

**MICHIGAN SNOWMOBILE AND TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL (Council)
MEETING MINUTES**

April 20, 2011

Approved July 22, 2011

**Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center
104 Conservation Drive, Roscommon, MI 48653**

PRESENT FOR THE COUNCIL

Frank Wheatlake, Chair
Sandra Batie
Jim Dickie
Jim Duke
Tom Dunn
Mike Foote
John Gonway
Carolyn Kane
Bill Manson
Erin McDonough
Greg Yager

PRESENT FOR STAFF

Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, Forest Management Division (FMD)
Steve Kubisiak, Acting Recreation and Trails Program Coordinator, FMD
Andrea Turner, Administrative Assistant, FMD
John Morey, ORV and Snowmobile Safety Field Coordinator, Law Enforcement Division
Rose Ingram, Huron National Forest, USDA Forest Service

PUBLIC ATTENDEES

Lee Murray, SAW
David Low, Western Michigan Snow Council (WMSC)
Bradley Potter, WMSC
Nancy Krupiarz, Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance
Lewis Shuler, Cycle Conservation Club (CCC)
Bill Gilbert, Michigan ORV Safety Association
Rick Harvey, Public

WELCOME

Chair Wheatlake called the Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Chair Wheatlake welcomed everyone and introduced himself, followed by introductions of the Council members, and all other attendees.

Chair Wheatlake acknowledged and congratulated Carolyn Kane on her *Partners in Conservation Award*, as presented at the April 7, 2011 Natural Resource Commission meeting. Ms. Kane has also been nominated by the *National Rails to Trails Conservancy* to receive one of 25 *Rails to Trails Champion* awards.

Chair Wheatlake presented the April 20, 2011 meeting agenda for review/approval.

Motion was made by John Gonway, seconded by Mike Foote, to approve the April 20, 2011 agenda. Motion for approval unanimously carried.

MINUTES

The minutes of the December 1, 2010 Council meeting were acknowledged.

Motion was made by Jim Duke, seconded by Carolyn Kane, to adopt the December 1, 2010 meeting minutes. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Jim Radabaugh gave a brief update regarding the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) split. As of March 13, 2011, we are officially two departments, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Rodney A. Stokes has been appointed director of the DNR. Mindy Koch replaces Frank Ruswick as Resource Management Deputy.

The division name will remain *Forest Management*, which replaces the previous division name *Forest, Mineral and Fire Management*.

Chief Boyd is unable to attend the meeting and sends her apologies.

Equine Trailways Subcommittee Report

Sandra Batie, Chair, ETS – presented the attached update.

Chair Wheatlake questioned the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) outlook. **Jim Radabaugh** stated that they (USFWS) would like the DNR to have a management plan (proposal) to present to them. **Sandra Batie** responded that the Director has asked Mindy Koch, Donna Stine, Lynne Boyd, and Jim Radabaugh to meet with her on Monday regarding this.

Chair Wheatlake asked how these goals would be funded. **Sandra Batie** and **Jim Radabaugh** responded that a grant request was submitted to the MNRTF for development of projects to support the ETS.

Mike Foote said the general takeaway – fact Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson lands managed (and purchased) for that purpose. The equine community does not understand that.

Erin McDonough asked if this was statewide. **Jim Radabaugh** said that Pigeon River is the focus right now.

Sandra Batie is happy with the way meeting went. Theresa Kline is working on behalf of the Michigan Horse Council to investigate the publication of a Michigan equine trail riding guide. **Chair Wheatlake** supports/believes it is great resource; tie into tourism.

Chair Wheatlake thanked Sandra Batie and the ETS for their report.

Nonmotorized Advisory Workgroup (NAW) Report

John Gonway, Chair, NAW – reported that the last NAW meeting was held March 7, 2011. Mapping expert Rob Golda was not present – a bit of a setback. Will discuss different maps/formatting, etc.

Chair Wheatlake said the charge for MSTAC was inventory, recommendations/expansion of all groups on federal, state, county lands.

Mike Foote referenced Lindsey Dingall; she has format information for mapping criteria for the DNR.

Jim Radabaugh referenced an e-mail from Steve Schnell, Community Development Director, Cheboygan County, regarding NE NW Council of Government working together regarding trails, services, motorized/nonmotorized. He would like to present at the next meeting.

Bill Manson said all trails identified on one map is hard to distinguish. Different rules, seasonal use, private lands, permissions, etc.

Carolyn Kane deferred to Nancy Krupiarz – committee defined all the GIS attributes; has a good model. Would like to bring it all together.

Erin McDonough stated that “format” is a good question. How are different groups getting their information? Suggested that each group look into this and bring into the next MSTAC meeting. Demographic issue.

John Gonway asked who will oversee the technology as a whole.

Chair Wheatlake stated that funding should come from legislation, probably not this year with economy, but some time in the future.

ORV Advisory Workgroup (ORVAW) Report

Tom Dunn, Chair, ORVAW – budget issues, discussed raising ORV fees. No money for expansion. It has been 17 years of the same fee structure – no increases. Has approached the legislation – no increase.

ORV safety training underway.

Lease property – Tom Dunn has concerns with property owners regarding who decides use.

Chuck Nelson report – need to promote ORV use to people outside the state.

Mapping system in good shape – downloadable.

Chair Wheatlake asked if a fee/budget had been formulated. Yes – had a workgroup. If presented to Director Stokes, would support.

Jim Duke mentioned a joint meeting Thursday, April 21, 2011, ORV/SAW (SORVA).

Rose Ingram stated that Hiawatha is in good hands (Ann involved).

Jim Dickie asked if ATV User groups were resistant to a fee increase. **Tom Dunn** said no, they (200,000 users) want maintenance, etc. of trails.

Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup (SAW) Report

Lee Murray, Chair, SAW – appointment of a new director, awaiting information from the DNR. (Referring to the State Trails Operations and Construction Unit Supervisor position.)

Major issue – revisions to Grant Handbook. Steve Kubisiak working hard on communications, 100 percent feedback. Next meeting June – will be ok to move forward.

Bill Manson gave an overview of the meeting Monday. Administrative Rules Permanent Trail Fund, \$8 into separate fund for easements on private property (50/50 right now). Now have a fund in place to move forward with process. Estimated need of \$5 million for the UP alone.

Bill Manson spoke with Steve DeBrabander, Grants Manager, DNR, regarding money from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF). Will write up a proposal to be presented to Director Stokes. **Chair Wheatlake** will speak with Director Stokes and Mr. Charters, etc.

Bill Manson stated that snowmobile trail permits are down 10 percent (estimate). **Erin McDonough** asked why. **Bill Manson** responded that population is down, snow conditions, etc.

STAFF REPORTS

Rose Ingram, USDA Forest Service – Carol Boll's (Recreation and Trails Program Manager), replacement is Kristen Thrall from Montana.

Huron-Manistee update – four supervisor positions. Hiawatha close to a decision, next few weeks. Lawsuit regarding forest plan, process generated nearly 9,000 responses (snowmobile, noise, and hunting).

John Morey, LED – busy with ORV safety workgroup last one and a half years. Safety Education committee – revised content, policy/procedures, three ORV instructor academy classes will be held at the RAM (new training site – overflow parking lot). On-line training company, will be presented to SAW at next meeting.

600 instructors – 190 responded – about 300 not active.

John Morey to provide number of students issued safety certificates snowmobile/ORV and age.

Group comments as follows.

Jim Dickie – encouraged by reports presented.

Bill Manson – radio reported the safest snowmobile season (Michigan) in 13 seasons.

John Gonway – DNR newswire reported Michigan as number one in fly-fishing.

Erin McDonough – MNRTF resource to expand trails, get the word out. She motioned to support grant request. MSTAC to the Commission – please support the grant request. Agreed, Chair Wheatlake to sign.

Chair Wheatlake – ETS is short one member. Look at Workgroup expirations, think/plan ahead.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Bill Gilbert – safety education mandates the number of instructors (2). He feels that the DNR needs to review that policy (referenced past certification of instructors). John Morey in response to need for 2 instructors – has referred to other instructors in surrounding areas, DNR Law Enforcement office, or himself. Response to competency of instructors – all new instructors must attend the academy.

Bill Gilbert – regarding call from public (Bay City) regarding class/requirements for instructors. **Chair Wheatlake** stated that this issue is not something MSTAC can address.

Nancy Krupiarz distributed information to MSTAC “Trails Uniting Michigan” poster (one name, one logo, etc.), all communities agreed.

Group comments as follows.

Discussion regarding trails/expansion, long-term vision. Destination trails – good attraction!

Chair Wheatlake questioned Wakefield - progress of property sold to city - not resolved.

Jim Dickie – send letter to Pure MI regarding available maps/trails. **Chair Wheatlake** will contact Dennis Muchmore.

Tom Dunn 7th annual Arbor Day tree planting, in Kalkaska, on May 1 at 9:00 (distributed flyers).

Sandra Batie – oak wilt disease, trail trimming – address properly.

NEXT MEETING

July 22, 2011, at BJ's Restaurant, Gaylord

Meeting adjourned at 12:15.