

**SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY WORKGROUP**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**February 21, 2020**  
**1:00 pm – 3:00 pm**  
**Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center (RAM)**

**ATTENDEES**

**SAW**

Joe Kuchnicki  
Don Britton  
James Duke  
Scott LaCombe  
Barry Bethke  
Joe Bartlett (absent)  
Karen Middendorp (absent)

**DNR**

Ron Olson  
Jacklin Blodgett  
Paul Yauk  
Jessica Holley  
Nikki Van Bloem  
Annalisa Centofanti  
Paige Perry  
Nicole Toman  
Michelle Coss

Meeting called to order by James Duke at 1:02 p.m.

**BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

James Duke motioned to recommend a chair in Lee Murray's retirement. Joe Kuchnicki nominated James Duke, and Don Britton seconded the nomination. The committee took a vote, and a unanimous decision was made to appoint James Duke as Chair.

A motion was made to approve the December 5, 2020 draft minutes as is. The meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

Motion was made to approve the February 21, 2020 draft meeting agenda.

Don Britton requested to take agenda items out of order by correcting the dates of the 2020 meetings, which were listed incorrectly on the agenda. Correct dates should be listed as June 25, October 15, and December 3, of 2020.

Members also requested to include discussion on enclosures to house groomers under tracks and tires (III/b), and ad equipment cost increases / higher after estimated under equipment action plan (d). Motioned to approve agenda, all in favor.

**ACTION ITEMS**

***ADVISORY WORKGROUP VACANCIES***

Paul Yauk confirmed that Joe Kuchnicki is now a member at large, and there were three vacancies on the SAW board that now have new appointees, which are.

1. Karen Middendorp / MISORVA Region 3
2. Scott LaCombe / Grant Sponsor
3. Joe Bartlett / MISORVA Region 2

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*TRACKS & TIRES FINAL RECOMMENDATION*

Don Britton gave his final recommendation for the Tracks and Tires topic. Remove tracks, or store machines up on blocks or something. Place wood under tracks and cover them up. Do not let the tracks sit on concrete or dirt. Release the tension and cover.

*ENCLOSURES*

Karl Davenport reported on hard enclosures to house groomers will run anywhere from \$20-\$25K. The carport type of enclosure with sides will be approximately \$3-\$4K. The material is a soft clear span. Other members were interested as to the lifespan for the soft material and Karl did not know but said he can check into it.

*TRESPASSING*

Trespass involving private landowners. James Duke has received numerous email complaints. Often, there is no indication when you leave state land and enter private land. Back country riding is developing so fast, that we cannot keep up with signage. Landowners have taken away over 200 miles of trails from state land use. Rob Katona has ideas and procedures he is working on. Paul Yauk said a press release to promote back country is being held off, because of this issue. It is hard to define the line between state and private land in some areas. The DNR and local clubs should spend time this summer to correct this. James Duke said this is not an issue just in MI but national. The groups are also receiving complaints from loggers where snowmobilers are on their two tracks. Paul Yauk suggested a partnership with forestry to help prevent this. However, there are public foresters we do not have communications with. Reinforce the Ride Right campaign and know where you ride, stay on the trail. Don Britton said the loggers are giving up in some areas, the battle is too much with the snowmobilers. He says there is no real solution, just cooperation between the groups. Paul said DNR will work on this. Joe Kuchnicki mentioned most sleds have GPS on them, or carry it with them, and the people knowingly trespass. This needs to be recognized and enforced.

*EQUIPMENT ACTION PLAN*

Groomer price quotes from August & September have increased 10%. The clubs need to reconsider numbers. Who can make recommendations to purchase with the increased prices?

Paul Yauk said equipment grants have been sent out and executed copies have been returned. Don Britton said go ahead with purchases if you have in-stock equipment, otherwise wait until next year. A couple drags have already been purchased. Karl Davenport said because of the increased difference in original price quotes, the equipment is not being ordered. Paul Yauk said he will get with Richard Kennedy and work this out. Karl Davenport mentioned that Richard Kennedy told him the grant dollar amount is what the clubs need to work with.

Jim Mikolaizik, from public audience, suggested to de-contract a tractor, taking items off the tractor, to get back to original quote dollars. He said their club did this.

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*FINANCIALS*

Paul Yauk reported on financials, starting with the trail permits, YTD January \$5.4M. Don Britton asked if the report reflect MISORVA dollars, Jessica Holley said no. Report did show a separate amount of \$50K to MISORVA. Paul said the UP has good snow and this should increase permit sales.

Paul Yauk also noted that he has been receiving some emails that trail conditions have been good. Our clubs and staff are doing a great job out there.

Joe Kuchnicki said the DNR does a good job explaining to the public what conditions are affected when negative emails are received.

*PINNEY BRIDGE SIGNAGE*

Karl Davenport said it is legal to be ride on the bridge and a neighboring landowner is not happy with the snowmobilers accessing it. The landowner scrapes the side of the road to dismay snowmobilers. All communications from the clubs are being ran through the road commission. Snowmobilers are being confronted by the landowner with hostility. Joe Kuchnicki said it should be a local law enforcement issue. Barry Bethke said the landowner has been causing conflict for 20 years, but recently has escalated. The landowner takes dirt from the road and places it on the snowbanks. Karl Davenport said since mid-70's, this has been a known trail. The landowner is stealing the signs and admitted to it in front of law enforcement officer, with no repercussions. Karl Davenport said to re-route will require a ton of signatures and is not a viable option with the creek. The Road Commission had a meeting this past Tuesday and registered letters will be going out to all involved. The letter states there is a public meeting to attend and address this ongoing issue. Karl Davenport believes there will never be a compromise with the landowner. Ron Olson said if we want to engage our legal rights, we can have the attorney general get involved. Rerouting the trail hinders with our legal rights. Legislatures have expressed their concern on this as well. Ron Olson said we will step up the pace. Nicole Toman said next step should be to have a meeting with local Lieutenant in the area and see what actions can be taken. Ron Olson said we have to document our administrative attempts first and can follow up with legal actions. Nicole Toman said internal conversations will be first. Nikki Van Bloem commented that it sounds like there is animosity between tempers, and how is that being managed. Karl Davenport said it is escalating and unfortunate for people that are not local to area. This situation is affecting East Jordan and this year has been the worst. Karl Davenport does relay to the clubs, volunteers, and riders to stay professional when these confrontations take place. James Duke asked Karl Davenport to stay on it.

*CARMUSE UPDATE*

Carmuse trail bypass is pending on approval. There is conflict with the approvals, the County has been denied and MDOT has been approved. To the south, a couple other bridge projects are in the works.

**UPDATES**

*James Duke*

The SAW committee has been active on trying to stay ahead of the large snow falls. There remains confusion with ORV trail usage, according to the most recent Public ACT 288 (PA288). The rumors are that ORV users can use designated snow trails year-round. Safety is a real concern. Nicole Toman

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commented that PA288 took into consideration the inventory of forest roads, and designated which roads will be open to ORV's. There should be a published map that will show areas where forest roads have been opened to ORV use. Nicole Toman will assist with specific areas, if this helps. Seasonal roads are different from trails. The best indicator is to look at maps for closures. The online web map allows for comments, where it will be reviewed and considered by internal DNR staff. The conflicts that exist with trails on state grade will need a directors order to resolve. No forest roads have been closed seasonally. Thomas Dunn suggested a clarification of county road or shared trail? There are no rules exist that ORV's has seasonal restrictions.

*Don Britton*

Completion of a reroute last week.

*Barry Bethke*

Suggested to clarify route and trails. Can there be a plan to decipher these to educate the public.

**DNR UPDATES**

*Paul Yauk*

Paul Yauk handed out copies of the Michigan magazine. This publication highlights how important our winter season impacts the state. The theme focuses around winter activities.

*Ron Olson*

Ron Olson talked about recreation passports. The Legislature is still working on opt-out, and no foreseen determination at this time.

James Duke said the 50th anniversary for the Haywire Grade is this year, please take advantage of this. The Haywire Grade was the first designated rail trail in Michigan. Four events will be happening in 2020 surrounding this trail.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION (LED) UPDATES**

Snow fatalities for current season are approximately 10. James Duke stated "police your own" has been working well. Paul Maulder (Public) asked for an update on the five-sled accident last week in WLP. LED did not have any information on this incident, since there were no fatalities. Barry Bethke commented that it was a speed issue. Paul Maulder said this is something that can happen with any trail use.

Ron Olson commented about the DNR's agreement with MISORVA for the sale of permits, launched a few months back. The DNR's concerns are about misguided commentary posted on MISORVA's public web page. Ron Olson worked with Jim Kelts and Karen Middendorp to communicate future statements prior to posting information. Ron Olson also asked to please work with DNR for solutions before publicizing.

The Groomer Workshop will be held March 5-7, 2020 in Sault St. Marie. DNR will pay the registration fee for current appointed SAW members that would like to attend. Paul Yauk is very excited about the information and education shared at the Groomer Workshop.

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2020 meeting locations are not determined and the DNR will recommend some locations for the upcoming meetings

1. June 25
2. Oct 15
3. Dec 3

**PUBLIC**

Curt Brower asked questions about grooming equipment and the use of machinery in the Silver Lake area. He would like to connect with clubs to gather information about the framework of the snow groomers. He is wondering if there is a way to utilize the old equipment. Don Britton would like to meet and discuss further.

Keith Lynch (to Karl Davenport) talk to Keith Churill about enclosures, also they have issue with steel posts cemented in right-of-way and is not being addressed by LED. They say road commission needs to get involved.

*Paul Maulder – Public Comment*

1. Timber and logging have become a real concern. Houghton Lake area has no signage restricting use of seasonal roads for logging. Summer forestry signed off on a road which received repair, and now the road is waterlogged and cannot be accessed. FRD wants the club sponsor to fix it, which they cannot. One year later nothing has been addressed. Communication between FRD and PRD is not happening. How can this be remedied? Paul Maulder is disappointed that a lot of grief has happened.
2. Trespass and speed are common issued, and nothing is being done to challenge to the riders. In Leota, people ride the 50" trail to ride "old style" (slow) to avoid the speeders. Oakland County Parks may be an example of how to address this challenge.
3. Signs and Pinney Bridge. There has been fighting over signs since 1992. A lot of money has been spent over this issue. The signage does not meet specifications with CRAM. No one will back-up the legal aspect, and landowners can remove signs that are not within the specifications.

*Karl Davenport*

Thank you, Jessica Holley, for her work on Motorized Automated Grants Given (MAGG). Paperwork is simply not working, and he is happy a solution is being implemented. The paper submittals are not being processed fast enough.

*Scott Lacombe*

Reiterates Karl's comments, process needs improvements for timeliness. Nikki Van Bloem encourages everyone to call in for MAGG training to make the transition a smooth one.

Joe Kuchnicki reminded everyone they need a solution for trail groomer enclosures, tracks, and tires.

Meeting adjourned 3:00 p.m. by James Duke.

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**Updates for Trails Advisory Groups meeting, Feb 21-22, 2020**

**North Central LP (Paige Perry)**

**MULTI-PROGRAM PROJECTS**

- Alpena to Hillman Phase 1 to Herron with 2 bridges- newest update involves a new rule for wetlands mitigation. Currently working with EGLE and MDOT to determine status.
- Little Black River Bridge on the NCST temporary 8' wide bridge in place to avoid winter reroute onto ~2 miles of city streets. Design is engineered and bids came in significantly over cost estimates. Still seeking funding to construct new.
- Gaylord South Trail outcry over the control structures installed to separate trail from RR seems to have subdued. Gaylord Area Snowmobile Club, Otsego County, City of Gaylord Chamber, Lake State Railway and DNR (specifically club contact Scott Thompson) have done a great job coordinating a consistent message to the public in terms of transparent information on the resurfacing project and the snowmobile public.
- Rogers City Spur Proposal
  - 'Bypass' Trail proposal was approved contingent on MDOT and PIRC permissions. MDOT permissions received. PIRC denied. Many thanks to Dave Campo of PIST and Matt Treinen DNR Contact! There is good momentum now to continue to pursue a hybrid multi-use proposal using some Carmeuse (that would trade for DNR owned corridor) and some MDOT.
  - Swan River Bridge on Rogers City Spur is slated for engineering in 20. Construct in 21-22.
- MDOT initiated meeting to discuss realignment of NWST along US 31 due to upcoming road project

**NAW**

- Event Permits: Great Lks Relay, Fundraiser in the Jordan Valley
- Trail Proposals: 3 for NCT keep stalling... Still trying to keep moving (will get finalized before spring!)
- Pathway 'you-are-here' maps: Working to finalize new template for next batch of pathway signs
- Norway Ridge EGLE Permit for multi-site maintenance is nearing final approval (many thanks to Local DNR Contact Blake Gingrich at PH Hoeft SP)
- Project Bridges on
  - NCT/IBT- Carp River Bridge - engineering cost estimates and structural options are being reviewed currently with NCTA, consultant
  - HCP - Black River Bridge - Engineering services are requested (1:3) for brand new build (this bridge was removed 3 years ago due to structural instability)
  - HCP - Pigeon River Bridge - Engineering services are requested (2:3) for evaluation, likely removal of existing and rebuild (this bridge was repaired 7 years ago and is twisting again due to poor design)
  - Pickerel Lake Pathway - Pickerel River Bridge - Engineering services are requested (3:3) for design only (hoping that staff and volunteers can remove current footbridge and replace in kind)

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**ETS**

- Trail Proposals: Inspiration Point EQ Pathway and Horse Camp proposal near Cheboygan pending

**SAW**

- JVTC Pinney Bridge Rd: Letter sent to JKVTC to explain Right of Way questions brought up at last SAW meeting
- Event Permits: Vintage Snowmobile out of Indian River FOE and Petoskey Snowmobile Club
- Incident Reports: Derailment of train in Otsego Co, Single snowmobile impact to posts, Snowmobile stuck in RR Switch

**ORVAW**

- Event Permits: Six Days of Michigan, Rites Of Spring -working with Elissa Buck to establish ROS into a multi-year event permitting pilot
- Grading Contracts for next summer – working to secure agreements/ contracts to work in 2 additional maintenance grades on dual use Routes that have been historically graded only once in late fall

**Northeastern LP (Amy Swainston)**

**NAW**

- Greg Kinser attended last Grayling Trail Committee Group (interest in Pure Mi Trail designation for water trail, crack repair of existing non-motorized trail); as well as meeting with Road Commission and Township supervisors for local community fundraising for Iron Belle trail progress within the County
- Assisted City of Clare by providing a letter of commitment from RTP funds for the MDNR match of \$300,000 to complete a 2.5-mile gap in the Pere Marquette trail which is a match to a TAP grant
- NEMCOG – Sunrise Committee is wrapping up preliminary plans for extending a bicycle / pedestrian path from Alpena to Oscoda.
- Continuous work by NEMCOG in wrapping up preliminary plans for Roscommon, Ogemaw. Continued detailed preliminary plans and designs for Iosco, Crawford.
- Recently Trails have been getting some snow resulting in improved groomed ski trails and reducing the hard packed – icy conditions. (Ogemaw, Tisdale, Mason Tract)

**SAW**

- Trail inspection of the Thumb area trails was done in early Feb. and substantial signage was done to all the trails to be open for the February snow systems. Efforts are continuing to update the maps to align with current land rights and Trail proposal information.
- Kalkaska county snowmobile – groomer incident/accident; speed was noted as the contributing factor in the initial report.

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- (Continue to have numerous inquiries at Customer Service Center / Law Enforcement contacts related to wheeled vehicle use on groomed snowmobile trails. Many of which were inventoried as forest road, county seasonal road or are part of the designated ORV route system)

**ETS:**

- Proposed EMR CCAA adjustments to FRD for areas where Shore to Shore trail encroached into the protection habitat to lessen the reporting / impacts the threatened species near Grayling.

**ORV:**

- A wheeled motorized activity form (PR0358) was created to facilitate notification of the activity by the organizer to the Department and to allow for staff review of the activity to determine whether the event permit criteria has been met. This form establishes a consistent mechanism for organizers to provide basic activity information for evaluation. Staff were provided the form in Feb. and will be posted on the DNR Website soon.
- Concern expressed by clubs seeking request for reimbursements (RFR) to reduce backlog of requests and follow thru with reimbursement requests. This may be resolved with MAGG but there is a need to define and standardize ways to keep sponsors in the loop of who's has / has not approved the RFR. I.E.:If it has been received by Trail Specialist; if it has been checked; approved for payment to Lansing. Locally I have responded to RFR confirming receipt and included the club when approved – processed on to Lansing.
- (Continue to have numerous inquiries at Customer Service Center / Law Enforcement contacts related to wheeled vehicle use on groomed snowmobile trails. Many of which were inventoried as forest road, county seasonal road or are part of the designated ORV route system)
- Proposed EMR CCAA adjustments to FRD for areas where ORV trails encroached into the protection habitat to lessen the reporting / impacts the threatened species. (Leota, Old State House)
- ORV Jonesville Bride – have consultant hired to look at bridge and evaluate current condition and improvements for connectivity.

**MTAC:**

Continue to have numerous inquiries at Customer Service Center / Law Enforcement contacts related to wheeled vehicle use on groomed snowmobile trails that are dual designated.

**Northwestern LP (Scott Slavin)**

Current priority project list funded or partially funded for 2020

**Non-Motorized Projects:**

1. East Branch of the Hersey River culvert replacement
  - a. Location: White Pine Trail, Ashton MI East Branch Hersey River
  - b. Status: Engineering and design complete, project is bid out.
  - c. Cost: 1.1 million



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- d. Funding: “funded” Project was part of the 11-mile paving project from Reed City to Leroy. The remaining funding for the paving project will be used for culvert replacement.
  
- 2. Rogers Farm Pond culvert replacement
  - a. Location: White Pine Trail, Stanwood
  - b. Status: Engineering and design complete, project is bid out
  - c. Cost: \$382000
  - d. Funding: “funded” using a trust fund grant and part of a 3 million MEDC grant.
  
- 3. Cold Creek culvert replacement
  - a. Location: White Pine Trail, South of Big Rapids
  - b. Status: Engineering and design is underway
  - c. Cost: Unknown
  - d. Funding: “funded” using MEDC grant for 3 million.
  
- 4. Byers Creek culvert replacement
  - a. Location White Pine Trail, south of Big Rapids
  - b. Status: Engineering and design is underway
  - c. Cost: Unknown
  - d. Funding: “funded” using MEDC grant for 3 million.
  
- 5. Tustin culvert replacement
  - a. Location: White Pine Trail, Tustin
  - b. Status: Engineering and design underway
  - c. Cost: \$ 500,000
  - d. Funding: “funded” funding has been provided form the snowmobile supplemental fund.
  
- 6. Reed City Covered Bridge replacement
  - a. Location: White Pine Trail, Reed City
  - b. Status: Bridge inspection report and conceptual design is complete.
  - c. Cost: 1.2 million
  - d. Funding: “not funded” Bridge inspection/conceptual design was funded. Additional funding for replacement has been pursued with TAP grant and NRTF grant, both unsuccessful.

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7. 29-mile paving project Big Rapids to Sand Lake
  - a. Location: White Pine Trail, Big Rapids to Sand Lake
  - b. Status: Culvert replacement is underway, RFP's need to be submitted for engineering and design.
  - c. Cost: Estimated cost 8-9 million
  - d. Funding: "not fully funded" 3 million has been acquired by a MEDC grant and is being utilized to repair several culverts that need to be repaired prior to paving. The remaining balance of MEDC grant will be used for engineering and design.
  
8. Lewis Bridge Abutment project
  - a. Location: Betsie Valley Trail, Elberta
  - b. Status: Engineering and design is complete, Natural Rivers Permit is out for review
  - c. Cost: \$79,000
  - d. Funding: "funded" RTP funding and friends group matching grant has been utilized to fund the project.
  
9. Re-Surfacing project Crystal Lake Segment
  - a. Location: Betsie Valley Trail, Beulah
  - b. Status: Engineering and design is complete
  - c. Cost: \$300,000
  - d. Funding: "partially funded" Friends group received a NRTF grant for \$150k, RTP grant for \$150,000 has been submitted.
  
10. Betsie Valley Trail Master Planning design
  - a. Location: Betsie Valley Trail, Frankfort to Copemish
  - b. Status: Conceptual design being completed by Johnson and Hill
  - c. Cost: \$40,000
  - d. Funding: "funded" Friends of the BVT funded this project.
  
11. Sign Project Pere Marquette Trail
  - a. Location: Baldwin to Clare
  - b. Status: A project request needs to be submitted
  - c. Cost: \$100,000

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- d. Funding: “funded” RTP funding has been allocated to this project.

12. Cadillac Pathway single track development

- a. Location: Cadillac Pathway, Cadillac
- b. Status: Mapping underway for 12 miles of new single track
- c. Cost: Unknown
- d. Funding: NMMBA and DNR seeking grants

**Snowmobile Program**

13. Bear Creek Swamp re-route

- a. Location: Free Soil, Lake and Mason Counties
- b. Status: EPA permit for construction is out for review
- c. Cost: \$130,000
- d. Funding: “funded” Funding was provided from the snowmobile program.

14. Fife Lake re-route/Easement acquisition

- a. Location: Fife Lake, Trail 5
- b. Status: Re-route construction is completed; easement acquisition has been requested.
- c. Cost: Unknown
- d. Funding: “unfunded” Request for use of snowmobile easement fund has been requested.

15. Manistee River Bridge decking project

- a. Location: Betsie Valley Trail, Mesick
- b. Status: Inspection and scoping report has been completed, decking project is on hold
- c. Cost: 1 million
- d. Funding: “unfunded” Inspection and scoping report was funded with RTP dollars. Engineering/design need to be funded along with construction this is estimated to be 1 million.

16. Kaleva to Chief snowmobile easement purchase

- a. Location: Chief

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- b. Status: Property acquisition is underway and scheduled for presentation to the NRC for approval.
- c. Cost: \$80,000 for property and \$100,000 for land clearing and capping of the surface.
- d. Funding: “funded” Snowmobile acquisition fund has been utilized to fund this project

**Off Road Vehicle Program**

- 17. Missaukee Junction ORV trail reroute
  - a. Location: Cadillac
  - b. Status: Project was complete in 2019 but a portion of trail was obliterated by a timber harvest
  - c. Cost: Unknown
  - d. Funding: FRD will utilize timber sale management fund to complete the reroute on the obliterated trail.
  
- 18. Missaukee County 2 unnamed creek bridge replacements
  - a. Location: Missaukee County, Miss-kal trail
  - b. Status: Engineering and designing is underway
  - c. Cost: \$500,000
  - d. Funding: “funded” funded with 2019 supplemental.
  
- 19. Sharman RD Trail Head construction
  - a. Location: Grand Traverse County, Grand Traverse Motorcycle Trail
  - b. Status: Trail proposal is still under review
  - c. Cost: \$20,000
  - d. Funding: “funded pending proposal” The site is a natural gas pumping station that has been decommissioned. The gas company will be helping to grade, gravel and improve the access road.

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**FROM: PAUL GABERDIEL**

**FEBRUARY 2020**

Workgroup updates,

**MTAC-** Haywire Grade has been awarded the 2020 Pure Michigan Trail award. The Haywire is also celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a rail trail this year. Events celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be snowmobile, Equestrian, Bicycling and ORV. We have had 3 major storms in the East UP. Because of the heavy damage seen on the snowmobile trails, trail maintainers my want to plan for additional trail maintenance work this spring.

**ETS-** Haywire Grade 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary event will on June 6, 2020.

**NAW-** Haywire 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary biking event will be on August 22, 2020. We have had 3 major storms in the East UP. Because of the heavy damage seen on the snowmobile trails, trail maintainers my want to plan for additional trail maintenance work this spring.

**ORVAW-** Haywire 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary ORV event will be on October 3, 2020.  
Haywire Grade has been named as a Pure Michigan Trail. We have had 3 major storms in the East UP. Because of the heavy damage seen on the snowmobile trails, trail maintainers my want to plan for additional trail maintenance work this spring.

**SAW-** Haywire 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Snowmobile event will be February 29, 2020.  
Haywire Grade has been named as a Pure Michigan Trail.  
Ride Right campaign placemats have been distributed to 7 food locations for last weekend, working on distribution to 4 more for this weekend.

Haywire 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary events participation registration can be done online at [www.visitmanistique.com](http://www.visitmanistique.com)