

SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY WORKGROUP (SAW)

MEETING MINUTES

June 21, 2011

Approved October 18, 2011

**B.J.'s Restaurant & Catering
990 North Center Street, Gaylord, Michigan 49735**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Lee Murray, Chairman, At-Large Representative
Al Green, Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA), Region II Representative, Cadillac
Bruce Wood, Trail Sponsors Representative
Rich Filley, Trail Sponsors Representative
Jim Duke, MSA, Region I Representative, Munising
Bill Manson, MSA, Region III Representative, Grand Rapids
Don Britton, At-Large Representative

DNR STAFF PRESENT

Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, Forest Management Division (FMD), Lansing
Lt. Andrew Turner, Law Enforcement Division (LED), Lansing
Cpl. John Morey, LED, Gaylord
Loretta Cwalinski, Secretary, Administration, Gaylord

PUBLIC ATTENDEES

John Houk, Presque Isle Sno-Trails
Jake Barton, St. Helen Snowpackers
Jim Dickie, MSA
Martin Cottle, Sault Snowmobile Association
Bill Lucas, Cadillac
Bradley Potter, Western Michigan Snow Council
Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club (OHSC)
Chris Carroll, OHSC
Melissa Marcott, Gaylord Area Snowmobile Trails Council

WELCOME

Chairman Murray called the Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup (SAW) meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., Tuesday, June 21, 2011, in Gaylord, Michigan.

AGENDA

Mr. Duke requested that the Munising Railroad Crossing be added to the Agenda; it will be added before Online Snowmobile Training Demo.

MINUTES

The minutes of the February 15, 2011 SAW meeting were acknowledged.

Motion was made by Mr. Duke, seconded by Mr. Britton, to adopt the minutes of the February 15, 2011 meeting. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**Military Bridge Update**

Mr. Duke said this has been a subject of concern for a long time. North of Bruce Crossing they would like to see a new bridge built alongside the highway bridge. Delay has been primarily cost, and also land ownership of both federal and state land. Still a work in progress. The DNR Western UP District Manager would like to see the traffic numbers on that trail. Northwestern Design estimated between \$570,000 and \$1 million for the project. The bid from UP Fabricating was \$370,000 to \$500,000. Counter is ready to be installed for this coming season. Data will be collected and a formal request made. He would like to see a subcommittee, or the SAW, pursue the project.

Mr. Wood asked about the process for getting quotes and who would be eligible. He added to make sure that detection for high speed versus low speed in bids is comparable. Discussion continued.

Mr. Manson asked Mr. Duke if he was personally in contact with the local club;

Mr. Duke said no. **Mr. Manson** responded that he would like Mr. Duke to get in touch with the club.

Chairman Murray suggested Mr. Duke create a subcommittee and act as Chair.

Mr. Britton said that there could be an issue with design versus construction and that UP Fabricating does both. He also added that he will be on the subcommittee.

Mr. Manson suggested that Mr. Duke meet with Dennis Nezich.

Terrorism Insurance (see memo)

Mr. Radabaugh said that this insurance could be eliminated from the policy and that the snowmobile program has not been reimbursing for it.

Snow Processor Demo Update

Mr. Litchfield distributed a color handout with information on processors that he feels reduce maintenance costs on groomers and overall save money for the snowmobile program. He noted that drags don't create a smooth enough trail the first time but that processors can. In addition, drags cause somewhat of an issue around corners whereas a processor can drag the snow down smoothly to avoid high banks. He noted four requests for processors were denied, and summarized that one club did purchase a processor with their own money.

Mr. Manson mentioned that Idaho, Minnesota, New York, and Wisconsin DNR have approved the processors.

Mr. Green said he agreed with everything Mr. Litchfield said but it (processor) cannot take the place of a drag. It is really necessary for both pieces. He added that the processors are much more maneuverable and great on twisting trails. He would like to see the DNR look into approving the processors.

Mr. Filley said they were the first club to use the demo and added they had a lot of trouble with it in the beginning. However, looking at the improvements shown currently, perhaps the newer unit would be acceptable. He would like to try a new one.

Mr. Litchfield said the cost is \$2,500 – \$3,500 more than original drags.

SAW Involvement in Equipment Selection Process

Mr. Manson said that it was decided at the last MSA meeting that they would like to be more involved in the discussion for equipment. He added that it is now June and there has been no information shared.

Mr. Radabaugh said that the last request was received the previous week and that the delay in information is due to late submittals of requests. He said he will share the criteria regarding equipment with the SAW, and that staff can meet with whomever the SAW chooses to be involved. A total of 51 clubs have requested new groomers. Out of 69 pieces – 48 requested new drags.

Mr. Manson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Britton, that after April 30 the DNR notifies SAW within a week which clubs have not turned in their requests so that the SAW can encourage them to do so. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Discussion continued on the amendment issue regarding fire season and possible delay concerns at that time. **Chairman Murray** would like to appoint one of the SAW members to follow-up (act as a contact person) and report back, and to speak with the field contacts to see what the delay is for equipment requests. **Chairman Murray** asked for a volunteer – **Mr. Manson** said he would.

Grooming Rate Workgroup Update

Mr. Manson said the workgroup discussed several items – fuel, routine maintenance, labor, etc. (17 items total). Average cost per mile of 12 of those 17 to determine the average hourly rate. He wondered when the DNR needed to know to have that information in club packets.

Mr. Radabaugh said by October. **Mr. Manson** feels that the last 3-5 years information would be ideal for a good average for routine maintenance and for labor. The subcommittee could gather information, have it by August for SAW to vote by e-mail, and be completed before the next SAW meeting.

Chairman Murray agreed and thought perhaps shared by teleconference for voting. He would like to be copied on the e-mail to Mr. Radabaugh with that information. **Mr. Radabaugh** said that for their discussion and the vote for a new rate will have to be a public meeting, and be ready for public formal action by the October 18 meeting. He said there should be no delay after the vote since we have a budget.

Messick/Copemish MDOT Owned RR Grade

Mr. Radabaugh reported that Senator Booher contacted him and would like to see a recreation trail at the corridor near Cadillac, and asked to meet on-site for a discussion. There are a few bridges and projects that were discussed; roughly costing \$2 million. Their meeting date will probably be in July. **Mr. Green** would also like to attend. Discussion continued.

Munising RR Crossing

Mr. Duke said that this trail was closed until a railroad crossing permit could be obtained. Someone with the railroad company said they observed an inappropriate vehicle crossing at the trail. Until permits were obtained, the trail would be closed. No one was notified of the closing. The grant sponsor had tried discussing with the company and asked Ron Yesney, UP Recreation Specialist, for help. He added that Mr. Yesney had submitted all of the documents to the Canadian National Railroad (CNR) on March 24, and again on May 18 after being notified that they could not find the documents. The documentation has been forwarded to the proper CNR group, but Mr. Duke feels that the CNR won't move forward until they get pressure from another source. He's afraid the trail will not be back open for this coming season. **Mr. Duke** would like to make a motion that the SAW move forward to contact legislators.

Mr. Radabaugh suggested that any correspondence come from the local club and not from the SAW, as provided in the by-laws that would prevent such correspondence. **Mr. Manson** asked Mr. Duke to prepare a letter and present it to MSA so it could be endorsed for a legal crossing.

Mr. Duke withdrew his original motion.

STAFF REPORTS**Forest Management Division**

Mr. Radabaugh discussed the 2013 Snowmobile Registration Decal update – Steve Kubisiak checked with Secretary of State and they are replacing those decals at no charge; they think they have discovered a material problem and new decals should be good.

Chairman Murray asked if MSA could put a brief note in their newsletter stating the problem and that it has been resolved.

Snowmobile Season Summary

Mr. Radabaugh reviewed the information and will have it added to the minutes and e-mailed to the SAW.

Mr. Manson asked about last year's special maintenance information that Mr. Kubisiak was to send out - they have not received that yet.

Mr. Radabaugh added that he received a resolution from Forest County, Wisconsin, to come up with a reciprocal Snowmobile Trail Pass with Wisconsin.

Mr. Manson brought up the issue of night grooming – he said there was a discussion on a stipend between night grooming and day grooming, but there's been no decision. **Mr. Britton** added that he basically wanted to see consistency in grooming throughout the state.

Mr. Radabaugh said that he will discuss with the field contacts to resolve that. **Mr. Britton** asked for a recommendation - he will get that to Mr. Radabaugh before the next meeting.

Mr. Green said that he wanted to revisit the snow processor discussion.

Mr. Green made a motion, seconded by Mr. Manson, that the DNR consider the processors as an acceptable piece of equipment to purchase through the program for clubs that are interested.

Mr. Manson said that he would like to hear from members of the SAW that actually groom. Discussion continued.

All supported the motion.

Snowmobile Safety Online Course

Cpl. Morey connected via an online presentation and conference call with Kerry Moher, VP of Business Development, www.snowmobilecourse.com. The course is broken down to five chapters; state of Michigan laws are located throughout. There is a timer installed so that students need to spend a certain amount of time on each page before moving on. The total estimated time to complete the course is three hours. The course is narrated and takes a wide range of ages into consideration. There is a quiz at the end of each chapter, and students are required to have a minimum of 80 percent before moving onto the next chapter. There are 60 questions on final test, which also include Michigan specific questions. The course cost is \$29.95. The study guide can be accessed for free. This would be a supplement to safety classes, not a replacement.

Cpl. Morey will share the website link with the SAW and MSA (who will also share with their Board of Directors). Once the LED receives approval from the SAW, the DNR will be ready to move forward and make it available.

Mr. Wood made a motion, seconded by Mr. Duke, that SAW approve the online program and requests the DNR move forward. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Chairman Murray reviewed the sign discussion from the last meeting. **Mr. Wood** said that the sign issue has been resolved and there is a recommended sign handbook.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Mr. Lucas mentioned that on the bottom of page six of the Motorized Trail Sign Handbook, the "legal requirement" section states that any issues be worked out locally. He also wants to make sure the DNR provides the stickers that they were told would be supplied. Discussion continued.

Chairman Murray reiterated that Mr. Lucas feels the document is workable but the existing problem with ORV signs, whether it's bagging them or taking them down, needs to be clarified.

Mr. Manson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Duke, that the SAW approve the Draft Number Five Motorized Trail Sign Handbook with the exception of the provision that the

ORV required non trail stop signs be removed or bagged at the ORV programs expense during the snowmobile season. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Mr. Houk asked again about the Rogers City spur that they have been trying to get. He has not heard anything after an e-mail from Bill O'Neill that Roger Storm would have that information.

Mr. Houk said there was a proposal sent to the DNR from Carmeuse but there was no response. **Mr. Radabaugh** asked when that meeting was with the City manager – it was in April. **Mr. Radabaugh** clarified that the corridor was a gift from the railroad, it was not purchased. He reviewed the complications of the property over the years and was not aware of the most recent proposal but believes Roger Storm should have some information. He added that they are continuing to pursue it. **Mr. Radabaugh** will gather as much updated information as possible for an agenda item at the October meeting.

Mr. Cottle stated that Kinross Township is getting out of trail grooming, and Sault Snowmobile Association will be taking over those trails. Reference the Kinross groomer - 2006 Tucker was 75/25 cost share - could the program purchase that groomer and are the Sault Club close enough in trail miles to be given that groomer? **Mr. Manson** asked if Kinross has said what they were going to do with that groomer.

Mr. Manson made a motion, Mr. Green supported, to recommend to the DNR that 2006 Tucker from Kinross Twp. be paid off to Kinross Twp. and the groomer and the program drag be transferred to Sault Snowmobile Association. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Mr. Cottle also mentioned a map the DNR has available online – there is an orange sign to Barbeau that shouldn't be there. Staff will update the map. He also wondered about a section of trail west of Brimley – a railroad grade thought to be owned locally, but he believes it's still owned by the railroad. **Mr. Manson** suggested he work with Mr. Lucas to figure that out. If it's still an issue, bring it to the October meeting.

Mr. Manson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Britton. Meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup will be October 18, 2011 at Ralph A. McMullan Conference Center, Roscommon.