

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
OFF-ROAD VEHICLE ADVISORY WORKGROUP (ORVAW)**

**MEETING MINUTES
March 11, 2015
Approved on May 30, 2015**

Ramada Hotel in Lansing

PRESENT FOR THE WORKGROUP

Thomas Dunn, Chair
Lewis Shuler
Don Helsel
Skip Schulz
Tim Kobasic

ABSENT FOR THE WORKGROUP

Amy Trotter
Pat Brower

PRESENT FOR STAFF

Jason Fleming, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD)
Richard Kennedy, PRD
Tim Schreiner, PRD
Rob Katona, PRD
Todd Neiss, PRD
Corporal John Morey, LED

PRESENT FOR FOREST SERVICE

Kristen Thrall, Huron-Manistee National Forest

PUBLIC ATTENDEES

Natural Resources Commissioner (NRC) John Matonich

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Dunn called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. He began the meeting by recognizing recent Department of Natural Resources (DNR) retirees Jim Radabaugh (Statewide Trail Coordinator) and Steve Kubisiak (RV program manager) for all of their efforts related to the ORV program. **Jason Fleming** provided that Paul Yauk is working out of class as the

Statewide Trail Coordinator and Richard. Kennedy is working similarly as the ORV program manager.

A request was made by **Tim Kobasic** and accepted to amend the agenda regarding the event permit process with the United States Forest Service. **Skip Schulz** requested and was accepted to add the multi-state ORV meeting to the agenda.

MINUTES

The November 5, 2014 Minutes were presented and reviewed. A motion was made by **Lewis Shuler** to approve the minutes, seconded by **Don Helsel**. Motion was approved unanimously.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Chair Dunn formally recognized NRC Commissioner John Matonich who was in attendance. Mr. Matonich discussed his history of being involved with the ORV program. Mr. Matonich's company was responsible for designing the St. Helen's scramble area. Mr. Matonich recognizes ORV as an expanding form of recreation and is willing to offer support though the NRC.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Jason Fleming provided updates from the two subcommittees, ORV Free Weekend Metrics and Projects and use from additional funds. For the Free ORV Weekends Metrics (Helsel, Kobasic, Maia Turek), discussions were made to do two surveys during both dates. The first date (June 13-14) will be a limited survey to test out the procedures. The second date (August 22-23) would be the full survey effort. We are looking to utilize volunteers and collect data to be later submitted by a company or non-profit. **Jason Fleming** also provided information about putting counters into the system to start getting base use information for all days, not just the Free ORV weekends. **Lewis Shuler** asked if this was for both peninsulas, the survey would cover both. **Tim Kobasic** stated we need to look at the data to see if there are regional implications. The wording on the surveys may need to have some components to discuss this issue. **Skip Schulz** asked what type of percentage of return we hope to see returned. **Jason Fleming** was hoping for approximately 15-20% of return.

Tim Kobasic and **Don Helsel** have been working with the Visitors Bureaus and local businesses in the Upper Peninsula to gauge assistance with volunteers.

UTILIZATION OF ADDITIONAL LICENSE REVENUES

Jason Fleming provided updates on project related to extra revenue from the increase of the ORV license and trail permits. The subcommittee (Shuler, Brower, and Helsel) has met three times. The consensus of the group was to focus on projects that address safety and

protection of the environment. There was also a feeling to spread the money out to as many projects as possible, giving those with a smaller amount of cost as a priority. For larger projects, the engineering studies could begin to be ready for future implementation.

The group also received input from the Recreation Specialists who were tasked with determining which projects they considered a priority. These reports would be combined to determine the final list and bring it back to ORVAW. **Chair Dunn** recommended enhancing the webpage to showcase projects.

STATE FOREST CAMPGROUNDS

The next item on the agenda was the discussion of opening State Forest roads in the Lower Peninsula for ORV use. **Lewis Shuler** proposed the idea to pass a motion to have the Department look into the change in the Administrative Rules which currently have a different rules for ORV use between the two peninsulas. **Lewis Shuler** believes there would be no cost to sign or develop the roads and that the change would fit into the Statewide Trail plan. **Don Helsel** asked if the sponsor would be required to grade and maintain. They would be considered roads and not subject to brushing/signing requirements.

Further discussion was had over the history of the designation and how it related to the 1970's with the idea of designating 1,500 miles of motorcycle trail and how State Game Areas and eventually Forest roads would be closed. **Tim Kobasic** question if this was a reversal of policy and if there were issues with use. **Skip Schulz** asked if forest certification would play a role and how it would impact how wood would be sold and it was determined that it would be a factor. Forest Resource Division would have to weigh in as it would impact their timber operations.

A motion was made by **Skip Schulz** to require the Department to look into the prospect of removing the restriction on the administrative rule for ORV's on State Forest road. The motion was seconded by **Don Helsel** and unanimously approved.

Chair Dunn recommended that ORVAW invites Forest Resource Division to the next meeting. Understands the timber industry is a multibillion dollar business, so the discussion goes beyond recreation. **Rob Katona** reflected that the Lower Peninsula has more ORV use than the Upper Peninsula, so there are more impacts to the resources. The service connectors help to address the issues.

UPDATE ON SLORVA

Jason Fleming and **Tim Schreiner** discussed the issue with the ORV voucher center and the process that began with the proposed reservable dune passes to replace the system used for over 15 years. The issues over the reservation system led to a public meeting where task force groups were formed to develop a strategy to change the issues. The taskforce, consisting of public, DNR and utilizing local public safety officials, met 2 times and developed a strategy based on consensus. A subset of the taskforce group was created to work on developing short term objectives to get into place prior to the April 1st

opening. **Tim Schreiner** used an example that certain members of the group were meeting on Friday (March 13th) to look to see if the entrance ramp to the ORV could be widened. July 3rd is looking to be a key volunteer event.

Chair Dunn would like to commend the DNR on their efforts to work with the group. **Tim Kobasic** questioned how a system without the current dune ready vouchers would address peak flow problems. The voucher system provided an even flow and there was a significant amount of impact on the County Sheriff prior to the voucher system. **Tim Schreiner** and **Jason Fleming** both mentioned that this is a work in progress and they expect issues to arise, but the key item is that it was supported by all parties and they all have an investment in the process, not just the DNR.

SIGNAGE

Next item on the agenda related to the plan for moving signs off of trees and onto posts.

Chair Dunn asked what kind of funds are available. **Jason Fleming** mentioned there are funds set aside in Recreational Trails Program (RTP) to work on the purchase of the signs, but there is a question on the additional cost of putting signs out on this level compared to the typical signing and brushing allotments.

Rob Katona mentioned that volunteer labor on the routes are already done. 50" and cycle trails have not yet been explored. The new Carsonite signs with the adhesive shield would be used and there is a task of removing signs on trees. Upper Peninsula groups feel it's above and beyond normal signage.

Rob Katona mentioned using MDOT schedule C for hourly rates to document their time with existing. The Department is looking to purchase the drivers for the clubs, possibly 3 per club, on purchasing of drivers. One area was estimated that of a cost of \$3500 which includes the cost of the posts and the adhesive shields, and labor. This could be done through a Special maintenance grant.

Lewis Shuler mentioned that schedule C does not cover ATV use, which is what is being used on narrow track trails. \$2.4 million is still a fix situation. Need to clarify 1/10 of mile as opposed to ¼ mile it is now. Drummond Island has issues with the rock and no interest in placing the signs into rock.

Lewis Shuler added there could be issues on county roads and right-of-ways. Need to work with the road commissions. **Don Helsel** asked that a need for a Carsonite puller to the equipment list would be crucial.

It was discussed on the ability to move towards a study plan for a pilot program. The issue is that routes, 50", and single track trails would all have different costs, so one amount will not fit all. **Richard Kennedy** mentioned that stickers are part of the sign.

Todd Neiss mentioned that this could be a discussion point for the ORV kickoff meetings that are happening the next two Saturdays (March 14, 21). A recommendation to come back to the next meeting with a plan.

DETERMINE MEETING LOCATIONS

Next on the agenda was the discussion of the locations for next three meetings. The August and November meetings will try to be scheduled at the Michigan United Conservation Club. The idea is to have the May meeting in the Upper Peninsula. There was discussion on several dates and the date was decided to keep in during the mid-week on the 13th of May and that we would look for alternative travel to get some of the members and staff to the meeting.

PROPOSED LUODS

The next item on the agenda was the two Land Use Order of the Directors that are coming up. The first was the order for the Soo to Raco route that would restrict the use to ORV 65" or less. **Chair Dunn** questioned if we were adding a new fourth width to the program. There are also issues with some 65" restriction being created because there are pieces of equipment of this size that may not be able to navigate on area that are smaller. **Pat Brower**, who was unable to attend the meeting added a statement of non-support due to the inconsistency of how it being applied on State lands. The Keweenaw restriction was acceptable because it was an issue of the public landowners not wanting street legal vehicles on their property. This is public land. A motion was made by **Skip Schulz** to support the LUOD to restrict use to 65" or less; seconded by (**Don Helsel**). Three in support, two (**Shuler** and **Brower**) oppose the recommendation.

The second LUOD is for the Marquette to Munising which would remove all restrictions. The trail is currently restricted to 50", but the trail has the ability to utilize full size and side by side ORV use. **Skip Schulz** made a motion to support the LUOD, seconded by **Tim Kobasic**. Approved unanimously.

Skip Schulz provided an update on the Multi-State ORV meeting. Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota planned a route to the UP in the summer of 2016. Looking for people to ride for support on Multiple Sclerosis. There was more discussion on connector trails from State to State. John Chad was working on the ride across the bridge, which **Lewis Shuler** provided an update on the event happening on October 3rd 2015.

Next on the agenda was **Tim Kobasic** discussing issues with trying to schedule events one year in advance. Looking to support for an ATV event in the Hiawatha Forest and it takes a year in advance to get approvals from the United States Forest Service (USFS). **Tim Kobasic** feels that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the State of Michigan and USFS should include language on consistent permit applications. A workshop was scheduled in December to discuss issues.

USDA Forest Service – Kristen Thrall, **Huron-Manistee National Forest** mentioned that it is six months in advance according to policy and that policies are not set through an MOU. **Tim Kobasic** has concerns regarding the issues with event planning in regards to the nesting raptors. Special Use and Events are the same, recreation to road permits to guides. Permits are at the discretion of the local manager. Huron Manistee, has a lot of requests. Long term permits can be for five years, still need for review.

The under 75 people rule would have prohibited the need for a permit as long as it was a non-commercial event doesn't require a permit.

Kristen Thrall provided that the Tread Lightly to do Ride on Campaign is coming. It's a 5 year process and there is free training.

Law Enforcement Division – Corporal John Morey

John Morey provided updates on the attempt for three ORV Safety Trainer Academies. It was cut to two when one could not be created in southern Michigan. Small class at Munising. The Ram Center trainings will be held May 29th-31st and June 5-7th at the Ralph A. MacMullan Center for the instructors. **Tim Kobasic** has four new trainers in the UP.

Next piece of information was the number of Conservation Officer recruits at the current academy is 39, only a loss of three from the start.

Student numbers for ORV training in the 2014 calendar year were 3,285 students, on-line 717 through Fresh Air Educators. Still need more data.

ROUND TABLE: **Skip Schulz** mentioned how successful the sound program in snowmobiling was and if there is a way that it could work with ORV side. **John Morey** mentioned that they are still determining how effective it's working. Officers are trained on the decibel readers.

Chair Dunn mentioned the DNR, AMA District 14, and MCCC are working together with the Lansing Motorcycle Club on the annual tree planting. Work with the Department on the seedlings, 10,000 seedlings. 11 years, 85% success rate. Sunday April 26th is the date of the event.

MOTION: Don Helsel moved to adjourn; seconded by Tim Kobasic.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

NEXT MEETING

May 13, 2015. Time and location to be determined.