

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

February 21, 2012
Approved April 23, 2012

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

PRESENT FOR THE COUNCIL

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

PRESENT FOR STAFF

Donna Stine, Policy Coordinator, DNR
Ron Olson, Chief, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD)
Jim Radabaugh, PRD
Andrea Turner, PRD
Paul Curtis, PRD
Paul Yauk, PRD
Lieutenant Andrew Turner, Law Enforcement Division
Todd Neiss, Forest Resources Division
Kristen Thrall, Huron-Manistee National Forest, U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Shannon Rische, Huron-Manistee National Forest, USFS

PUBLIC ATTENDEES

Bob Bates, St. Helen Snowpackers
Lewis Shuler, Cycle Conservation Club of Michigan
Bill Lucas, Michigan Snowmobile Association
Alex Auman
Tom Kozlowski, R.H.T.C.
Sue Thrushman, MMRC-ATV Off-Road Club
Lee Murray, Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup
Nancy Krupiarz, Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance (MTGA)

WELCOME

Chair Wheatlake called the Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council (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.

MINUTES

The minutes of the October 19, 2011 Council meeting were acknowledged. **Sandra Batie** asked that the *2011 Recommendations Report of the ETS* (Draft Report) be attached to the minutes. **Motion to adopt the October 19, 2011 meeting minutes unanimously carried.**

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Reorganization and Progress of Transition

Chief Olson provided an overview of the transition of the forest campground and trails programs from FRD to PRD, effective January 8, 2012. He highlighted the four DNR priorities. He referenced a number of things including the Recreation Passport and nonmotorized trails marketing via Pure MI; need for reasonable regulations and getting people out-of-doors; make it a good experience; maximize local recreation; and recent Gold Medal award for State Parks. He would like Michigan to become "Number 1 in Trails."

A Land Use Order of the Director (LUOD) transferred the state forest campgrounds and trailheads to miniparks – opens them up for recreation passport funding.

The organization charts for PRD have not been completed. The goal is to have things go as well as can be during a transition – find gaps, line up staffing/resources, etc.

Subcommittee and Workgroup Reports

Equine Trailways Subcommittee

Sandra Batie, Chair, reported that she turned down an invite to join the Pigeon River Country (PRC) Equine Committee. Jane Carmichael was formally recognized for her service on the ETS at the November meeting. Chair Batie is currently working with Jim Radabaugh to identify Jane Carmichael's replacement. The Draft Report was accepted with a few edits and will become final once edits are complete. Chair Batie mentioned a visit to the Trolz Property (south of Jackson) - great potential. Sandra Batie has kept in contact with the PRC State Forest (Elk Hill campground) and talked about improved communication between the DNR/Equine Stakeholders.

Erin McDonough asked if the PRC Equine Committee was working on different recommendations than the ETS. **Donna Stine** stated that the ETS recommendations were for the state plan and the PRC Equine Committee was just for PRC equestrian issues. **Sandra Batie** stated that three ETS members were working with Paul Curtis on the DNR statewide trails plan.

Chair Wheatlake questioned who is responsible for the improvements at Elk Hill. Donna Stine replied that PRD/FRD are responsible and improvements should be complete by spring of 2013.

Nonmotorized Advisory Workgroup

Nancy Krupiarz read a report on behalf of Chair Gonway, which included the need to fill a vacancy. The last meeting was held in December 2011.

Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Workgroup

Tom Dunn, Chair, reported that the last meeting was held November 9, 2011. Lewis Shuler, Executive Director of the Cycle Conservation Club of Michigan, was recognized as a member of the National Off-Highway Hall of Fame. There was an overview of how safety training money is spent. The budget forecast included an ORV fee increase presented by the Governor. The members want to “get done, get it done right.” Need to find a legislator to support/carry on fee increase. Two legislative rides planned, one each in the UP/LP. Amy Trotter gave an overview of the land cap bill - the members recommend that the Council oppose this bill. Next meeting is scheduled for March 7.

Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup

Lee Murray, Chair, reported that it's been a hard winter for the program. The last meeting was held December 8, 2011 at Foggy's in the U.P. The next meeting is scheduled for March 1 in Ishpeming and they are looking forward to Chief Olson being there. The SAW is working with DNR staff (Steve Kubisiak) regarding the budget and will analyze the information at the June 19 meeting; Sharon Schaffer, Chief, Finance and Operations, will be in attendance. The final draft of the *Michigan Motorized Trail Sign Handbook* includes less signs (less cost, less follow up) and is estimated to save a couple thousand dollars. Sign orders are due in April. The SAW is looking into leasing equipment and will have information available at the next meeting. Trail issues off trail and on hill, and sand left by a lumber company on one of the trails. The DNR has been very cooperative.

Chair Wheatlake asked if the ETS and advisory workgroup appointments were up to date. **Jim Radabaugh** responded that he is currently working with Sandra Batie to fill the ETS vacancy for the U.P.

Review and Approval of Plan Outline

Donna Stine, Executive Division, distributed a revised *Statewide Trail Network Plan Outline* (Plan). The Plan fulfills one of DNR's Four Priorities. She reported that the DNR has created a work team to assist the Council and gave a brief overview of the staff assignments. It was suggested to the DNR Management Team to make Michigan “the trails state;” emphasized the importance to Michigan citizens and the economy.

Sandra Batie stated that she was concerned by the number of planning groups around the state and possibility for duplication, etc. of data. She also commented that the *Plan* needs “vision.”

Donna Stine mentioned the Traverse City Rotary support of Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) – that this can build a state network – community is intimately involved in bringing all trail users together. Hopefully this Plan will “bring all plans together.” Also there was preliminary discussion to change Pure Michigan and making the link better.

Erin McDonough sees trails as a connection to community and economics, “sense of place.” We need to figure out how to link the Council and the Parks Blue Ribbon Committee. She will send the Blue Ribbon “vision.”

The “Trail Town” concept started in Pennsylvania, it links trails to communities. Each community has their own “plan,” includes county/state partnerships.

Trail definitions within DNR to be worked on.

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Agenda

Donna Stine reviewed the Trust Fund projects list; \$13 million for trails, \$32 million total.

Bill Manson asked why trust fund money can't be used for snowmobile trails. **Jim Radabaugh** reported that they look to the program for money first.

Sandra Batie asked that the *Finalization of the ETS 2011 Recommendations Report* be added to the next meeting's agenda so that Council members could comment on it. The comments then could inform the equestrian workgroup plan for the Council's overall trail network plan.

STAFF REPORTS

James Radabaugh reported that snow permit sales are down. An ORV fee increase (\$35 to \$45) was proposed in the Governor's Budget.

Lt. Turner reported that there were 16 snowmobile fatalities (5 nonresidents), compared to 13 last year. The snowmobile sound testing was reinstated for 2-stroke only. There are two new ORV instructor schools scheduled for the first two weekends in June.

Todd Neiss commented on Timber harvest practices; open houses are scheduled for public input and encourage trail user participation.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Nancy Krupiarz discussed SB499 - telecommunication company easements along rail trails. She thought the Council may want to take a position on this bill.

Chair Wheatlake thinks the Council should be neutral, perhaps Snowmobile, ORV, ETS, can put the pressure on.

Paul Yauk will provide the DNR fee schedule for easements.

Chair Wheatlake asked the Council members to comment on how things were going. The overall response was "all okay" (moving along, moving forward; good job; on track, good shape; further along thanks to help from DNR, specifically Paul Curtis; really great). **Carolyn Kane** has concerns regarding funding, where's it coming from; private partnerships? Not seen in trails priorities. She is excited in regards to the *Plan* and its objectives, and cited the Michigan Trailways and Greenways Alliance that took one year and 100 trail advocates to create, and the Michigan Rails at the Crossroads – both went on the shelf and not used.

Chair Wheatlake to meet with Erin McDonough and the Blue Ribbon Committee.

NEXT MEETING

April 23, 2012, Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center

Meeting adjourned at 1:26