

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY WORKGROUP (SAW)**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**June 18, 2013  
9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

**BJ's Restaurant and Catering  
990 N. Center Street  
Gaylord, Michigan 49735**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**DNR STAFF PRESENT**

Jackie Blodgett, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD), Lansing  
Jason Fleming, PRD, Lansing  
Loretta Cwalinski, Finance and Operations Division (FOD), Gaylord

**PUBLIC ATTENDEES**

**Bill Taylor, Lewiston Fun Ones  
Mike Beard, Bader & Sons  
Joe Kuchnicki, Harbor Springs 2159 & MSA  
Bill Lucas, Cadillac**

**WELCOME**

**Chairman Murray** called the SAW meeting to order at 9:32 a.m., June 18, 2013, in Gaylord, Michigan. He welcomed everyone and introduced himself, followed by introductions of the workgroup members, and the few attendees.

**Chairman Murray** asked for any additional agenda items.

**Mr. Wood** asked to have added to the agenda a discussion on what to do with equipment when it's no longer usable. Also, add under Old Business, use of 100% equipment for non-snowmobile use.

**Mr. Green** would like to discuss, under New Business, grants for storm damage cleanup.

**Cost shared tractor; DNR & the program - Mr. Wood** would like to see that on the agenda, under weekly grooming report update.

**Groomer Equipment Inspections** not on agenda, still open. **Chairman Murray** would like to see it move forward and put under New Business, discussed after lunch.

**Motion was made by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Duke, to adopt the revised agenda for the June 18, 2013 SAW meeting. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

**Motion was made by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Wood, to allow the Chairman to take agenda items out of order at his discretion. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

**Chairman Murray** asked for approval of the February 28, 2013 minutes.

**Mr. Manson** said he was incorrectly quoted in the February 28, 2013 minutes as saying he would write a check from MSA for a groomer inspection. **Chairman Murray** said that he was the one who offered to personally write a check.

**Motion was made by Mr. Green, seconded by Mr. Britton, to accept the minutes as corrected from the February 28, 2013 SAW meeting. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

In review of the minutes from the February 28, 2013 meeting - Equipment meeting did not take place, and that meeting will be rescheduled.

December 5<sup>th</sup> meeting location will be discussed.

**Munising RR Update** – No updates yet, so was not put on agenda today.

**Military Hill Update** should be moved to October meeting.

**Pere Marquette SA** – reimbursement and discussion; report or update on that needed today.

**Chairman Murray** asked if **Mr. Fleming** is ready to discuss sending non-compliance letters. Mr. Duke's issue has been resolved, but in general **Mr. Fleming** said he doesn't like the inconsistency in how the field handles these situations; he feels those letters should come from himself, but he needs information from the field, etc. to keep him informed and for documentation.

**Weekly Grooming Report** – Will be discussed later.

**Snowmobile Events Permits** – **Mr. Fleming** said the SAW and ORV advisory group together with FRD and PRD staff are looking at what really matters if a permit is required. It's not an easy process, particularly with scoring; there's a wide range of Use Categories as well as the approval path that needs to be discussed.

**Mr. Duke** asked about winter activities, in particular in the Munising area; are the non-motorized folks put through the same process? **Mr. Fleming** said yes, they will be. The next group that will be looked at are equestrian, so there will be more consistency.

**Mr. Manson** asked about two scenarios for snowmobile events: if there is an event, gathered at a privately owned space such as a hotel, sporadic use, mixed trail system, no permit would be necessary. The second scenario is similar, but the group using a clubhouse as base, several groups going from there out to do a fun run, using state trails as well as federal and county; they've been told in the past that they do need a permit. PRD can't issue a permit for any other property except on state land. Discussion continued. **Mr. Fleming** said that posting is a defining characteristic when it comes to permits. Basically the permit process will come down to two levels of a permit – one would be no cost. Staff would also have direction when a permit is not required, regardless of size of the event. Penalties for not having a permit could be a civil infraction. **Mr. Fleming** would like SAW to review, and also give recommendations. ORVAW (Off Road Vehicle Advisory Workgroup) moved upon and supported the plan.

**Mr. Manson moved to support the plan as presented, seconded by Mr. Duke. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

**Mr. Wood** advised that many of the grant sponsors failed to return the requested paperwork. Some sent it in, many did not. There were six to eight grant sponsors that were involved. This topic will be put on the October meeting agenda.

**Cost-share Update** – **Mr. Wood** reminded the group that when the DNR got out of grooming completely, one groomer was used by FRD and should come back to the program, adding that it, along with three others, were purchased entirely

with program funds. He would like to see proof from the PO that no snowmobile program funds were used. **Chairman Murray** asked that this be confirmed to the SAW.

**Use of Equipment for Non-snowmobile Use** – **Mr. Fleming** said that in his review, there was nothing in any documents mentioned and that 100 % usage was not specifically addressed. He does not know how much he can go backward, but he'd like to go forward. Discussion continued.

**Mr. Wood** wants it known that he has a problem when someone uses that tractor for farming, and if ORV trails are groomed, and the program is not being reimbursed. **Chairman Murray** called for a solution. **Mr. Fleming** will continue the review and share his findings.

**Budget Update** – **Ms. Blodgett** shared documents and spreadsheets that summarized 2010, 2011, and 2012 expenditures and revenues, and then projected for 2013 along with actual 2013. Discussion over actual expenditures continued, for information that can be shared with the public. This group would like to see more of a breakdown of those numbers, but will not be shared beyond this group. At the next meeting she will have those details available. **Chairman Murray** thanked Ms. Blodgett for her information and noted that the information was well presented. **Mr. Manson** would like a cost analysis sent electronically; **Mr. Fleming** will make sure that's done.

**Mr. Fleming** said he will have Richard Kennedy further explain how some of the costs are split out, particularly to different groups throughout the state. Discussion continued on fund balances.

**Mr. Wood** feels the system is being abused, and that clubs are asking repair facilities to create more maintenance records than are really needed. There is some dishonesty in the repair of equipment. Discussion continued on the issue of auditing and how to watch those problems. The equipment is a major investment, and it's a concern if there is abuse in the repair system.

**Mr. Britton** said that an audit is critical – we need to know what's out there, and the maintenance needs to be looked at closer.

**Snowmobile Trail Inspection Log** – **Mr. Britton** asked that the DNR make it a rule that the log must be completed. He would also like to see an electronic version, and discuss how it would fit into the handbook. SAW will look it over, and make a recommendation.

**Cost Analysis** - **Mr. Fleming** will send this out electronically.

**Fuel Adjustment Memo** was sent out on the 7<sup>th</sup> by Mr. Kennedy. Bruce Currier, Account Technician, PRD will be coming to the October meeting, and to the pre-season kickoff meetings as well.

**Sign Manual Discussion – Mr. Manson** advised that he attended a conference call along with Chief Ron Olson and John Loman, (retired safety employee of GM). Mr. Loman requested that his State Representative initiate the call because he thinks the reason there were more accidents last year is because some of the signage has been removed. **Mr. Manson** said that he made it clear that there were more miles ridden this year because of the good snow conditions. Mr. Manson also said, "all snowmobilers need to be safe, and pay attention to speed and trail conditions."

**Mr. Wood** was in on a discussion of signs at the International Snowmobile Congress conference for signs. He reviewed the use of a Slow sign, but US Forest Service wants the qualifier included as well. Various scenarios were discussed. He'd like to recommend that the DNR put the Slow signs in the inventory but have it used sparingly. **Mr. Duke** does not agree – he feels bridge signs should be back in, and thinks it's dangerous without them. Lengthy discussion continued on Slow sign and marking bridges as well. **Mr. Lucas** feels that less is better – people should be looking at the trail, and not the signs.

**Mr. Kuchnicki** said that Daniel Pratt, Fire Officer, Gaylord FRD, had some good pointers about man-made items that could be dangerous, like fences. He feels the only sign that should be added, should be something for man-made hazards.

**Mr. Taylor** wondered if he should use a Bridge or Bridge Ahead - he thinks what they use now is sufficient. Hazard sign or two is plenty.

**Mr. Fleming** told about a several hour grooming experience he had last winter in the UP, and some sign concerns they came across. He feels there could be some tweaking in the sign manual. A December ride on the Haywire Trail would be a good experience for him to see a different condition.

**Mr. Green** said that the bridge situation shouldn't be ignored. Comments that he has received at shows expressed that something warning a bridge ahead is important.

**Mr. Wood** said comments he's received were that Bridge Ahead was the most important.

**Motion was made by Mr. Wood, seconded by Mr. Britton, that SAW recommends to DNR that Slow signs should be placed as per all warning signs, before bridges. Mr. Duke opposed. Motion for adoption carried.**

**Mr. Green made a motion, seconded by Mr. Britton, that the same Slow sign be used for special circumstances defined by the field contact and grant sponsor along with the object marker.**

Re-discussion took place on usage of various signs, and the hazardous areas that could be encountered.

**Mr. Taylor** does not want to have to replace the downhill signs with slow signs; on their trail they had over 200 removed. Could result in more confusion.

**Chairman Murray called for the vote.**

**Motion opposed by majority.**

**Grant Handbook Discussion** – **Mr. Fleming** said that most of the corrections that have been made were dates and changes of Division names, there were no substantial changes made except for an audited item, done by the Auditor General's Office. Recommendations were made that had to do with invoices. When there is a request for reimbursement, the original invoice must be supplied, and the Sponsor can make copies. This will be in bold in the Handbook for clarity. The Handbook will be sent to the SAW, and any comments, etc. should be sent back within two weeks. In the Trail Grooming Equipment Grant Agreement, an item was added to clarify that equipment shall be used solely for use on snowmobile trails (entirely clarified on #3).

**Mr. Manson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Filley, that the Department send a memo to grant sponsors that own 100% funded equipment to be used solely on snowmobile activities and trails unless approved in writing by the Department. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

**Mr. Britton moved to ask the Department to put the grooming standards along with the inspection form in the Snowmobile Grant Handbook. No support for the motion.**

Discussion on partial grooming and reimbursement began, whether or not something needs to be inserted into the manual to rewrite that section. This needs to be decided on at this meeting. If a groomer goes the whole distance of a trail, that should be reimbursed. **Mr. Britton** has been aware of grooming not being completed, but being reimbursed as a whole segment. **Mr. Wood** thinks that perhaps segments should be redone – this could be decided between the Department and the grant sponsors. Discussion continued on rewording the trail reimbursement.

**Mr. Britton moved, seconded by Mr. Manson, to approve the Snowmobile Trail Standards with the exception of the grooming regularity and the**

**partial grooming, as amended, along with the snowmobile trail inspection log. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.**

**Discussion from Equipment Subgroup** – **Mr. Fleming** wants to have a July meeting – the 17th? Straits area is recommended. The area will be determined; perhaps the USFS office in St. Ignace.

**Michigan Trails Week** – **Mr. Fleming** said that this is either the second or third annual meeting for that event. It's all trail use – Maia Stephens is leading the discussion. If SAW has any ideas, please let them know.

**Grants for Storm Damage Cleanup** – **Mr. Green** has been asked to bring this issue to the workgroup. There was funding for a particular cleanup, and a funding request has been submitted, but he would like to know if there is an avenue to get the funding sooner, to get moving on it. **Mr. Taylor** has an estimate of approx. \$10,000 - \$12,000. Are those dollars being used correctly? Also, he added their trail is a mess – he has seen the whole trail and it needs to be taken care of. Could there be an amendment?

**Mr. Fleming** said there is a lot more to look at considering ending of grants, overlapping, etc. Perhaps there is something that can be done yet this cycle – he will discuss with Mr. Kennedy. He will contact Mr. Taylor directly.

**Mr. Wood** wanted clarification on the Schedule C and exactly what it is to be used for. Mr. Fleming will find out and advise. If there's equipment rental, a Schedule C is used, but he will get clarification.

Location of December 5<sup>th</sup> meeting will be in Munising, exact location will be determined.

**Grooming Equipment Inspections** – **Mr. Fleming** wants to know exactly what the goal is, and how it will be done. Where will the dollars come from? There is value, but details need to be worked out. Establish a contract? He would like feedback on the best approach.

**Mr. Green** said it should be uniform. There could be abuse with it, and perhaps a contract could be established. **Mr. Wood** added that the less people involved the more uniform.

**Chairman Murray** said this will be discussed at July 17th Equipment meeting. Qualifications and standards need to be looked at.

**Reimbursement to Pere Marquette (PM)** – **Mr. Wood** said this issue deals with the sentence that was just reworded from the Handbook. He would like to see PM still get reimbursed for that groom. **Mr. Fleming** said there will be a decision.

**Letter of Non-Compliance** – **Mr. Duke** said he thinks that there won't be any more problems as in the past. The issue that their tractor did not have the fuel capacity has been addressed. They have been carrying extra fuel as needed. Trail improvements are coming along. They are communicating more closely within their group as well, and the trail will continue to be spot-checked. There have been more compliments than complaints recently. He would like to recommend that this be a closed issue. He does not feel a letter should be written unless the situation changes.

**Chairman Murray** mentioned a possible policy change to Mr. Manson – could there be a policy change that the year-end report be sent to Mr. Kennedy and copied to the Field Contact? Getting the information to both sources is better. Should there be a time limit with comments by Field Contact? This could be shared at the pre-season meeting.

**Chairman Murray asked for any closing comments.**

**Mr. Manson** mentioned that some sponsors need replacements, but that the equipment should be going back to the manufacturers for refurbishing or repairing right now, with the money available. Gogebic could use that. Either redone, reworked, or replaced. They should get estimates. **Mr. Wood** will follow-up for discussion at next meeting.

**Mr. Filley** wanted to bring up signs again. Could definition clarification be made on a couple of signs – the sharp turn and the 45? If those two can be clarified for usage and meaning, that could clear up some confusion. Staff will get back on this.

**Mr. Green** requested that at the July 17th Equipment meeting, the group address re-assignment of existing equipment.

**Mr. Taylor** shared photos with the SAW and read a letter he had sent to Cody Stevens, FRD Atlanta Unit Manager, regarding timber harvest and snowmobile trails. He was also concerned about stumps being left on or near the trails after the harvest. He has not heard back from Mr. Stevens. Also, he has informed Paige Perry, PRD Recreation Specialist, about an issue with ORV and pathway signs being placed on snowmobile trail sign posts. He also wanted to know if he could sell old signs no longer used. Since they were an asset to the State of Michigan, they cannot be sold, even if funds come back into the program.

**Mr. Wood** agreed that it's not uncommon for stumps to be left along the trails.

**Mr. Green** said that the USFS has stump removal in their contracts.

**Mr. Green** moved that the Department include a clause in timber contracts that after a timber harvest the trails be restored to a safe and usable condition.

**Mr. Filley** said he thinks that is already in those contracts, and in some areas, those stumps along trails are left taller.

**Motion withdrawn. Mr. Fleming** will check to see if that is, in fact, in timber sale contracts.

**Chairman Murray** asked if re-appointments to the SAW committee came through? He also announced that Mr. Duke has been nominated to the Hall of Fame, and that he will be inducted in September.

**Mr. Joe Kuchnicki** asked about exchanging equipment and a process to make that happen? Any roadblocks? Harbor Springs would like to get a new one as the old one is costly. This will be discussed at the July meeting.

**Mr. Fleming** announced that Jim Radabaugh has been reestablished as the Statewide Trails Coordinator; however; the SAW will still have Mr. Fleming as their coordinator.

**Mr. Britton made a motion, seconded by Mr. Filley to end the meeting. Meeting ended at 1:51 p.m.**