



Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup

Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting

Date: June 23, 2022

Roll call

Present for the Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup
(committee):

- Don Britton, chair
- Joe Bartlett
- Barry Bethke
- Keith Churill
- Joe Kuchnicki
- Scott LaCombe
- Karen Middendorp

Present for the Department of Natural Resources
(department) Staff

- PJ Costa
- Anna Centofanti
- Cpl. Mike Hearn
- Jessica Holley-Roehrs
- Rob Katona
- Greg Kinser
- Steve Krzesicki
- Tim Novak
- Pat Olson
- Jill Sell
- Scott Slavin
- Matt Torreano
- Nikki VanBloem
- Monica Weis
- Ron Yesney

Chair Don Britton called the meeting to order at 10:25

Karen Middendorp made a motion to approve the March 3rd Meeting Minutes as submitted; Barry Bethke seconded. Motion carried.

Karen Middendorp made a motion to approve the June 23rd Agenda with additions; Barry Bethke seconded. Motion carried.

Karen Middendorp made a motion to allow the Chair to take the agenda items out of order; Joe Kuchnicki seconded. Motion carried.

Meeting minutes

Public Comment:

None

Business Items for Discussion:

State Trails Coordinator Introduction – Tim Novak:

Tim has 15 years in recreation field with a bachelor's and master's in Recreation and Parks Administration from Central University of Michigan

Verizon Fleet Management – Jessica Holley-Roehrs:

Everyone should be receiving a letter today from Jacklin Blodgett stating the fleet management program has been approved for all groomers and implemented in the next few months with an outline of what is to come

Direct questions to Jessica

Funding information from Michael Desnoyer and the funding report

Miners Castle Trail – Ron Yesney:

Alger County, Keith Churill's area

Five years ago, the county road commission wanted us off their road, about an eighth of a mile

The trail is a destination trail

The Munising CVB temporarily paid the road commission for the last six to eight years to keep the trail open, however the road commission is set to pave the road in 2024

Trail is 12.45 miles long; the .8 miles is on H 58 which is paved road

We would need to build about a mile of new trail with a 70-foot bridge

Project estimate \$1.026m - \$85k engineering, \$650k bridge, \$40 culvert, \$80k new trail construction, and \$171k for 20% contingency

Where is the funding coming from? Is there alternate funding than using snowmobile funds?

Request a grant from Pure Michigan

Trust Fund grant, however, we would be in a time crunch as we missed this cycle

We could be eligible for funding in the next cycle, however the trail would be closed for a few years

Money saving option from a bridge a pre-stressed three-sided structure

If this trail is closed, the National Park Service would make the determination to allow snowmobiling or not

It would not be groomed, and the signs would be taken down

H58 is a plowed county road, which is heavily used

Not a lot of ROW, guardrails on both sides, not enough room for a trail

Could extend the shoulder? Not enough room to do so.

We had a planned re-route, but the intended route is within a conservation easement

Cannot build a structure (bridge) within an easement

Public comment would like to have the trail off the blacktop

Steep area to install a bridge, permitting, engineering, and cross culverts involved in the project

The National Park Service discussing snowmobilers to purchase a park pass to ride

Next steps:

Project vetting – discussing the complexities and cost with SAW

We would like to have feedback from the SAW

Look at the dollar amounts of other routes, discuss the importance of other areas which may be of higher importance, especially areas that are not destination only, how to justify using 1/10th of our budget for this small section of trail

Negotiation with landowners

Bidding an engineering project

Design

Bid and award construction contract

Karen Middendorp made a motion for the SAW to discuss the Miners Castle Trail/H58 Re-route at a special meeting; Barry Bethke seconded. Motion carried.

Karen will set up a Zoom meeting in about a month

Lake Linden Funding:

The SAW was asked to forgo \$1.15m in equipment funding and put into funding the Lake Linden project.

The funding that was taken out should come back into the program and into the 2023 budget

Ask for a supplemental?

Even if we ordered the equipment now, it is up to 12 months out to receive

Jackie said a supplemental could be requested

However, right now, legislature is working on the 2023 budget and not addressing any PRD supplementals

The 2023 budget year starts October this year

If we haven't asked for it in the budget, we'd need to request an adjustment to be added for this fall's approval

Lake Linden is not wrapped up yet, staff are working on the project

Won't know funding until after the project is bid out

Money is identified to go to the Lake Linden project, unsure how much the project will cost at this point

Not sure if we would have an excess or need more funding to complete the project

Jackie will report back

On the possibility of a supplement

Or if the funding has been added back into the 2023 budget

If not, pursue an adjustment request

We need the funding because some of our equipment is so old, we can't purchase any more parts and repairs are costly

To be an item on the September SAW agenda

Stumps and Logging:

Kriss Bennet was going to bring this issue up with FRD

Jackie and Tim have a meeting with FRD to discuss in July

Jackie will bring Tim up to date

To be an item on the September SAW agenda

Spring asked if there are any specific areas occurring on USFS lands, please let her know

Joe Bartlett said most of the issues are on state land

Updates:

Michigan Tech Groomer Study – Russ Alger:

Going through the data and noticing specific trends

Most the ESR data is in the system

In a few months we should have enough information to get opinions and have discussions on the failures/issues

Preliminary data on the condition of the machines, maintenance, etc.

Most machines are in good to fair condition

Machines with higher hours equal worse condition

Groomers – 9 new, 12 excellent, 62 good, 45 fair, and 24 poor

Having useful data points to get into the breakout specifics, i.e., hours groomed, total repairs for each manufacturer, total costs per hours of groomed, miles per repair, etc.

Most repairs/costs - Track/wheel and drivetrains

Will be finishing the project soon and will put into a useable format to make some recommendations

How many are wheeled vs. tracked – don't have that data, yet

This is good data for past trends the ESRs are tracking repairs; future records will be tracked for each individual machine through the fleet management system

Any sources for information on tracks vs high-performance snow tires and when one would be better than the other? Yes, we can conduct mobility testing. Document what additives to put into the tires. Tires are cheaper for the program.

MISORVA Miracle Million – Karen Middendorp:

We put together a board of seven to roll this out

78 groups responded, 76 were accepted and awarded grants

Grants are going out

Trenary has been making purchases and will be sending in their receipts for reimbursement

Hopefully, we will get another round for million dollars

Free Snowmobile Weekend – Karen Middendorp:

Passed the legislature

ISA announced 'Take a Friend Snowmobiling' week is February 11th through the 20th

Karen Middendorp made a motion to hold the Michigan Free Snowmobile Weekend on February 11th and 12th; Joe Bartlett seconded. Motion carried.

Equipment Subcommittee – Don Britton:

Purchase of Used Equipment

Possibly allowing the DNR to fund used equipment

In the past year we found equipment in very good condition, a few with warranty

We found a newer used piece of equipment in Wisconsin that was in great shape, we could use our dollars to go farther for program equipment

With the low hours and low snow in the Lower Peninsula we could get good used/reconditioned equipment

Not as expensive a brand-new, good useable machines

Great ideas. Does it require a change in statute? If so, Karen is willing to work with the snowmobile community and legislatures.

Lease-to-own, yes with Hiawatha Trails which worked out really well, a big savings to the program

Lease payments applied toward purchase of the machine

KM made a motion to explore the possibilities of purchasing used equipment, and if needed, change the statute to do so; Barry Bethke seconded. Motion carried.

Karen asked the Equipment Subcommittee to send the meeting notes to the SAW committee, especially if there are motions or resolutions discussed

Yes, they will be shared with SAW

This past meeting discussed information that is not yet publicly available

It was agreed the SAW understands sensitive information might be in the notes and would not discuss or release information such as that

Fuel adjustment costs discussion

Lower Peninsula 2 cents per mile and Upper Peninsula 8 cent per mile adjustment

Decided to go with the UP adjustment only if not, we'd have to go with a 2 cent per mile statewide

Didn't want to penalize the UP as the LP had lower snow amounts

Maybe have DEF on its own line, especially for the newer equipment

Permanent Easements – Matt Torreano:

Lyme continue to purchase the rest of their holdings in the UP, approximately 55 miles of trail

There is interest in their property in the east UP and we are seeking to obtain easements on about nine miles of trails

The DNR will bring this to the NRC for a public notice for approval

Once approved, we will start on that section first, then move to the other easements on the rest of the Lyme ownership

Permanent easements on the Miners River Bridge

Working with Hancock, they have all the information, and we are waiting to hear from them

We are working on some easements in Gaylord

Title work is completed, we are confident of ownerships

We will decide from which properties we need easements

Lake Linden trail reconstruction, asking for landowners to give us easements

There will be a few small expenditures to purchase some easements

Big Bay

The club did the legwork on the re-route of the trail, due to safety concerns

Spoke with landowners to keep the trail on the west side of the road

Closed an acquisition with the help of the Snow Country Trails Conservancy using the permanent easement funding, SCTC will pass along the easement to the DNR

This is the reason the SCTC was created, to move quicker than the DNR to purchase easements

New trail development and we are connecting the permanent easement pieces together and eliminated two crossings

Law Enforcement Update – Cpl. Michael Hearn:

March 2021 Hiring Process

Ten certified police officers went through a mini-academy, nine of which are in the field
20 went through an academy in Kirtland Community College, 19 are now in the field

March 2022 Hiring Process

We are holding an additional academy this year for 20 new officers

17 made it through the conditional offer and will attend our academy in July

Three other certified law enforcement officers will attend an accelerated academy

Brevort Fatality

Snowmobile fatality in Brevort, Thursday February 24th at 1:40 pm

Crash occurred on Thursday Feb 24, 2020

8 degrees. Light Snow. Considerable snow dust on trails.

2 snowmobiles. Victim 59yo Male from St. Clair Co. GF is on second sled. Both have 4 years of riding experience.

1:40P traveling SB on Trail #2. Which is also a county road (schoolhouse road). Road is being plowed for logging activity. Loggers have signs posting the activity in both directions warning riders.

GF advising, they were going approximately 40mph. 2 miles prior to crash a person in a red truck was waving at them, but they did not stop.

Upon approach of a slight corner, logging truck rounded the corner going 10mph. Driver saw the snowmobile and locked up the brakes – skidding approximately 20'. Lead snowmobile never slowed or hit the brakes. Colliding with the semi near the DS wheel area.

Victim was immediately unresponsive. Logger called 911 – GF tried starting OCPR.

MSP arrived on scene within 10 mins starting CPR and hooking up an AED.

EMS arrival 5 mins after MSP. Pronounced the victim as deceased.

Investigation

ME notified and called to scene.

Interviews conducted. Mackinaw County SD on scene to assist

MSP accident investigator and motor carrier officer called to scene

Logging truck was seized, and driver taken to St. Ignace for a blood draw.

Victim sent to Grand Rapids for autopsy.

No drugs or alcohol in either party.

March 8th info sent to prosecutor. No charges were being issued.

Victim determined to be at fault due to excessive speed and not being able to stop when the truck rounded the corner.

Could have the same ramifications if a hound's man was driving down the roadway

Some logging activities can only be performed during the winter

Joe Bartlett asked if we could discuss this to avoid this from happening again on a logging operation

Add strobe lights to logging trucks, widen the logging roads

No update on the sound/4-stroke issue and testing

Cans marketed as being able to pass our test RPM level

USFS Update – Spring Rosales:

Working on our 10-year Trail Stewardship program to improve the trail system and better partner with other trail partners

Held meetings across the UP to discuss with different groups

What is different about this from other initiatives

We want to ensure continuity we have funding from congress in the last few years to be a better partner to our partners

Hiring a partnership coordinator and several trails' positions in the

Ottawa

Update on Snowmobile Trail Bridge Replacements

Per the Ottawa- expecting NEPA decision by early 2023. Specialists surveying area now. Trying for FY24/25 funding cycles

DNR Staff Updates - Written:

Vandalism on the Manistee River Bridge is superficial damage

The Mesick Fire Department put out the fire; the damaged railroad ties will be replaced when the repair work is completed

The bridge is on the list for repair and decking within the next year or two

No update on the Maple City issue

L'Anse through Chassell Trail

We are still pursuing opening

Major infrastructure with bridge crossings that need to be addressed

Matt will have Ron Yesney discuss with Joe Bartlett

Karl Davenport – Pinney River Bridge status

Karl working on getting a survey of the area

Keep the Pinney River Bridge issue as an agenda item

2022 Meetings - Informational:

Chair Britton would like to hold these meetings in-person

Anna to pursue the option

September 15th

December 1st

Closing Comments - SAW:

Chair Britton welcome to Tim, thank you to everyone for all their work, and glad that we are starting the GPS for tracking the equipment will get good information

Karen Middendorp made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Joe Kuchnicki seconded. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 1:24 pm

DRAFT