

**OFF-ROAD VEHICLE ADVISORY WORKGROUP (ORVAW)  
MEETING MINUTES  
September 16, 2020  
MS Teams Meeting / Audio Conference**

**ATTENDEES:**

**ORVAW**

Thomas Dunn  
Paul Hittie  
Curt Brower  
James Hunt  
Jim Maike  
Keith Lynch  
Don Helsel

**Others:**

Karen Middendorp  
Karl Davenport  
Mark Pankner  
John Newman  
Mike McMahan  
Vicki Carpenter

**DNR**

Paul Yauk  
Michael Desnoyer  
Jessica Holley  
Anna Centofanti  
Greg Kinser  
Ron Yesney  
Rob Katona  
Paul Gaberdiel  
Jeff Kakuk  
Jill Sell  
Scott Slavin  
Paige Perry  
Jacklin Blodgett  
Kristen Thrall, USFS

Meeting was called to order at 5:01p.m. by **Committee Chairperson, Thomas Dunn.**

Thomas Dunn noted that at this time, a quorum is not met.

Thomas started by welcoming everyone and hopes they have had a chance to go out on the trails and get firsthand what we are all experiencing. Thomas suggested proceeding with the meeting, working with agenda items that do not require a vote.

**Grant Extensions**

Richard Kennedy (DNR) provided an update on grants. Richard said the 2019 grants were issued for 2-years. Regular maintenance for spring and summer, and insurance will be closed out. Any club that has special maintenance projects will receive a one-year extension for the project. We have sent out all but a couple of the extensions. The 2020 grants in play will expire as outlined, in one year. New 2021 grants will expire on September 30, 2021. Richard said they are working on a critical project request (CPR) to release the remaining funds for the 2020 grants. Richard is hoping the CPR will be approved soon. Keith Lynch asked what happens to funds that are not used, and Richard replied that the unused funding will roll back into the program, which the new formula will get applied to. Paul Yauk (DNR) said the clubs have to spend the money to avoid the dollars being reallocated with the new formula. Richard said grants have been rolled back to one-year to in order to submit paperwork timely and identifying needs to spend dollars.

Committee Chairperson, Thomas Dunn now recognized that there are enough committee members present for a quorum, and motions can start.

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**BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

Thomas Dunn made a motion to approve the May 13, 2020 meeting minutes. Jim Maike and Don Helsel are first and second to approve, will all in favor.

Thomas Dunn requested to add the following items to the September 16 meeting agenda

1. Speed limits on routes
2. Discussion on 3-year contracts
3. ORV Safety Classes

Thomas made a motion to approve the September 16, 2020 agenda with the additions. Don Helsel and Keith Lynch were first and second to approve, with all in favor.

**COVID19**

Paul Yauk mentioned to reach out to staff with your grant questions. Paul said the department has received a lot of compliments and there has been heavy trail usage over the past months. Thomas agrees that the trail use has increased, and parking lots are full. Most are really enjoying the recreation.

**Financial ORV Fund**

Michael Desnoyer (DNR) presented the financial Orv Trail Improvement Fund balance. ORV permit sales have increased over 14% from last year. There is a 20% increase with license sales. Overall, there is a \$750K annual increase. Expenditures are down from last year, most of the reason is COVID related and restrictions that have been enforced. This presentation is included with the minutes.

**Aetna Trail Proposal**

Jeff Kakuk (DNR) discussed a trail proposal that was submitted by Keweenaw ATV Club in Spring of 2020. Jeff said the feelings are divided, with 50/50 pros and cons. The DNR is asking for the ORVAW committee members input. Some of the trails have been closed by landowners who are logging because of the trail users etiquette. In the proposal, there is a large investment for infrastructure (bridge), which will be placed on private land that has a one-year land agreement. This trail does get a lot of traffic, and there are very popular destinations along the route. Ron Yesney (DNR) explained that motorcycles are not allowed on this trail because of the original land agreement with the property owner due to a lawsuit. Jim Maike said it seems like a lot of money for a select few. The land lease should have clause in the terms to hold property owners harmless. Ron Yesney said the land lease was issued in another state with this owner. Curt Brower asked, because of the large expense involved with a bridge, could there be an alternative method to cross the water? Jeff Kakuk replied saying, there is not any other viable options. Jim Maike mentioned that he knows of a wholesaler in Chicago that sells old railroad cars. Newaygo has a railroad car and Oceana county has a couple of them. The flat bed railroad car will hold a lot of weight. Ron Yesney said this method may be possible but will have to be stamped by an engineer. Maybe a road commission can allow this option? Don Helsel asked if this can be a portable bridge? Jeff Kakuk said yes, that can be possible. Keith Lynch knows of a temporary structure that is used for military bridges. Thomas Dunn asked the committee to make a motion. Jim Maike and James Hunt motioned to

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not approve, with all in favor. **The Off-Road Vehicle Workgroup does not recommend a temporary route.** If a long-term land lease is put in place, we will revisit this discussion.

**MAGG (Motorized Automated Grants Given)**

Jessica Holley (DNR) updated the group, stating all development is on hold due to the spending freeze (COVID related). When the program is started back up, there may be some delays due to scheduling. Very soon the 2021 budget will be approved and released, and we will see where we are at.

**ORV Handbook**

Don Helsel reported the status for the 2020 ORV Handbooks and asked Paul Yauk to be his conduit to LED. The 2020 handbooks are in the warehouse, Don has received a box and is handing them out. However, the 2018 handbook is still online. Paul can you convey this message to LED. Next concern is how will the handbooks be distributed? The 2020 ORV Handbooks are not showing up with retailers order systems.

**Trails Week**

Paul Yauk said next week you will be hearing a lot about the virtual trails week, a lot with the non-motorized side. DNR Marketing and Outreach will be sending articles out. This is a great time of the year to get out and see the beauty of our State while using the trails. Trails have become a huge economic resource in Michigan. Don Helsel asked if the department can do an economic study on motorized usage in the state.

**Speed Limits**

Don Helsel brought up that trail traffic is very heavy, and a lot of inexperienced riders are out there that have not been educated, and with no safety concerns. Trail riders are guessing what the safe speed limits are. Can speed limits be posted. Thomas Dunn wants to create a committee with 3 ORVAW board members and DNR staff to talk about concerns with education and safety. Volunteers from ORVAW include:

1. Keith Lynch
2. Don Helsel
3. Jim Maike

Paul Yauk will work on getting LED to commit and a volunteer from trails. Scott Slavin (DNR) offered to volunteer. Thomas appointed Don Helsel as chairperson. Ron Yesney, also volunteered, and will be a resource for Scott.

**ORV Safety Classes**

Thomas Dunn asked where we are at with the in-person Safety Classes. There is no word yet for in person classes. Jim Maike feels hands on is the best route for this education.

**3-year Contracts - Maintenance**

Don Helsel said the trails are averaging 100 vehicles a day. Rumble strips are back. Trails need more frequent maintenance. Can we do this with a local contractor for 3-years, how will this paperwork be filled out to try this as a test scenario? Paul Yauk asked Don to please present a scope and forward to

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both Richard and Paul. We will call this Periodic Grading Schedule. Don will submit a 2-3 paragraph proposal (copy the board and Lewis Schuler). Michigan Tech soils look into how we can stabilize this. Curt Brower mentioned his Silver Lake group calls this safety grooming. James Hunt said for equipment choices, propose a vibrating compactor. Depends what engineering recommends.

**Committee Updates**

Don Helsel asked if trails staffing will be increasing in headcount? Jackie Blodgett (DNR) replied saying we are in a hiring freeze and positions need to plan 2 years ahead (any new positions would have had to be planned 2 years prior). Paul has already provided needs for 2022. Don, please share your specific thoughts or ideas with Paul.

**Kristen Thrall, USFS**

The staff is transitioning soon to visitors with scheduling appointments as USFS will be working out of the office. Congress approved a chunk of money for deferred maintenance. \$25M per year, first round of projects just went in. Four trail proposals are at the top of the list for FY 2021. Kristin will pass along information once she knows more. Key here is deferred maintenance, no new projects. Kristin said they are seeing a lot of illegal trail use from riders destructing trails, which turn into restoration projects. Kristin and Paul Yauk said they want to work together to leverage these dollars.

**Meeting Dates**

Thomas requested to hold 2021 meetings before MTAC meetings. Anna Centofanti will put together a proposed schedule and send out to the committee members.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mike McMahan comments or concerns have been addressed in this meeting.

Vicki Carpenter expressed her concerns with the lack of response from her trail specialists. Her specialist is Amy Swainston, which Amy has been out on medical leave for some time and will remain out for a while. Scott Slavin offered his assistance, and Greg Kinser reported that he is filling in for Amy in her absence.

Chairperson, Thomas Dunn, adjourned Meeting at 7:01 p.m. Curt Brower and Keith Lynch were first and second to approve, with all in favor.