



# OFF-ROAD VEHICLE ADVISORY WORKGROUP (ORVAW)

## Meeting Minutes

Location: Grayling Township Hall  
2090 Viking Way  
Grayling MI 49738  
Date: May 10, 2023  
1 - 3 p.m.

### **Welcome – Roll Call**

#### PRESENT FOR THE OFF-ROAD VEHICLE ADVISORY WORKGROUP:

- James Maike, Chair
- Keith Lynch, Vice Chair
- James Hunt
- Bob Meyers
- Mike Maves
- Jarrod Biebel (virtual)
- Trevor Hoffer (virtual)

#### PRESENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR) STAFF

Tim Novak, Annalisa Centofanti, Greg Kinser, Paige Perry, Nicole Hunt, Melissa Piirainen, Jessica Holley-Roehrs, Blake Gingrich, Sage Hegdal, Ron Yesney, Peter Costa, Jeff Kakuk, Scott Slavin, Jill Sell, Lee Maynard, Rob Katona, Steve Krzesicki, Josh Pellow, Michael Hearn (LED), Andrew Kenyon (USFS)

Others: Alex Dejong on behalf of State Representative John Roth (District 104), Karen Middendorp, Scott Nestle, David Nuechterlein, Chris Gamache, Dean Marshall, Paul Mulder, Tom Craig, Vicki Carpenter

### **Meeting minutes**

#### ACTION ITEMS

Meeting called to order at 1:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Pledge of Allegiance

Motion was made by Mike Maves to approve the March 16, 2023 minutes, James Hunt, seconded, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Motion was made by Keith Lynch to approve the May 10 agenda and seconded by Mike Maves, with all in favor. Motion carried.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

**Skip Schultz** from Saginaw Michigan communicated the need to change the ORV legislative funding language to allow grading equipment purchases. The ORV program should be molded similar to the snow program where grading equipment purchases and the costs to maintain the equipment is covered through grants. It does not seem fair that ORV clubs are covering costs for equipment and related costs.

Tim Novak, DNR, said there are internal reviews taking place to see if equipment funding can be an option for ORV sponsors. A formal letter will be sent once a determination is made.

**Tom Craig** expressed his opposition against the proposed legislation (HB4459) to ban wheeled vehicles from using multi-use trails during winter months. Mr. Craig asked the ORVAW committee for their stance on this proposed bill.

Mike Maves mentioned this is a "rinse and repeat" from a proposed legislation introduced a few years back (HB4535). Mike believes if approved, this will affect local residents in his area restricting opportunities for hunting, ice fishing, and other recreational activities, along with numerous unenforceable rules.

Keith Lynch mentioned other states regulate motorized winter trail use by temperature, which may be something to consider.

**David Neuchterlein** expressed he is opposed to the HB4459 as written. David said the width of the trails should be considered with mixed use.

## BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

### **SUNSET BILL**

James Maike said he talked to Representative Borton and was told the ORV Sunset Bill has not moved on the House floor and needs to be picked up.

Karen Middendorp added Representative Hill presented the bill yesterday, and she testified in support of the bill. No vote was taken, but she is presuming to have an answer by next week. The bill is straightforward by eliminating the sunseting of Michigan's ORV licensing program.

### **ORV TRAIL IMPROVEMENT FUND LEGISLATION**

Tim Novak, DNR, as mentioned earlier, the legislative language is being reviewed internally to see if the fund dollars can be allocated towards equipment purchases. Tim will report back to the committee once legal reviews and make a determination.

Keith Lynch said there is a larger amount of funding dollars available today as opposed to a few years ago.

### **USFS ROUTE APPROVALS**

Ron Yesney, DNR, said Rob Katona, DNR, has been working with Hiawatha National Forest Services on some connectors in the central Upper Peninsula (U.P.) receiving recent approvals to connect from Dukes to the Lake Linden area. Both the eastern and western Upper Peninsula have good connector systems, and Rob is working on improving the central U.P. region. Rob is analyzing gaps with a vision of creating connections over the whole U.P.

Rob Katona, DNR, mentioned the United States Forest Services (USFS) is currently experiencing staff turnover and is delaying this process, it is moving slower than he hoped but still forward.

### **LAKE LINDEN**

Matt Torreano, DNR, reported on the Laken Linden trail reconstruction project. This project will connect Dollar Bay with Lake Linden, the reconstruction is approximately eight miles long. Due to the size of the project the bid packages were broken into chunks and sent out to six bidders to ensure the most competitive bidding. Five of the six bid packages have been awarded and the sixth is waiting on award. Completion date is set for mid to end of November 2023. This trail will not be open for ORV use until 2024.

## **UPDATES**

### **USFS UPDATE**

Andrew Kenyan, USFS, glad to hear that the Hiawatha connector projects in U.P. are good. Ben Richardson will be the new Hiawatha Forest Program Rec Manager; he is currently transitioning over. Huron Manistee has a tentative program rec program manager coming onboard and will be attending future ORVAW meetings in Andrew's place as Andrew will resume his role in Oscoda. USFS is working on onboarding employees. Forest roads are open and have been brushed prior to oak wilt. Trail improvement grant applications have been submitted.

#### **LED UPDATE**

Corporal Michael Hearn (DNR/LED) provided an ORV Accident Data presentation (attached).

James Maike remarked the education piece is challenging. Michael Hearn said the public does a good job with education they need to change the behavior.

Paige Perry, DNR, added the "Ride Right" snow campaign will be expanded to include ORV's with bullet points on safety.

Bob Meyers suggested to Alex Dejong to lobby legislators for mandatory ORV education similar to the water safety program where after specified dates everyone is required to acquire a safety certificate.

#### **ORV EQUIPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE (FORMER SNOW GROOMER)**

Scott Slavin, DNR, reported for the ORV Equipment Subcommittee and reiterated what Tim Novak said earlier, the group is waiting for the internal review determination. Thomas Dunn will follow-up with any updates.

#### **ORV LEGISLATIVE RIDE JUNE 9 LAKE COUNTY**

Clubs will offer presentations, trail side lunch. This is an excellent opportunity to network with clubs, volunteers, and legislators.

#### **2023 FREE ORV WEEKENDS**

June 10-11 / Aug. 19-20

#### **2023 MEETINGS**

Aug. 9 – will be virtual.

Nov. 2 – TBD

CLOSING/ROUND ROBIN

**James Hunt** inquired about the status of storm damage reports developed and presented to the DNR last year as a result of the Storm Damage Subcommittee. Will these reports be adopted as policy going forward?

Jessica Roehrs responded, saying they are not a policy yet, but the DNR has received good direction from the Storm Damage Subcommittee. There has been discussion as to how the DNR would like to incorporate some of these suggestions into the next ORV handbook revision.

**Bob Meyers** asked to add the HB4459 add to agenda each meeting to keep updated. Bob asked the committee to discuss this today and make a motion on the ORVAW Committees stance.

Mike Maves added the HB4459 is in draft #8. The bill will regulate wheeled vehicles on snow and mixed-use trails. There are so many gray areas. This will affect tourism as there is more ORV use in the winter than snowmobile use.

Bob Meyers does not like the idea of other trails groups removing access for other trail users.

Jarrold Biebel mentioned to consider the condition of trails for the spring season. Funds for repairs is limited.

#### MOTION

ORVAW workgroup is opposed to the HB4459 as written today motion made by Bob Meyers, seconded by Mike Maves, all in favor. Motion carried.

#### **Vote Taken:**

James Hunt - yes

Bob Meyers - yes

James Maiké - yes

Keith Lynch - yes

Mike Maves - yes

Trevor Hoffer - yes

Jarrold Biebel - yes

**Keith Lynch** pointed out the trail connection work in the central U.P. that he has been assisting Rob Katona with over the past 13 years has been delayed at times due to the USFS internal communications resulting from staff turnover. Keith is hoping the permanent summer staff will alleviate some of these challenges. The alpha numerical system is ready to go to make the connection across the middle of the Hiawatha Forest.

## ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Bob Meyers and seconded by James Hunt, with all in favor. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 2:46 p.m.