



Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup

Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting

Date: September 15, 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

- Jacklin Blodgett
- PJ Costa
- Anna Centofanti
- Cpl. Mike Hearn
- Jessica Holley-Roehrs
- Rob Katona
- Brian Mensch
- Lucas Merrick
- Steve Milford
- Tim Novak
- Scott Pratt
- Doug Rich
- Jill Sell
- Matt Torreano
- Monica Weis
- Ron Yesney

Chair Don Britton called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

Karen Middendorp made a motion to approve the June 23rd Meeting Minutes as submitted; Barry Bethke seconded. Motion carried.

Karen Middendorp made a motion to approve with an addition to the September 15th Agenda with additions; Barry Bethke seconded. Motion carried.

Meeting minutes

Public Comment:

John Newman

2022 Registration reimbursement for Grant Sponsors

Virtual meeting

MISORVA requested reimbursement to increase their subscription for ZOOM

We're going to charge \$5 or \$10 a person; 100 in attendance

Jessica will follow up on the reimbursement

Trail washout repair on Trail 3 from Painesdale to Tri-Mountain

Ron Yesney said Jeff Kakuk working on the project

On the Bill Nicholls trail, there is a watermain requiring stabilizing prior to beginning work

Work should be completed before the season start

Sheet piling will be driven alongside the main

Engineering nearly complete

Need to test drill to find the bedrock to know how deep we need to drive the sheet piling

Adjacent landowner denied access we can't extend the culvert, need to work with in the 100 yards, and the current culvert to remain in place

Removing trees along the trail

Most work will be done by the DNR construction crew

Any re-route in place in case?

Not an easy solution

No positive feedback from the road commission to use their roads

Business Items for Discussion:

Verizon Fleet Management Implementation –
Jessica Holley-Roehrs

Things moving along very well

Installations are being scheduled

Verizon aware they need flexibility in setting the installations

Will start getting the information loaded into the system

Will be a learning experience this year

How can we use this platform for efficiencies and using this to benefit our program?

Is the program incurring costs before it is functional?

We are in a one-year contract with Verizon

Not yet fully functional as no units are equipped

Worked on data entry on the platform for several months

Will continually assess this program

Is the program right for us, is it doing what we want it to do?

When new equipment is being delivered, will work on the installation at that time

Everything should be accomplished by November 15th

SAW Minutes
Sept. 15, 2022

Excluding delivery dates or equipment in the shop

Contact Jessica at any time to discuss

2023 Groomer Workshop and Funding – Karen Middendorp and Tim Novak

First weekend in March at the Soo

Contract in place and moving forward

Asking the program pays for two attendees for the 67 grant sponsors

In the past, the DNR paid for those who showed up under the request for payment

Asking for about \$25k

Karen Middendorp made a motion asking the program pay for two attendees from each of the 67 grant sponsors to attend the workshop. Barry Bethke seconded; motion carried.

Tim Novak will discuss with Richard Kennedy to ensure there is funding available. Need an answer from the DNR by October, would like to send out the registration out soon

FRD Logging/Stumps – Jacklin/Tim Novak

The recent issue has been resolved

Local management unit met with club contacts

We have been waiting for a long time to discuss stump heights and how to mitigate the issue, would like the update from the FRD and PRD conversation on the issue

Tim Novak following up on the discussions between PRD and FRD meetings

Jacklin Blodgett said there were emails in July regarding discussions with FRD, club, and Tim

Tim had site visits and looked at trail issues

Joe Bartlett asked about the issues with logging trucks on snowmobile trails and stump heights

Tim let everyone know we are having internal conversations

Hopefully we will have something in place by the next SAW meeting

Joe would like to have discussions with FRD

Jacklin to hold meetings with Joe Bartlett and Don Britton

What are the parameters for forestry in stump heights, would like to recommend three feet in the Lower and four feet in the Upper Peninsula

Updates:

Law Enforcement Update – Cpl. Mike Hearn

Snowmobile Safety Education

Eight new snowmobile instructors with a few more in the application process

Recertifying our instructors this year to weed out those who are not participating the program will have a better idea on how many we will have on board

Updating the education PowerPoint

Groomer encounters

Recall/stop selling on the Polaris issue

Impacted DNR equipment

Fatality Report

Last year had 13 incidents, over half were intoxicated

All reports received, will update and finalize the website

Lack of consistency of how the information is reported to the DNR and how they are investigated

Looking to standardize how the information is reported to the DNR

USFS Update – Spring Rosales

2 spaces Open Sans (Body)11

SAW Minutes
Sept. 15, 2022

MTU Groomer Study Final Report – Russ Alger

Draft report and PowerPoint presentation sent to the DNR

Worked up a bid specification to purchasing equipment

Will have the Equipment Subcommittee review

Data from 2015 to 2022 from the ESR data

Total Prime Movers 232

138 tractors and 94 tracked

Total clubs 69

Most costly and frequent repairs: drivetrain, engine, tire/tracks
by manufactures

Correlate maintenance to repairs?

Trail maintenance and how it effects repairs and maintenance
on the equipment

Listed the common repairs by manufacturers, models, and
sizes

Total repairs and costs by manufacture, more machines =
more repairs on that type

Averaged by machine – New Holland highest number
and costliest

Broken down further by type of repair

Correlation between running tracks and
drivetrain and track repairs

SAW Minutes
Sept. 15, 2022

Nothing showed up specifically with any manufacturer regarding repairs

Averaged the cost of a machine: a new machine for costs, add in tracks, and repairs

Tucker the least costly machine over the last seven years

Average lifetime of a machine is 12 years, data did not mention hours

We typically seven – ten years with

Savings for the program, no smoking gun but the following stood out

Run wheels rather than tracks in general, it depends on snowfall, lower snow can use wheels

Do we go with ag tires or turf tires? In the report there are recommendations and options

Would depend on the club which tires would be suitable

Will do a write up

Machine maintenance and track maintenance plays hugely in the repairs

Verizon should help in this respect

Can set up parameters for reminders and alerts for each machine

Need a maintenance schedule and track it

Follow the manufacturer's schedule

Daily maintenance

Trail maintenance to make the trail smooth prior to the season will help

Any recommendations on grooming intervals?

Depends on the snowfall

Nighttime grooming lets the trail set up

Will review the optimum horsepower recommendation

Recommend an interval for grooming and maintenance during a 24-hour period

Will first share with the DNR for comments before sending to the Equipment Subcommittee

Lake Linden Construction and Funding – Ron Yesney/Jacklin Blodgett/Tim Novak

Lake Linden Construction

Recommended the project split by segments and will bid out in six bids

Smaller packages over the entirety of the project for more competitive bidding

Staggering the bids to allow bidders the flexibility and opportunity to further bid on the other segments

Bids out in October, awarding bids in December to start in spring 2023

Permitting through EGLE

SAW Minutes
Sept. 15, 2022

One package near Dollar Bay needing an Army Corps of Engineers joint EGLE permit

Matt Torreano met with adjacent landowners for construction easements

Will know more on the funding issues after the bids are awarded

Trail to be open December 1st next year

Lake Linden Funding

No movement on the supplemental since we last spoke, nothing set for the new fiscal year

Decide this fall for 2023 spending between May 2023 through September 2023

Can the supplemental be added back to 2023 budget?

At the time of discussions, it was too late

Must wait for the bids this fall

Will find out if we have the resources set aside or need to request more at that time

Miners Castle Trail/H58 Reroute (special meeting update) – Ron Yesney

Road commission said now more operations on the road after 2024

Either reroute or close the trail

SAW Minutes
Sept. 15, 2022

Not an easy reroute, the easier of the reroute options is not allowed under the conservation easement

Deputy Direct Stacy Welling-Haughey will discuss with the divisions to see if we are able to work within the conservation easement

If not, we would need an easement from Hancock to install seven culverts and a bridge for a \$1m project for a trail that ends at Miners Castle

PJ Costa spoke with the National Park Service, they allow ORVs up to Miners Castle

If the trail is designated multi-use, could potentially split the trail funding between snow and ORV

The road commission will not allow the use of the road and will close the road to use

There isn't a shoulder to ride as there are guardrails

Look at other funding sources to help?

RTP wouldn't work

In recent years, MNTF has not looked favorably at trail development

MISORVA Million – Karen Middendorp

Grants are going out

Purchases are being made with tools and equipment being used on the ground

Free Snowmobiling Weekend (February 11-12) –
Karen Middendorp

February 11th and 12th coinciding with bring a friend snowmobiling weekend

Date will change every year

Equipment Subcommittee – Don Britton

Clubs that were awarded new equipment: Alger Sorva, Grand Marais Big Bay, North Country Trails, Hiawatha, Chippewa, Iron River, Irons and Lewiston

Summertime operation of track machines - Jessica Holley-Roehrs

Clarifying the handbook bullet points and providing guidance for the proper use of tracked machines

One bullet - 20% sponsors can groom their state approved trails so the sponsor can get to and from the trail or loops to the cities – should not have anything to do with the summer maintenance

Running tracked machines on pavement

Use of snow machines for ORV work

We want to have guidance and enforcement clear to the sponsors

The DNR sponsor contacts should work with the clubs to make it clear what our expectations are

Have a special focus group with the sponsors who have tracks, have an open discussion and consideration

Incorporate language into handbook

Would like to see a tire and track presentation at the groomer workshop

Statewide Purchase of Used Equipment - Tim Novak

Discussed and not found any restrictions found on purchasing used equipment

Funding from the snow and ORV not limited to purchasing new

The Equipment Subcommittee would research the equipment and have it sent back to the dealer to be inspected

This will change the face of equipment out there

The only time we have considered used equipment is during the season when the cost of the repairs isn't worth it, we'd look at a piece to get it up and running

If clubs are interested in purchasing a used piece, they could check out the piece

Pinney Bridge – Barry Bethke

Waiting for the update from the Greg Kinser

Barry Bethke went to look at the bridge

What is going on? Now somebody has put cedar posts across the trail

Karl Davenport sent a letter to Ron Olson three years ago about the issues with the adjacent landowner and the bridge

It is a designated snowmobile trail, the county agrees with the trail

Surveys are completed, apparently the landowner harassed the surveyor, and the Michigan State Police came out

Set up a meeting with Barry, Joe, and Karl with Tim Novak, Greg Kinser, and the DNR partners to discuss. Bring in the road commission and law enforcement as well.

Also find out who oversees these situations, local law enforcement or the DNR

There are also problems with signage, move the trail off the road in the right-of-way, and potentially sign on private land

Ask Ron Olson to give us his perspective at our December meeting

DNR Staff Updates – Written (see attached)

Manistee River Bridge

The landowner closed the alternate route for the trail, is Scott Slavin aware of this?

When does the funding expire on this project? Is there a guarantee for funding this and other projects that are on hold?

2022 Meetings

December 1st meeting

Wondering why other workgroups are allowed to have in-person meetings and the SAW isn't?

Chair Don Britton would like to have an in-person meeting in Christmas

Would like to incorporate a snowmobile ride

Asked if Karen Middendorp would set up the rooms at White Pine and the meeting at Foggy's

Barry Bethke made a motion to have the December 1st SAW meeting in-person in Christmas and incorporate a snowmobile ride. Joe Kuchnicki seconded; motion carried.

2022 Meetings – December 1st

Round Robin/Closing Comments:

Joe Bartlett is concerned about the DNR participation in our meetings, would like more DNR representation. Discuss with Ron Olson.

We need to discuss ways to share snowmobile trail improvement funding work with ORV funding. Trail 8 has had \$93k worth of work using the snowmobile trail improvement fund and the ORV community is also benefitting from the work.

Joe Kuchnicki hope in the future there is more participation from the DNR, seems in the last few years we haven't had much.

Karen Middendorp Canada Creek has pulled out of grooming the trails, spoke with the ORV club and they are not interested in grooming. The surrounding sponsors are not interested in picking up the extra miles. How do we find a sponsor to pick up the trail? How can we fix the issue? Jessica Holley-Roehrs agrees that it is huge void and a safety issue. She will continue to find more information and push the issue. Could the DNR groom the trail? No

SAW Minutes
Sept. 15, 2022

rules or regulations against it, however, we'd lose certain efficiencies as paying DNR staff is costly. Ron Yesney said the last time this occurred, we held a community meeting discussing the issue, showed the community a presentation, discussed the grant and somebody was willing to step up. Jessica said we need to make that same effort in this situation.

Barry Bethke said he is tired of the same excuses, that we will get back to you or we are working on it. How can we give advice if we can't get answers from the DNR on certain issues?1

Barry Bethke made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Karen Middendorp seconded.
Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 1:32 PM