

**DRAFT MINUTES
SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
BJ's Restaurant
990 N. Center Street
Gaylord, Michigan
June 12, 2007**

Chairman Manson called the meeting of the Snowmobile Advisory Committee (SAC) to order at 9:38 a.m., Tuesday, June 12, in Gaylord, Michigan.

Members Present:

Bill Manson, Chair, Region III, Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA), Grand Rapids
James Duke, Region I, MSA, Munising
Bill Lucas, Region II, MSA, Cadillac
Lee Murray, At-Large, Hopkins
Orville Olson, Representative at Large, Ludington
David Thomas, Trail Sponsors, Marquette

Members Absent:

Jack Nelson, Business Community Representative, Greenville

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Randy Charles, USDA, Ottawa National Forest
Carol Boll, Huron-Manistee National Forest
Anne Okonek, USDA, Ottawa National Forest

Staff Present:

Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management (FMFM), Lansing
Steve DeBrabander, State Trails Operation & Construction Unit Mgr., FMFM, Lansing
Steve Kubisiak, Recreation and Trails Program Coordinator, FMFM, Lansing
Richard Kennedy, FMFM, Lansing
Joe Taylor, FMFM, Lansing
Christie Bayus, Grants Management, Lansing
William O'Neill, FMFM, Gaylord
Don Klingler, FMFM, Gaylord
Lt. Creig Grey, LED, Lansing
Lt. Tom Courchaine, LED, Crystal Falls
Loretta Cwalinski, FMFM, Gaylord

Mr. Manson welcomed everyone. The Committee, Department staff and the audience introduced themselves.

MINUTES

The minutes of the February 6, 2007 SAC meeting was acknowledged.

Motion was made by Mr. Lucas to adopt the minutes of the February 6, 2007 meeting, seconded by Mr. Thomas. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Law Enforcement Sub-Committee – Mr. Murray reported he is the Chair of the SAC's Law Enforcement Subcommittee. Members include Mr. Nelson and Mr. Manson. He distributed a handout with recommended maximum grant allocations for equipment.

Recommended maximum amount of grant allocation:

Snowmobile: \$10,000 with grant at 85% = \$8,500
Trailer: (two place covered) \$4,000 with grant at 85% = \$3,400
Rescue sled: \$3,000 with grant at 85% = \$2,550
Clothing: (suit, boots and gloves) \$350 with grant at 85% = \$297.50
Helmet: \$250 with grant at 85% = \$212.50
GPS: \$300 with grant @ 85% = \$255
Decibel Meter: \$350 with grant at 85% = \$297.50
Radio: \$3500 with grants at 85% = \$2975

The law enforcement subcommittee also recommended that money be allocated for overtime. This means that, regardless of what duties were performed for the first 40 hours of any week, work over 40 hours per week performed on behalf of the snowmobile program be paid at time and one half.

Motion was made by Mr. Murray to accept the proposed grant allocations as listed on the handout, seconded by Mr. Manson.

Mr. Kubisiak advised the Department is in the process of reviewing equipment criteria in all the law enforcement grant programs (i.e. ORV, Marine Safety and Snowmobile).

Lt. Courchaine stated that overtime pay is not eligible in the law enforcement grant programs.

Mr. Murray said he understands current policy, but believes when enforcement officers work more than 40 hours a week the snowmobile law enforcement program should pay overtime at time and a half.

Mr. Duke added that in the western Upper Peninsula law enforcement is told not to work more than 40 hours, and if they do it is paid at regular time. He believes overtime pay will encourage more participation in the program.

Mr. Manson called for a voice vote to use the recommendations brought forth from the law enforcement sub-committee on the recommended maximum amount of grant allocations and overtime pay:

Mr. Manson -- Aye
Mr. Duke -- Aye
Mr. Lucas -- Aye
Mr. Thomas -- Aye
Mr. Olson -- Aye
Mr. Murray - Aye

Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Finance Subcommittee – **Mr. Olson** reported the finance subcommittee consisting of Mr. Manson, Mr. Murray, Mr. Lucas and himself met several times to review the ten year budget. They looked at trends on trail permit fees and met with Department staff to discuss criteria. Mr. Olson and Mr. Lucas attended the Natural Resources Committee (NRC) meeting and presented a list of questions regarding snowmobile appropriations to the Department. The NRC said they would have answers soon. He said he will be meeting later today with Mr. Taylor.

SAC By-Laws Update - **Mr. Thomas** reported he and Mr. Murray completed their assignment. After reviewing other DNR Advisory Committee By-Laws, studying the law that established the SAC, and reading the information posted on the DNR website, they do not believe by-laws are needed for SAC.

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas to accept their recommendation, seconded by Mr. Duke.

Mr. Manson -- Aye
Mr. Duke -- Aye
Mr. Lucas -- Aye
Mr. Thomas -- Aye
Mr. Olson – Aye
Mr. Murray - Aye

Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Snowmobile Grant Handbook – **Mr. Thomas** reported the new handbooks were mailed to the clubs. He said the SAC provided the Department with a list of sponsor concerns and recommended changes to the handbook, and a three hour telephone conference with the Department took place to discuss. He said a change concerning the appeals process was added, but expressed disappointment that no other changes were made. He said he did not get any feedback from the Department as to why the changes were not made.

Mr. DeBrabander offered that the discussion could continue now.

Mr. Olson asked if the handbook is final, or if it is still be possible to make changes.

Mr. DeBrabander said changes could be considered, but it may not be a good idea since the handbook has already been distributed to the sponsors.

Executive Directives -- **Mr. DeBrabander** summarized the Executive Directives. Most of the grant programs are exempt with the exception of payments. All grant payments will be delayed 45 days. This will affect all grant payments this fiscal year and will be in effect until the restriction is lifted. He noted the Department of Management and Budget (DMB), with input from the Department, developed test criteria that all new grants and amendments must meet this fiscal year.

2007 Snowmobile Grant Line Balance - **Ms. Bayus** updated the Committee on snowmobile grant expenditures through May 31, 2007 and distributed a handout. March grooming payment requests have not been made due to the 45 day delay.

2007 Cost Analysis – **Mr. Kennedy** discussed the summary for the Upper Peninsula (UP). There were 238,854 miles groomed this past year, down 121,044 from the previous year. The Lower Peninsula (LP) groomed 107,487 this past year, down 514 from the previous year. Total miles groomed were 352,048 for the season. This is down 130,987 (due to low snow, higher temps) from the previous year.

Average statewide fuel cost was \$1.48 per mile. The department reimbursed \$1.67 per mile for fuel this past year. **Mr. Kennedy** reported that based on the cost analysis fuel costs were down overall from last year. This could be due to a reduction in the miles being groomed, and newer equipment getting better gas mileage.

In addition, two trails were taken over by grant sponsors from the DNR; Twin Lakes and Atlanta.

Mr. Murray questioned cost-per-mile and cited Alpena compared to Grand Traverse as an example.

Mr. Kennedy said differences are likely due to a lower number of miles groomed, or perhaps higher equipment repairs by one club. The Department will e-mail the cost analysis to the SAC.

2007 Equipment Grant Requests – **Mr. Kennedy** advised there are quite a lot of groomer and drag requests. These requests were for a variety of reasons including clubs would like to replace old equipment; clubs are past the 50 mile threshold due to new trails; clubs have been in the program the required two years; and clubs are taking over former DNR groomed trails.

Snowmobile Revenue Report - **Mr. Radabaugh** and **Mr. Taylor** handed out snowmobile revenue reports. Trail permit sales were down this year and show a progressive decline over the past several years with corresponding decreases of revenues into the snowmobile trail improvement fund. **Mr. Taylor** reviewed a graph depicting revenue categories from 2006-2010 and revenue projections. He noted that unless future revenues are different from the projections there will have to be some adjustments in spending

Mr. Manson said that they have a lot of convincing to do with the legislature as they are not looking favorably at increasing permit fees.

Lt. Grey reported that historically local law enforcement grant requests have come in under budget, but now requests are increasing and will probably fall short next year unless revenues increase.

Mr. Radabaugh referenced the 2008 bar chart and noted that projected expenditures exceed actual revenues taken in last season. Therefore, a portion of this year's unobligated grant balance will need to be lapsed back into the snowmobile trail improvement fund in order to cover next season's appropriation. He added that initial grant outlays next season may also need to be reduced in order to stay within budget.

Mr. Manson asked where that leaves the program in terms of purchasing equipment this year.

Mr. Radabaugh said the Department received 61 new equipment requests. Priority will be placed on providing eight machines to the clubs that will be taking over trails previously groomed by the Department. The Department is working with DMB to transfer Department owned grooming equipment to the clubs to save money. He reiterated the need to control program expenditures.

Fuel Reimbursement Review - **Mr. Manson** tabled this item.

DNR Outhouses – **Mr. Manson** reported a grant sponsor asked if portable toilets could be placed at a trailhead that already has vault toilets. The vault toilets are not serviced by the Department during the winter months and the club does not want to clean the vault toilet. He believes the club should be able to place portable toilets at the trailhead.

Mr. Kennedy asked if anyone in the audience is aware of situations where portable toilets are used at trailheads that already have vault toilets.

Mr. Klingler said in his Unit the vault toilets are maintained by Department staff on a weekly basis during the snowmobile season.

STAFF REPORTS

Alpena Trail Connector - **Mr. DeBrabander** reported the proposal was approved last month with conditions. Grooming will be permitted December 1st through March 1st. The trail will be open to snowmobiling until March 31. A three year sunset provision was included. During this time the trail will be evaluated to determine if there are any negative impacts with deer habitat, raptor nesting, or other wildlife concerns.

Discussion ensued regarding grooming restrictions and evaluation process. The Department will explore the possibility of placing signs to inform the public that the trail will not be groomed during the month of March and the reason why. The club will have opportunity for input during the evaluation process.

Club Grooming of Former Department Groomed Trails – **Mr. DeBrabander** reported staff is working with the clubs on transitioning department trail grooming responsibilities to the clubs. All trails are expected to be transitioned to the clubs next season.

Mr. Lucas asked if a grant doesn't take effect until October 1st if anything can be done to allow the new club to begin maintenance work earlier.

Trail work may be performed under a volunteer agreement. The Department will send the new club a grant application and information on how to register volunteers. The Department will notify affected sponsors and field contacts to finalized transition of trails and equipment.

M-65 Update – **Mr. Manson** reported he has swapped voice messages with the Iosco County, but has not had an opportunity to discuss this project with them. He believes the holdup is with Consumer's Energy.

Recreation Specialist Reports – **Mr. O'Neill** reported the opening of the Mullet Lake trail to snowmobiling last season went very well overall. A few signs were vandalized and a few landowner snowmobile incidents were reported and addressed by law enforcement.

Mr. Duke said that in talking to Dan Moore, Recreation Specialist for the Eastern UP he is still dealing with a snowmobile reroute in Shingleton. Local residents are working with staff to identify a new route. He noted Alger County is paving H-58 and have expressed concern with stud damage. The club is concerned the county will begin snowplowing roads once they are surface.

Mr. Manson suggested the club send a letter to the road commission to make them aware of their concerns.

Mr. Manson also requested the recreation specialists provide their reports to the Committee at least one week in advance of the meeting.

US Forest Service Reports – **Mr. Randy Charles, Ottawa National Forest** reported Military Hill Bridge engineering reviews are being done.

Hiawatha National Forest – **Anne Okonek** reported snowmobile use was down last season due to weather conditions and noted increasing ATV damage. **Mr. Duke** thanked Ms. Okonek for her snowmobile trail advocacy efforts.

Huron-Manistee National Forest -- **Ms. Carol Boll** reported recreation surveys are ongoing and they are receiving very good comments from visitors. She thanked those who have participated in the survey.

Law Enforcement – **Lt. Grey** reported legislation has been introduced regarding sound emissions and stationary testing procedures for snowmobiles. The Department supports the Bill.

Brockway Mt. Road -- **Mr. Kubisiak** referred the committee to a letter addressed to Keweenaw Trails Services Inc. from the Keweenaw County Road Commission. The letter states groomers are damaging Brockway Mt. Road and the county is requesting \$20,000 from the local snowmobile club to assist in resurfacing damaged segments of road. **Mr. Kubisiak** noted a consultant working on behalf of the county has also contacted the Department inquiring about financial assistance from the snowmobile program to repair the road. He asked the Committee for their advice on this request.

Mr. Manson asked Ken Stigers, Keewenaw Trail Service about the roads. **Mr. Stiger** agreed the road is in rough shape, but feels the county should repair the road from funds they receive from the state gasoline sales tax.

Mr. Manson suggested the road commissions get together and revisit the gas tax issue. He believes snowmobiler's already pay their fare share. He said that until the snowmobile program is returned 100% gasoline sales tax they deserve he does not support the use of snowmobile funds to repair roads.

Motion was made by Mr. Lucas to accept the recommendation, seconded by Mr. Thomas. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Don Carroll, Ogemaw Snowmobile Club hopes the new sound legislation will allow a 30 day grace period, and law enforcement will try to work with folks, and not immediately write tickets for noise.

L.G. Roberts, Pere Marquette Snowmobile Club asked if any of the fines collected for snowmobile law violations go back to the snowmobile program. **Lt. Courchaine** explained the process. **Mr. Manson** said MSA's legislative committee will review. **Mr. Roberts** asked questions about a trail paving project in Clare.

Larry Marzean, Alpena Snowmobile Club believes the snowmobile grant handbook is unacceptable. His primary concern is ownership of grooming equipment. He does not understand why the August meeting was cancelled. **Mr. Radabaugh** explained the Department is under travel restrictions, but that staff is available on a day to day basis to address concerns.

William Caskey, Jordan Valley Trails Council read a letter addressed to Mr. Manson from their club. Their club will not sign a snowmobile agreement unless the handbook is changed.

John Hauk, Presque Isle Sno-Trails requested a speaker system for meeting because it is difficult to hear. He asked that the clubs taking over DNR trails be officially notified by the Department. He inquired on the status of the Rogers City spur, Presque Isle reroute, and status of his clubs appeal regarding December grooming.

Al Green, Cadillac Winter Promotions asked if the new Missaukee club will be officially notified by the Department and be sent a volunteer agreement.

Don Reed, MSA expressed concern with the snowmobile grant handbook and would like the issues resolved before the season. Primary concerns are ownership of five year old equipment and the 100% equipment purchase program. He believes snowmobiling is good for the economy.

Gail Scott, Goegebic Area Grooming, Inc. expressed concern with the snowmobile grant handbook. Primary concerns are equipment ownership and language requiring clubs to consider John Deere tractor grooming equipment. She said the grooming equipment at Twin Lakes has been sitting outside in the elements and asked if it will be repaired before being given to a club.

Alan Cottle, Sault Snowmobile Association said he agreed with Ms. Scott and will not sign his grant agreement either.

Tom Gallagher, St. Helen Snow Packers said he had a problem accessing the DNR website.

Jim Dingman, Trailriders, Baldwin said he doesn't like the John Deere idea either.

Ken Scott, Michigan Snowmobile Association asked about the economic impact study. **Mr. Radabaugh** said the project is on hold this fiscal year due to the Executive Directives.

Mr. Manson asked the clubs to give him specifics on what they are not happy with in the snowmobile grant handbook and he will review and resubmit to the Department.

Mr. Radabaugh said he will set up a meeting later in the month with the SAC to review club comments and handbook. Grants Management and internal audit will also be in attendance.

NEXT MEETING

The next SAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 23, 2007 at 9:30 a.m., BJ's Restaurant & Catering, 990 North Center Street, Gaylord, Michigan.

Meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.

Public Present:

Al Green Cadillac Winter Promotions
Al Persondek RHTC
Don Carroll Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club
Dan White Ogemaw Hills
Dave Distelrath Ogemaw Hills
Bud Martin Ogemaw Hills
Don Reed MSA/SSA
Rolland Rieger PIST
Rodney M. Altman P. I. Sno-trails
Ken Stigers Keweenaw Trail Service
Gail Scott Gogebic Area Grooming Inc.
Ken Scott Michigan Snowmobile Assn.
Kaye Houk P.I. Sno-trails
Larry J. Marzeen Alpena
Bob Eller Alpena Snowdrifter
Wm. R. Caskey JVTC
Mary A Caskey JVTC
Debra Manson MSA

Jim Dickie Mid Mich Snowmobile Council
John Houk Presque Isle Sno-trails
George Zajac Trail Rider Snowmobile Club
Jim Dingman Trailriders (Baldwin)
LG Roberts Pere Marquette Snowmobile Club
Michael Hamilton Pere Marquette Snowmobile Club
Tom Gallagher St. Helen Snowpackers
David Becker St. Helen Snowpackers
Rich Filley Grayling Snowmobile Assoc.
Terry Barton West Michigan Snowmobile Council
Brian Callaghan Inland Lk. Sno & Tip-of-Mitt Sno Assoc
Alan Cottle Sault Snowmobile Assoc.

Western Upper Peninsula Recreation Specialist Report

June 12, 2007 – Ron Yesney

Trail Proposals:

Republic to Humboldt to West Ishpeming – Moose Country Snowmobile Club has submitted a proposal to use two connected State owned railroad grades as a snowmobile trail. The grades being proposed include the Republic to Humboldt – 9 miles, and the Humboldt to Ishpeming, commonly known as the Greenwood Grade, – 13 miles. This trail would create a loop trail between Republic and Ishpeming and would relieve traffic congestion on trail #8 and trail #5. The proposal is currently being evaluated at the district level.

Dukes to Sand River - Trails Inc. has submitted a proposal to connect the Marquette to Munising trail with the Chatham to Little Lake trail. The proposed trail would be 13 miles in length and would include lands owned by the U.S. Forest Service, Forest Land Group, and Michigan DNR. This proposal is currently being evaluated at the unit level. If the proposal is approved, the next step would be to seek formal approval from the Forest Service for use of their portion of the proposed trail.

Chocolay Township - A proposal has been submitted to create a business spur connection from the Chocolay grade to the business district in Harvey. The proposal includes a bridge over the Chocolay River. This would be a multi-use trail; bikes and hiking in the summer and snowmobiles in the winter.

Buck Lake - A trail proposal has been submitted to reopen a segment of trail # 3 in the Ottawa National Forest north of Watersmeet that was closed in 2002 due to land control issues. The new proposal would reroute the trail off of private land, onto USFS property. A decision memo has been received from the USFS approving the use of their lands for the trail. The trail proposal is now moving forward. If approved, the trail would greatly improve grooming efficiency and reduce congestion by reestablishing this north-south connector in the West UP.

Land Control:

Longyear Realty Company - Longyear Realty, a major corporate landowner in the U.P., has requested that the DNR develop a one permit system for all snowmobile trails on their properties. They have stated that they are unhappy with the permitting system that makes them issue and sign permits with six separate snowmobile clubs each year. They feel that one land control permit issued to the DNR would be simpler for them to administer and track. This request is being evaluated.

Ahmeek, Mohawk, Copper City Trail – Two landowners in the Keweenaw, just north of Calumet, have cancelled their year to year land control permits with the Keweenaw Snowmobile Club. This is on the main north/south trail from Hancock to Copper Harbor. The trail had been using an old Railroad spur, but it appears as though the spur is in private ownership. DNR Baraga Unit management staff will be traveling to the area to look at reroute options on May 30th.

For more information or questions on any of these projects, feel free to contact me at 906-228-6561.