

Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Workgroup

June 12, 2019 Minutes

The regular meeting of the Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Workgroup (ORVAW) was called to order by Chairman Thomas Dunn on June 12, 2019 at 5:00 pm. Members present were: Chairman Dunn, Keith Lynch, Paul Hittie, Donald Helsel, Curt Brower, James Hunt and James Maike.

The following Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff were present: Paul Yauk, Jessica Holley, Nikki Van Bloem, Michael Morrison, Greg Kinser, Michael Desnoyer, Nicole Toman, and Michelle Wieber.

The following DNR staff were present via phone: Amy Swainston, Rob Katona, Ron Yesney, and Cpl. John Morey.

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Dunn welcomed everyone and asked them to mute their cell phones. All in attendance introduced themselves as well.

Action Items

MOTION: J. Hunt moved the approval of the March 13, 2019 meeting minutes to the September 11, 2019 meeting, seconded by D. Helsel. Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: T. Dunn asked to take items out of order on the agenda for the June 12, 2019 meeting, seconded by J. Hunt. The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: J. Maike moved the approval of the amended meeting agenda, seconded by K. Lynch.

When voting to take agenda items out of order, Paul Yauk spoke about the new orientation binder that would be a useful tool for all Trail Advisory Committee members. Some information it includes is the State Trail Plan, procedures, etiquette, work group directives, member information, Comprehensive Plan, and the Strategic Plan, etc.

Business Items for Discussion

Old Business:

A discussion on liability picked up from the previous meeting, with Nicole Toman leading the conversation, noting that liability protection against the landowner language is broad enough, written by legislature. A court case has not been held, to focus on the wording, as this is the only way to have it re-worded. Lewis Schuler said risks need to be taken into consideration, as contracts are getting very large. Board of Governor's Insurance was suggested.

There were not any work group reports to discuss, as no meetings were held.

DNR Staff Reports

Michael Desnoyer provided a financial update on ORV funding & budget. Some of which included: Permit sales, trail permit history (ORV license), FY2019 ORV trail improvement fund distribution, ORV revenue distribution, and the ORV license fiscal year report. Michael also discussed funding that went towards the efforts in the clean-up on the Father's Day flood in Houghton County in June of 2018.

Rob Katona and Ron Yesney briefed on the Alpha-Numeric Naming Project. Handouts were given to the group. Ron recommended option 4, a conference call was to be scheduled for further discussion.

Nicki Van Bloem provided information on the Trail Plan Update. Currently seeking a contractor, anticipating 2 years for process, this timeframe allows for DNR workgroups, subcommittees, entities, Federal partners, etc. The general process consists of feedback on the current (2013) plan. Questions to answer are, are the goals valid? Complete? Partial completion? Next step is to thoroughly evaluate the 2013 to confirm and carry forward. Nicki requested agenda topic for the next meeting to be for all to bring their top 5-10 thoughts, which would focus on the current plan, not new items.

Paul Yauk provided the group with information and updates on the Oakland County ORV site. The site is to have an official name very soon. Many events are to be held, including two different 4-wheel drive events, and a motorcycle event. Feedback from County and State individuals involved in the planning seem to be right on track. The County is eager to get the word out about the mixed-use events. Other events are being planned for September and October, as well as a training event in August, permit pending. The group discussed a trip to visit sometime this fall, a date has not been set yet.

Many of the staff reports included a common theme – high water levels.

Ami Swainston reported trail conditions to be soggy. Rainy conditions, reports of mud holes, water holes are not drying up. Working with the USFS on beaver damage.

Ron Yesney stated the UP is struggling with high waters, beaver issues as well, and are working with trappers. No closures to report at this time, but some flooding, and workers are draining as many areas as possible. Updates have been made to the public regarding etiquette with water levels & closures. The interactive map system can show updates on closures and such in real time.

Greg Kinser reported he's dealing with rain, water levels, puddles, beavers, and flooding. He is working locally to relieve these issues, luckily no real significant damage has been reported, aside from the Tomahawk. There are two, 4-foot washouts. A permit for a re-route is being sought. A separate permit has been issued to handle areas of damage due to beavers.

Greg also reported updates on Scott Slavin's behalf. The Cadillac area suffered a windstorm event, but most larger trails remain open. Work is being done on cycling trails, with the help of the USFS. Evert cycle trail is closed at two different locations. Salvage cuts are taking place. Missaukee Junction is closed due to timber sales. These projects are among other local ongoing projects.

Paul Yauk gave credit to staff, partners, and clubs for ongoing hard work. Paul also mentioned the Opt-Out is in discussion with the legislature. This would make it for the customer to check the box for not wanting the Recreation Passport when renewing their license tabs.

Jessica Holley provided a marketing update. Wait-2-Trail (look, protect, play) – working on overall campaign for this and next season. Ride Right campaign, also working with the Marketing and Outreach Division on social media, press releases, and videos.

Cpl. John Morey informed the group of low enrollment in the law academy but has a great group. Discussed first responder's updates.

Other Remarks

There was a proposal to add a winter meeting, as it was agreed that September through March is too long to go without communicating. Jessica Holley asked that a January meeting be considered. Chairman Dunn and Paul supports this request. The January meeting could be held via conference call, or on a Saturday, as that would allow more public to attend.

Nikki suggested a 2-day retreat be held for all Trails groups.

Ron also mentioned there are grading issues in the Upper Peninsula but are isolated issues.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:27 pm.

Follow-Up Conference Call

The ORVAW agreed to meet on June 27, 2019 via phone conference for further discussion of the Departments Alpha Sign Plan for the Routes of Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Those present on the call were: Thomas Dunn, Curt Brower, Don Helsel, Paul Hittie, and Keith Lynch.

Those absent were: Jim Maike and James Hunt. A quorum was met.

The following DNR staff were present on the call: Ron Yesney, Rob Katona, and Jessica Holley.

Ron Yesney presented the plan and the details of funding. The group had been provided a downloadable map prior to the meeting.

Discussion of plan ensued with concerns of funding, ability of educating the public, implementation, mapping and feasibility.

Ron Yesney and Rob Katona provided a well thought out presentation, answering all concerns of the work group.

The Work Group proposed and passed a resolution to put the Alpha Sign System for the Upper Peninsula of Michigan ORV Routes in place.

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