

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

DRAFT MINUTES

**October 13, 2015
10:00 a.m.**

**BJ's Restaurant
990 North Center Avenue
Gaylord, Michigan 49735**

MEMBERS PRESENT

**Lee Murray, Chairman, At-Large Representative
Bill Manson, MSA, Region III Representative, Grand Rapids
Jim Duke, MSA, Region I Representative, Munising
Don Britton, At-Large Representative
Rich Filley, Trail Sponsors Representative
Joe Kuchnicki, MSA, Region II Representative
Bill Lucas, At-Large Representative**

DNR STAFF PRESENT

**Jason Fleming, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD), Lansing
Cpl. John Morey, Law Enforcement Division (LED), Gaylord
Loretta Cwalinski, Finance and Operations Division (FOD), Gaylord**

PUBLIC ATTENDEES

**Bob Leidlein, Track, Inc.
David Low, West Michigan Snowmobile Club (WMSC)
Ron Corbett, President, MSA
Dean Storms, MSA Member, Case Township Supervisor
John Houk, Presque Isle Sno-Trails (PIST)
Dave Campo, PIST
Bill Stegenge, Bader & Sons
Karyn Hautamaki, MSA Member**

WELCOME

Chairman Murray called the SAW meeting to order at 10:02 a.m., October 13, 2015 in Gaylord, Michigan. He welcomed everyone, introduced himself, as did the workgroup and attendees.

MINUTES

Mr. Duke corrected an item on page 4, **Munising Grooming**; the correction is Hiawatha Trails Association (HTA), not Hiawatha Land Trail Authority.

Also on page 4 **Mesick River Crossing** should be **Manistee River Crossing**.

Motion was made by Mr. Lucas, seconded by Mr. Britton to accept the corrected minutes from the June 23, 2015 SAW meeting. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

AGENDA

Chair Murray would like to see the following items added under **Old Business**:

- **Update on Permanent Easements**
- **Oil Sample Update**
- **Research Request for Trail 8**
- **Trail 160 North of Iron Bridge**
- **Sign Committee Update**
- **Snowmobile Rental – Lost Sticker Revenue**
- **Groomer Driver Workshops**
- **Two-Year Tractor Turnaround**

Motion was made by Mr. Duke, seconded by Mr. Manson to accept today's revised agenda. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Motion was made by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Duke, to allow Chair Murray to take agenda items out of order at his discretion. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Snowmobile Easement Grant Program – **Mr. Fleming** reported that there is \$140,000 appropriated and would like to see that money spent. The reason is that before we can ask for a larger appropriation to spend down the balance, it needs to be justified that we utilize the existing amount. These grants are for 501C3 only, and the betterment of snowmobile trails. **Mr. Manson** is working with Mrs. Jackie Blodgett and Mr. Fleming on the revenue amounts in the fund. There are several questions as it appears the \$8 which goes into the fund is not totaling the expected amount. **Mr. Fleming** stated the Department of State is investigating the discrepancy. **Mr. Manson** will update SAW in December.

Alger County Right-of-Way – **Mr. Fleming** said there still has not been any decisions and is not sure if that portion of trail to Miner's Castle will be open this season or not. He thinks there may have to be another meeting.

Regarding MDOT ROW Permitting Issue - DNR and MDOT will be working together to develop a new permit system for MDOT road crossings and right-of-way usage. Mr. Todd Neiss, PRD Recreation Specialist is currently working to address that issue.

Mr. Manson would like to be informed of county road commission charges and add item to December agenda as well.

Oil Sample Update – **Mr. Fleming** said they completed Plainwell's oil samples first, and clarified how the whole process was to be followed - made instructions clearer as how to get the samples taken and sent in. **Chair Murray** is asking the equipment subcommittee to clarify the

process in the future; there's still some confusion in the steps, and even how to read results. **Mr. Fleming** said they do need to establish a baseline and use the information to track what's working and what is not. Groomers should get with their field contact with any issues regarding sample results that need to be addressed. The clubs need to get their results back to FRD staff.

Motion was made by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Britton, that the equipment committee and the Department contact Oil Scan to ensure that copies of the tests are returned to the grant sponsor and the Department as soon as possible. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Discussion continued on what the best process would be to have results read and acted upon. **Chair Murray** asked if Mr. Kuchnicki could work with Mr. Fleming to contact Oil Scan, see what can or can't be done – and bring that information back to SAW's December meeting.

Motorized Use Permit update – **Mr. Fleming** advised that nothing has changed as of yet.

GPS Update for Groomers – **Mr. Fleming** said that there's potentially another GPS option that could end up in all the groomers, or at least for the newer equipment; this is still being investigated.

Chair Murray asked about the sample unit that Mr. Filley had supplied - **Mr. Fleming** has not made contact with the company yet; he will get with Mr. Filley and discuss that GPS unit and provide more details.

Research Request for Trail 8 – **Mr. Fleming** said that Mr. Ron Yesney did not provide an update, however; **Mr. Britton** said that there is a proposal with Richmond Oil and another parcel to purchase easements and that letter is waiting to be sent. He would like to see this item on the next agenda for an update.

Manistee River Update – The MOU is in place with MDOT Rail and the DNR is moving forward to put the trail in. **Mr. Manson** added that the river crossing needs substantial repairs. Cadillac Winter Promotions has submitted a trail request for Yuma to Copemish. In addition, there needs to be a few signs added on that section for safety concerns.

Motion was made by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Lucas that SAW encourages PRD to apply to the Natural Resources Trust Fund for dollars to repair the Manistee River bridge (as a multi-use trail). Motion for adoption carried.

Trail 160 North of Iron Bridge – Nothing to add at this time, but **Mr. Fleming** will follow up. This will be added to the agenda for December's meeting.

STAFF REPORTS

Law Enforcement Division – **Cpl. Morey** said there continues to be discussion about the decibel issues and available decibel meters. There are two or three in each Law Enforcement district, and several officers have been trained on how to use them.

Mr. Duke said that he was told recently at a meeting that there will be 60 meters purchased and put to use in the program. **Cpl. Morey** checked with Lt. Skip Hagy, and there are no plans to

purchase more decibel equipment, but wanted everyone to know there will be more statewide enforcement regarding decibel concerns. **Mr. Manson** asked if it would be helpful to have an official letter requesting additional meters – **Cpl. Morey** said he has made that concern known to staff, and will forward any letters provided. He added that he has also requested a press release to let the public know about additional enforcement.

This issue is very important to SAW and the success of the program because trails are lost due to excessive noise from snowmobiles on trails.

Groomer Equipment List – **Mr. Fleming** said they are getting closer to the \$300,000 range and this should be capped out. He added that it was good to hear that attending the equipment meetings is important, and highly beneficial. Several avenues are used to advertise the meetings, but attendance is not mandatory. Groomer workshops are also important to have as many groomers attend as possible. Chair Murray would like to see something in addition to what's been done to improve attendance at these meetings and training opportunities. Making phone calls in addition to sending letters is one extra step. Attendance is critical for a successful program.

Mr. Britton mentioned he'd like to see the program assist in making equipment trades between clubs; for example to make trading an old Tucker in one area, for a new Tucker in another area if that club has a John Deere, but would like a Tucker. **Mr. Fleming** said that it does make good business sense for the program.

Suggestion was made for the equipment sub-committee to meet before December. **Mr. Fleming** added he will have Mr. Richard Kennedy also follow up with groomers that have not turned in their reports.

Mr. Manson would like to make a motion, seconded by Mr. Britton to send two people to the Groomer Driver Workshop at Moose Country Snowmobile Club (Republic) on November 7th - expenses to be reimbursed by the program. Motion for adoption carried unanimously.

Sign Committee Update – **Mr. Fleming** said the sign committee has not met yet, but he will still remain active with the committee. He is suggesting to meet in December in the morning before the SAW meeting; 8:00 a.m. Sign Committee and 9:00 a.m. for the Equipment Subcommittee meeting. These meetings will be held in Christmas, at Foggy's Steakhouse.

ADDITIONAL STAFF REPORTS

Mr. Fleming advised that Lean Process continues; motorized grants will transition into Trails Section. One new position of note - Emily Meyerson is the Northern Lower Peninsula Trails Coordinator. He added there have been several other position changes and additions as well. New trails staff will be invited to attend the next SAW meeting and **Chair Murray** added he would like to see them attend any of the SAW meetings when possible. He would also like to extend an invite to Lt. Tom Wanless and Sgt. Steve Orange, LED Recreational Safety, Education & Enforcement.

Chair Murray asked **Mr. Fleming** to address the groomers at the kickoff meeting on the oil sample kits.

Mr. Manson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Lucas that a member of SAW be a part of a permanent easement selection committee. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

That person will be **Mr. Manson**.

Two-year tractor Turnaround – **Mr. Lucas** shared a handout that addresses and summarizes trades for 2015 tractor options. Mr. Kuchnicki would like to see more information on how much money is actually spent on Saucy tracks. Discussion continued regarding tracks and repairs.

Mr. Manson added that there should be discussion with other options for tracks, there are many manufacturers. Can this be added to the December's equipment sub-committee agenda to discuss? **Chair Murray** would like that committee to come to the following SAW meeting with a recommendation.

Snowmobile Rental Lost Sticker Revenue – **Mr. Manson** has not been able to do the research; however, **Mr. Corbett** looked in to rental information and it appears that snowmobile renters add money to their rental fee for the permits, and suggests could be charged at least three times a permit fee per snowmobile. Discussion continued around creating Legislation for additional fees to rental companies per snowmobile. **Chair Murray** suggested continuing to look into what could be feasible and perhaps bring a recommendation back to SAW in December.

NEW BUSINESS

Lean follow-up – **Mr. Fleming** said their charge was to basically make Grants Section and the process more efficient. He shared the committee's recommended changes to the Grants Handbook. The committee found a few inconsistencies which were corrected; in addition updated the ORV Grants Handbook.

Mr. Manson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Britton that SAW accept the recommendations for the Recreational Trail Grant Handbook as presented (to go into effect 2016/17). Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

ORV/Snowmobile use conflicts on Drummond Island – **Mr. Manson** noted several concerns on snowmobile trails there that need to be addressed: ORVs continue to use the snowmobile trails, in particular Wranglers and fat-tire bikes, which also adds to a trespass issue with ORVs, and continues all winter. He expressed additional concerns over Wildlife Division's Comprehensive Management Plan that seemed to omit snowmobile trail consideration as well as the lack of PRD in on that discussion. **Chair Murray** recommended bringing this topic up to MTAC to see if they could provide input.

Mr. Fleming added that this would be a good topic to discuss jointly with the ORV Advisory Workgroup. This is not just an issue of destroying a groomed trail, it's a safety issue as well. Discussion continued, and will continue.

Chair Murray would like to invite ORV Advisory Workgroup to SAW in December immediately after SAW for a joint meeting.

NEXT MEETING

Next meeting of the SAW will be December 3rd, 2015 in Christmas, Michigan.

2016 MEETINGS

Locations to be determined:

- March 3, 2016
- June 21, 2016
- October 18, 2016
- December 8, 2016

Mr. Manson made motion, seconded by Mr. Britton to accept the 2016 SAW meeting dates. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

SAW Reappointments - Chair Murray asked Mr. Fleming for a letter of recommendation (by e-mail) for any appointments that need to be updated/renewed.

Brutus Trail – Mr. Kuchnicki said everything is going along well, but Maple River Bridge may be a little behind schedule for the Alanson to Pellston section. Question was raised about how close some of the boulders are to the trail, but marking them will hopefully take care of any hazards. **Chair Murray** would like to have the boulder issue brought up to MTAC as well. **Mr. Houk** said that the North East State Trail has a similar issue with bollards, and they are a hazard. Groomers need a fair amount wider than the designs of some of these trails, which also needs to be addressed.

USDA Forest Service

Chair Murray again noted the lack of USDA Forest Service staff attending the SAW meetings.

Mr. Houk mentioned discussion from the June 23, 2015 SAW minutes that Carmeuse land acquisition is still not complete, and Carmeuse has not been available to respond. **Mr. Houk** will see if he can directly contact someone at Carmeuse and move this along. He also mentioned the bridge in Millersburg being condemned, and the trail re-route, however; the trail now avoids Millersburg altogether – he wanted to know if bids for engineering will be ready for February. **Mr. Fleming** said that is what he's hearing and that this will happen fiscal year 2017.

Mr. Storm said that he was very disappointed at the recent public meeting that was held to discuss improvements and repairs on that bridge – the bridge was already designed and costs were decided upon and no public input at that time would have made any difference.

Mr. Campo said PIST has their next club meeting October 28th; he would like to have an update regarding the bridge before that time.

Mr. Lucas invited everyone to share the information about the Groomer Driver Workshop, and to please call either (231) 775-4344 or (231) 839-8660 for further information, and make a reservation for the day.

Mr. Duke said that many of the Munising area trail projects are done, and all will be ready for the season.

Mr. Manson sent an e-mail to PRD Chief Ron Olson, which he read aloud, regarding snowmobile activities and local Mackinac Island activities. This is regarding free permits for snowmobiling on Mackinac Island in addition to a trail permit from the State of Michigan. He is still trying to figure this one out.

Mr. Britton said that Trail 82 had a major washout on it this year; a bridge is being engineered currently. There is a proposed reroute, but hoping to have the bridge in.

Also, Big Bay, Trail #14 that crosses over US 41 has changed, halfway between Brickyard Road and Walmart, which has made it a much safer crossing.

Mr. Kuchnicki said he discovered in a recent discussion with Dana Pelton, FRD Fire Officer Supervisor in Gaylord, that FRD has their own grooming equipment and an equipment operator that assist clubs in a pinch.

Meeting adjourned at 1:58 p.m.