

SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY WORKGROUP

Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2020

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Teams

ATTENDEES

SAW

Chairman Jim Duke
Barry Bethke
Joe Bartlett
Don Britton
Joe Kuchnicki
Scott LaCombe
Karen Middendorp

DNR

Paul Yauk
Ron Yesney
Greg Kinser
Rob Katona
Pat Olson
Paul Gaberdiel
Jill Sell
Scott Slavin
Debbie Jensen
Jessica Holley
Anna Centofanti
Matt Torreano
Jeff Stampfly
Jason Stephens
Steve Milford
Kim Kennedy
Michael Desnoyer
Cary Foster
Monica Weis

Chairman Jim Duke called the order at: 10:08

Joe Bartlett made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from June 25th, Joe Kuchnicki seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Don Britton made a motion to approve the amended October 21st meeting agenda, Barry Bethke seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

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

Forestry and Stumps

Jeff Stampfly spoke about the stump issues along the trail and to ensure loggers adhere to the timber sale contract specs. FRD recognized training may have been inadequate for new staff and took this opportunity to train their foresters and fire officers who are field contacts; PRD trails staff was invited to attend.

It is through the Open House where we seek input to our harvest prescriptions. These prescriptions form the basis of timber sales and help inform what specs are included in the sale. There are several snowmobile specific specs to choose from, some of which the forester can edit.

It was asked who is responsible for the damages the clubs submitted? Without specifics, this could not really be addressed.

SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY WORKGROUP

Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2020

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Teams

The snowmobile trail is seasonal, and we are often unable to cut trees flush to the ground during winter contracts because of snow depths. We do work with other divisions, users, and loggers to try and minimize impacts for all involved.

Foresters inspect the sale before closing it and any contractual issues are discussed with the logger.

What are the damages if there are issues? A bond is secured typically 5% of the sale price. If the logger fixes the issues, then the bond is released.

The best time to get input into timber sale specifications is through the Open House process. We can work with users and other divisions to protect or perhaps improve sections of trail that are involved in a timber sale. It is at this time when we can discuss harvesting along trails, stump removal, etc. We are limited to only enforcing contract specs that were written into it once it is issued. Once activity on a sale has started everyone should feel free to contact FRD and we and work with you to the extent the extent the contract allows.

Joe Bartlett made a motion that the SAW Committee recommend the FRD create a timber sale contract spec to have stumps removed 20 feet of the centerline of the snowmobile trail. Karen Middendorp seconded. Karen Middendorp seconded; motion passed.

Trespass Issues

The SAW created a Back Country Riding Subcommittee and last year we made progress with the following:

Sign created – better than the Stay on Trail sign

To be implemented this year with posters and placements the Ride Here campaign

We take our co-managers considerations into effect

Need to work with the manufacturers who are making off-trail machines encourage the SAW to engage with them and help educate them

Education on trespass issues, loud pipes and cans, safety, etc.

Next steps: Interactive maps, with the PA 288 layer, to direct people where to ride in the 10 designated areas based on snow depth, terrain, and cover type.

USFS snowmobiles are exempt and able to ride back country except in sensitive areas.

Why are berms in place on state land after timber sales, they prohibit wheeled vehicles and prevents snowmobile access which encourages snowmobilers to ride farmers' fields. Can posts be placed instead of berms allowing snowmobile access? In almost all state contracts, any administrative access (these are not considered to be roads, as they are temporary in nature for forest management purposes) opened for timber sales must be closed with an earthen berm and brush. The timber sale spec accomplishing this is widely used and its use is based largely on input from open houses, staff, and other divisions. Most of these administrative accesses are spurs that do not provide additional access.

Earthen berms containing slash or stumps are often used to close this temporary administrative access as it would be an additional cost to require loggers to install posts. FRD is a co-manager with other divisions who may want access closed to the area. It was stated that we are promoting off-trail riding and it seems FRD is blocking access. If you are aware of sales in your area and want to have a voice, attend the open public meetings at either the Open Houses or Compartment Reviews. The co-managers are also there to have discussions on input.

SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY WORKGROUP

Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2020

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Teams

With PA 288, forest roads are inventoried annually and clearly show what is open to ORV use and what is closed to ORV use. If the road is open to ORV use, then it is also open for snowmobiles. Input on the state forest road system is accepted throughout the year and can either be submitted via an interactive map at www.michigan.gov/forestroads or by having a discussion with the local DNR staff.

New trailhead developments would be funded through the Snowmobile Trail Improvement program and the permanent easement fund, at this time there is no funding source exclusive to off-trail riding.

Wheeled Vehicle

Operating during snowmobile season causing damages – MISORVA working with a legislator on the issue. A Land Use Order of the Director could, on designated state trail, prohibit side-by-sides and ORVs on snowmobile trails careful not to exclude hunters and anglers. We need to educate new riders and law enforcement and how to better implement the ORV program. It was agreed to include the SAW in discussions on these issues.

With ORV damages on designated dual trails, the snowmobile clubs are investing time and money getting ready for the season with snowmobile funds. It should be the ORV clubs doing the work; however, it was suggested that snowmobile clubs could apply for ORV grants. Spring Rosales from the USFS spoke of the Great American Outdoors Act funding for maintenance on trails. We are looking to partner with the DNR on future projects involving dual use trails on Federal land.

WUPCAC Resolution

Resolution 1 – regarding snowmobile trail lost due to noise was discussed and it was agreed that banning non-factory manufactured exhaust systems would be a solution. As it is, enforcement testing for 88 decibels can be tricked by some pipes and cans manufactured to do just that.

Resolution 2 – discussion about creating a different formula to reimburse the clubs considering the operational costs and regional differences during the season. It was said it would cause friction if one club gets more funding than another, equal funding across the board. Perhaps in the UP change the maintenance formula. If grant sponsors were to complete their paperwork properly and input all the monies on the green sheet, all that money would go back into the formula per mile, as it is, the data is skewed – we need to put everything on the green sheets.

Don Britton made a motion that the SAW approves and accepts the Resolution #1 from the WUPCAC letter dated July 1st regarding snowmobile noise and trail retention. Barry Bethke seconded; motion approved.

Bridges

After discussion with different manufacturers the best way to efficiently replace our bridges while saving money would be to go with a steel bridge with wood decking.

The Doty Bridge will be completed soon.

The Miners River Bridge out to CR 422 is on hold due to crossing land that is in a conservation easement. Spring Rosales spoke again about the partnership for bridge or project funding from the Great American Outdoors Act on Federal land. If there is an area that needs fixing, let us know – the sooner the better as the wheels of government tend to run slow with the approval process.

SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY WORKGROUP

Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2020

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Teams

Allegan Trails Response

Mark Evans discussed the Allegan response to the January 8th letter from Paul Yauk regarding issues with the new trail. We agreed to restitution and were not offered a remedy to move forward and be reimbursed for the project as it was originally approved. Paul asked Mark if the trespass on the State Game Area has been resolved. Everything is completed except the sapling planting in spring. Once the non-compliance is fully completed, further discussions can take place and at that time, we need all the players come to the table, including WLD, before we can reach an agreement. Mark state the trail is not closed, people can ride on the plowed portion of the road.

Porta-Johns

Karen Middendorp has received questions from grant sponsors about the daily cleaning of the Porta-Johns. The sponsors feel they are not sanitation engineers and if the Porta-Johns are not cleaned daily will the incur a failure and not maintain compliance? Joe Kuchnicki asked if cleaning is not in the Grant Handbook, do we have to worry about it? It was stated that in the Covid-19 that everyone signed there is language about facility cleaning. Paul Yauk will work with Karen before the season, coming up with a solution like PRD facilities.

Snowmobile Free Weekend 2021

Karen Middendorp shared that MISORVA proposed January 29, 30, and 31 for the free weekend ride. Paul Yauk said this would be a good time to encourage new users, partnering with Pure Michigan and Jim Duke added we could tie into the 'Take a Friend' ISMA weekend.

Groomer Trail Work After Dark

Groomers and machines can operate after dark. Where the question came from was Scott Slavin had complaints on the White Pine Trail of operators mowing and brushing in a residential area at 3:00 in the morning. Scott addressed the issue with the club.

Snowmobile Fund

Projections show that there was a decrease in the Snowmobile Trail Improvement fund. Permit sales were down 4.5% and the gas tax down due to reduced Covid-19 travel and lower gas prices; overall a reduction of \$584k. The fund has not been impacted as much since snowmobile season ended before Covid-19. There has been a slight reduction in expenditures and spending. The snowmobile grant program is down \$200k to \$8.1m in expenditures. There is an overall \$3.5m in an unreserved total balance. It was asked if funding from the gas tax can be increased, yes but it would need to be done legislatively. Funding for trailhead developments are in a separate fund with some monies from the Pure Michigan campaign.

Snowmobile Trail Proposal Status Update

Current spreadsheet shows six recent projects, four approved and two in review. It was asked that a spread sheet indicating the status of all submitted trail proposals be provided, Paul Yauk indicated he would make that happen. It was said that people need to look a spreadsheet to see if their proposal is a go, no-go, or a maybe, get some indication on what the next steps are to either get approval or start planning the project

SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY WORKGROUP

Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2020

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Teams

Grant Update

Written comments from Richard Kennedy:



Richard_Kennedy_UP
DATE.pdf

Karl Davenport with Jordan Valley Trails discussed the delivery of the new track system their club ordered. Do they need to re-negotiate the contract price from last year? It was thought to be cheaper to pay the sales tax and pick up the tracks thereby eliminating any shipping fees as that was not factored into the price. To get the tracks for this year, we either need to pay a shipping fee of approximately \$3k or a plan for a 14 hour drive to pick them up. Yauk will discuss with Davenport to arrange for shipping and receive reimbursement so the tracks will be installed for use this year.

If there are any issues or concerns, contact Kennedy or Yauk.

Trail Sign Order

Signs and posts have been delivered across the state and are ready for pick up.

Equipment Subcommittee Update

Don Britton proposes three meetings a year with Kennedy discussing equipment status and issues. There will be an upcoming meeting with Kennedy to discuss the transfer and movement of six machines. There is a request for an agenda item for the Equipment Subcommittee Report.

Staff Updates

Paul Yauk said for the foreseeable future, staff will be teleworking, we will resolve the Porta-John cleaning issue, hopefully all grants are in, we are in a transition with staff retiring and are actively replacing their positions, pre-season meetings went well, we had a record season on the trails this summer use is up 70 to 100%, thank you for your patience and understanding. If you have any issues, contact me, Ron Yesney or Greg Kinser. We are excited to partner and work on projects with the USFS through the Outdoor Act funding.

Jessica Holley echoed Paul's statement that the pre-season meetings were well received and attended. The Grant Manual and the Snowmobile and ORV Sign Manual are online with an updated date of 10.1.2020. With the many changes in staffing and new volunteer involvement, please feel free to contact Jessica with any program questions.

Ron Yesney spoke about the west UP bridge washouts and trail closures of 109 due to land control and 15 due to a bridge being out. He also spoke of Lac La Belle to Mt. Bohemia re-route.

Rob Katona gave an update on the Foster City Trail 16 re-route in Dickinson County, a landowner revoked permission in the west, there is no connector from Crystal Falls, Iron Mountain, and Felch. Craig Lake to Nestoria has been re-routed due to logging activity. On Trails 8 and 417 we are relocating several crossings. The lakeshore restoration on Trail 417 along Lake Superior is completed.

SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY WORKGROUP

Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2020

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Teams

Approximately 100 miles of dual use trail has been resurfaced using ORV funds. New trail development for the Nahma Grade Spur in Delta County is in the process.

Matt Torreano said we are working with the KLA parcels in the west Up acquiring 56 miles of easements encumbering all the 2020 fiscal year funding and should be completed by year end. Working with the Snow Country Trails Conservancy to move forward with selling some parcels and cleaning up a few past issues. Moving forward with Lyme Timber (formerly Weyerhaeuser) easement purchases across the UP. Paul Gaberdiel spoke of the closure of the Blaney Park trail due to the swampy nature and two US 2 crossings. The Soo to Kinross Trail 49 bridge in Kinross is under water and failing. Carmuse is working and making provisions for trail on the other side of Trout Creek for next year. Bissell Creek has been approved for engineering. None's Creek bridge could be a project to work with the USFS on the Outdoor Recreation funding. There is a lot of water on Drummond Island, the road from the boat dock to the main island will be closed through March 15th for mining use.

Scot Slavin updated the group on the Bear Creek Swamp Trail 614 re-route completion and opening for this season. The dual use Trails 6 and 651 in Missaukee were surfaced using ORV funding. Trails 650, 35, and 344 were resurfaced with ORV funds as well. The Wexford Trail 5 culvert replacements are moving forward and will work with the USFS for project funding. Slavin is working with the club regarding the closure of the second bridge on Bear Creek Swamp.

Greg Kinser welcomed Debbie Jensen who will be taking over responsibilities of Nikki Van Bloem. The Alpena resurfacing and culvert replacement project is underway. We are breaking ground on the Gaylord Multi-Use Year-Round Trailhead. Moving forward with the Rogers City project. We are in the initial stages of securing an easement in the Grayling area for permanent access.

Jill Sell spoke about the Hartford Trail collapse in Van Buren in which our construction crews replaced a culvert receiving grant money from the non-motorized fund. Since the project bids came in over budget, the Cheboygan bridge is still in place and useable. There are discussions about the Liberty Road Trail 6 culverts and washouts. Funding is in place for engineering and construction on the Swan River Bridge, but progress was stalled due to Covid-19. We are working with MDOT to restart the project. There is still an active trail proposal to get the snowmobile trail into Rogers City. Dave Campo gave an update that MDOT cut all the trees and the stumps were removed by the Presque Isle Road Commission along the west side of M 23 to move the trail from the residential area. Only brush work needs to be done for the completion of the re-route.

Nikki Van Bloem talked about the Trail Plan update stating the draft goals and objectives are almost complete. To review and get more information go to the MichiganTrailsPlan.org website.

Future Meeting Dates

December 3rd will be held virtually.

Discussion surrounded adding an extra meeting during the season to coincide with MTAC and other trail meetings. Anna Centofanti will forward a proposed set up 2021 meeting dates to the SAW for review.

SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY WORKGROUP

Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2020

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Teams

Public Comment

Mark Evans stated that in Region 3 there currently are two trail closures due to water.

Dave Campo revisited the stumps on the side of the trail issue and Greg Kinser re-iterated that there are good opportunities for the public offer input on state timber sales during the open house and compartment review meetings. PRD and FRD are in discussions during the internal pre-review and we have the chance to either put in language to protect the trail and groomers or to re-route the trail along the edges of the timber sale stand edges.

Roundtable

Joe Bartlett thanked Paul, and all involved to help remediate the Allegan trail issues.

Joe Kuchnicki said we cannot forget our volunteers; they do a lot for us. One volunteer is defending a lawsuit, and another is paying penalties. Thanks to them for all they do for the program.

Karen Middendorp said the grant sponsors are the backbone of our program and they deserve much praise.

Jim Duke thanked everyone for attending and participating in the meeting.

Barry Bethke made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Don Britton seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 2:29 pm.