

**Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Workgroup  
Draft Minutes  
March 13, 2019**

The regular meeting of the Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Workgroup (ORVAW) was called to order by Chairman Thomas Dunn on March 13, 2019 at 5:00 pm. Members present were: Chairman Dunn, Lewis Shuler, Keith Lynch, Paul Hittie, Don Helsel, James Hunt and James Maike.

The following Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff were present: Paul Yauk, Jessica Holley, Nikki Van Bloem, Amy Swainston, Rob Katona, Greg Kinser, Cpt. John Steele and Cpl. John Morey.

**Welcome and Introductions**

Chair Dunn welcomed everyone and asked everyone to mute their phones. A moment of silence was requested for ORV member, Tim Kobasic, who had recently passed. James Maike asked that this meeting be dedicated to him.

Chair Dunn asked everyone to introduce themselves. Part of the introductions included three new ORVAW group members, Curt Brower, Keith Lynch and Paul Hittie. Each member spoke a little about themselves. Chair Dunn also introduced the fill in person for taking notes, Vicki Carpenter, since Barbara Graves recently took another position within DNR and the position is temporarily vacant. Mrs. Carpenter is the recording secretary for the Lansing Motorcycle Club and is also Jim Hunt's wife.

**Action Items**

MOTION: J. Maike moved the approval of the September 12, 2018 meeting minutes, seconded by J. Hunt. Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: D. Helsel asked to take items out of order on the agenda for the March 13, 2019. It was seconded by K. Lynch and it carried unanimously.

MOTION: J. Hunt moved the approval of the amended meeting agenda. It was seconded by D. Helsel and carried unanimously.

**Business Items for Discussion**

Handbook of Michigan ORV Laws – DNR Law Enforcement Div. (LED) has provided distribution of handbooks for years. Approximately 70,000 were thrown out. There was a surplus of funds from the previous fiscal year and these funds were used to print 30,000 copies of the revised handbook. LED made some changes and others are still needed, please let LED know so they will be made for the next printing. Cpt. Steele is wanting to encourage ORV riders to remind folks to ride right. It was discussed that the handbooks be placed at Secretary of State (SOS) offices, DNR Customer Service

Center (CSC) locations as well as MDOT rest areas/welcome centers to get as many as possible out in the hands of the public.

ORV Special Grant Process - D. Helsel questioned the financial liability of special grants, would it be the organization, the contractor or the DNR. He asked that the DNR provide the reply in writing. J. Holley explained that there was a thousand dollars written in each grant when it is awarded. With the proper paperwork and approvals this additional funding can be used. A list of grant projects was passed out to everyone along with costs associated with the projects. P. Yauk had no formal answers for liability and asked that it be tabled until the next meeting. D. Helsel questioned why there's been delays in getting funds and other information out to organizations providing work, P. Yauk said this year will be much better. He asked that this be put in the June agenda.

Current and future ORV grant projects were discussed, and it was encouraged to get the word out to the public, as part of a marketing plan, so that they know where their ORV dollars are at work. These could be trail replacement, new bridges, culverts, and trail re-routes. DNR Press Releases are periodically done for events such as state park improvements, high lighting conservation officers that find missing people in the woods, saving people from ice flows in Saginaw Bay and arresting poachers. Jessica would like to hear about things in the ORV community so that they could be put out as press releases like other DNR highlights.

Marketing - The Geels 2018 Trail Bed Restoration by the Great Lakes Dual Sports is a perfect example of how grant dollars can be used. Last years funds for Houghton County trail damage was covered 75% by FEMA funds and 25% by state funds, is another great example. The marketing for ORV should follow snowmobile marketing to keep informality within the department. This year will be somewhat smaller, since this year's big push is, that this year is the Parks Division's 100<sup>th</sup> year, but Jessica still wants to hear good news stories. Chair Dunn said it is important to get the news to non-users so people can understand that ORV's are not bad.

ORV funding/budget - D. Helsel asked that this be carried over to the next meeting.

Chair Dunn asked P. Yauk the 5-year plan and future goals of the ORV program. N. Van Bloem said the RFP for consultants has funding and should go out in a month or so. It would probably take a year to complete. She said she is looking for input from the group and is looking forward to working together. DNR Parks Div. did a strategic plan to tie ORV's into Parks Division. P. Yauk explained that the ORV program is going through lots of changes with new users. The ORV area in Oakland County is in full speed forward and P. Yauk reminded everyone that lots of toys can work together.

The sustainability of the system and safety needs are a concern. The side by sides are causing damage. It was brought up in discussion if there were weight restrictions on trails. T. Dunn expressed concern about straightening trails would lead to faster speeds. L. Shuler stated that with more forest and county roads open to ORV's maybe some of the ORV traffic would expand outside of the trail system. A jeep jamboree was held and a restaurant that is normally closed opened for the event and that the jeeps had a minimal impact on trails and had signs out that an event was in progress. This helped the local community with extra business and was successful.

MSA, SAW, DNR & ORV's – D. Helsel asked if there would be any efficiency to have joint clubs that provide both snow and summer motorized programs. There would not be a single permit for both and that maybe it would be best that they work together but remain separate. K. Lynch raised support for keeping the programs separate. Chair Dunn they should be kept separate to protect the trails, L. Shuler stated it was just a money grab. There is already grading, grooming and maintenance provided for ORV trails. J. Maiké agreed for the 24", 50" and 72" trail widths. Seasonal trails were briefly discussed, and it was agreed upon that the folks in the lower peninsula would not agree to that plan. There is already a lot of confusion with the mixed trails and that the orange snowmobile diamonds are of no benefit to the ORV program.

Winter ORV Program - A pilot program for winter ORV was done on Drummond Island's 83,000 acres, it was asked to be put on the agenda in the future for further discussion.

### **DNR Staff Reports**

Ron Yesney – Upper Peninsula had more snow than normal this year and that ORV's and snowmobiles are getting along.

Greg??? – No winter ORV events in northern lower peninsula. ORV trail impact was minimal with large snowstorms.

Jeff – DNR Western Upper Peninsula, shared that funding for a new bridge was approved. Funding for bridge was split evenly between Michigan and Wisconsin. The trail will go into Wakefield and will consist of 11 miles of infrastructure improvements.

R. Katona – Central Upper Peninsula, snow is finally melting, Marquette received over 4 feet of snow. Michigan will have new cycle trail.

Chair Dunn thanked the DNR staff for their time and efforts and for taking extra time away from families.

### **Public Appearance**

Greg from Kalkaska is newly retired and has been riding for years. He's a quad rider and has concerns about the side by sides all over the routes and he would like to keep narrower trails where side by sides can't be. He said side by sides are too fast and woops in the trails get worse quickly with more traffic and higher speeds. He's also a safety teacher.

Bill Manson – Michigan Snowmobile Assoc. over the last 4 or 5 years more clubs are becoming dual ORV/Snow combination organizations. There was an open meeting held in Mackinaw City to form a new group that was open to the public.

### **Special Recognition**

Lewis Schuler was given the Trail Champion plaque for all his many years of service.

With no further time and business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 6:59 pm.

MOTION: D. Helsel made motion to adjourn, seconded by J. Hunt, motion passed unanimously.

DRAFT