent four-wheel drive users during snowmobile season. He asked the three ORVAW members if that limitation would affect ORV riders.

Comment was made that if weather is not conducive for snowmobiles, then ORVs are being limited unnecessarily, as well as hunters.

The definition of a snowmobile should be reconsidered as well. **Mr. Fleming** recommended focusing on the multi-use trails for the four months out of the year, and solve it.

Mr. Lynch feels like the four inch snowfall doesn't really work; seasons should be followed.

Mr. Reese added that hunters do use access to private land off snowmobile trails, so he feels that the dates should be looked at, not the weather. There is a potential to lose land permissions.

Mr. Kobaski added skijoring, equestrians, fat-tire bikes and cross country skiing to the discussion as well.

Mr. Fleming said that Land Use Orders take at least a few months to take from start to finish, and are primarily for State land. Private lands would be a little different. **Chief Olson** said that it may be a good idea to have a public meeting, get input from as many stakeholders as possible, then work towards an agreement and solution.

Mr. Manson said it would be a good idea to make that group meeting happen soon; Mr. Katona and Paul Gaberdiel will work on that meeting and connect with SAW and ORVAW.

Current Legislation – Mr. Fleming mentioned House Bill 5037. This is regarding the Secretary of State (SOS) and the issuance of a vehicle identification number and title to modified vehicles. This bill would not change the law but the process.

ORV FY 15 Review – Ms. Blodgett shared a handout and a presentation with detailed information on revenue and expenditures for the ORV program from 2011 to 2015. Revenue

items included license and permit fee, Safety Education Fund and other miscellaneous fees. Expenditures were detailed as well. Projected 2016 revenue and expenses were shared, and Ms. Blodgett will e-mail those numbers to the group.

Mr. Schulz asked if RTP money is in this fund, and it is not. It is a separate RTP fund and Ms. Blodgett can provide that information. In addition he mentioned that the ORV fund does not get as much gas tax as snowmobile fund. That could maybe be changed by legislation, or referendum. **Chief Olson** said that is something staff will check into, and advise. Is it a protected fund or not?

Mr. Manson would like Ms. Blodgett to request from SOS the breakdown of permit sales and dollars to the snowmobile program.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Mr. Helsel said that what they'd like to do with both THE snowmobile and ORV groups (and include other users as well), is to have two meetings (one in the spring, one in the fall) primarily in the UP – and have regional meetings to see what's working and what is not working. In sharing trail information and efforts of both groups, this may prove to be beneficial to both. **Mr. Manson** suggested that there be two regions in the UP, or perhaps a total of three.

Mr. Hyrns asked about combining efforts through the programs, and **Mr. Fleming** agreed that it is all part of LEAN Process for efficiency, for both groups. He also noted the discrepancies between grading and grooming that will be addressed.

Ms. Grady said that what they get in reimbursements for grooming vs grading is quite different as well, and to work together could be beneficial, in particular on wear and tear.

Mr. Hyrns asked what the grooming rate would be, but that is currently being worked on. **Mr. Yauk** will provide that.

Mr. Fleming will keep their recent discussion of ORV meeting dates for future meetings and will be the same except for clarification regarding the November meeting. The three ORVAW members in attendance agreed to go with it.

Chief Olson thanked everyone for their passion and work toward the betterment of the program and trails.

Mr. Kobasik commented positively regarding all the years that he has been involved with various programs with the DNR, and wanted to especially thank **Mr. Fleming**.

Motion was made by Mr. Britton, seconded by Mr. Helsel to end the joint meeting of SAW and ORVAW. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.