

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

DRAFT MINUTES

December 5, 2013

9:30 a.m.

Sydney's Restaurant

M-28 East

Munising, Michigan 49862

MEMBERS PRESENT

Lee Murray, Chairman, At-Large Representative
Al Green, Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA), Region II Rep., Cadillac
Bruce Wood, 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

Dan Moore, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD), Newberry
Cpl. John Morey, Law Enforcement Division (LED), Gaylord
Loretta Cwalinski, Finance and Operations Division (FOD), Gaylord

PUBLIC ATTENDEES

David Low, Western Michigan Snowmobile Council, MSA Region III
Denny Zoet, Western Michigan Snowmobile Council
Jim Dickie, MSA Region III
Ron Corbett, MSA Vice President
Don Reed, MSA Past President/Seney
Mike Beard, Bader & Sons, Inc.
Bill Stegenga, Bader & Sons, Inc.
Bob Stein, Munising
Stu Volkers, Region I, EUP Council, Les Cheneaux
Maryann Noah, Region I, EUP Council, Les Cheneaux
Bill Lucas, Cadillac Winter Warriors
Bill Taylor, Lewiston Fun Ones
Allen Cottle, Sault Ste. Marie Snowmobile Association
Rick Brown, Southern Michigan Snowmobile Council
Karen Middendorp, MSA
Rock Zahm, Concerned Rider
Jay Wright, Chippewa Snow Chasers
Paul O. Moran, Chippewa Snow Chasers
Tom Adgate, Munising

WELCOME

Chairman Murray called the SAW meeting to order at 9:30 a.m., December 5, 2013, in Munising, Michigan. He welcomed everyone, introduced himself, as did the Workgroup and attendees. Rich Filley was not able to attend.

Chairman Murray asked that the Minutes be presented to the SAW no later than two weeks prior to the next SAW meeting.

Motion was made by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Green, that the last meeting's minutes (October 15, 2013) not be approved until the next meeting since SAW has not had a chance to review. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Murray would like a motion to be able to add to the agenda as necessary. Mr. Manson so moved, Mr. Britton seconded. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Mr. Green wanted to discuss Trail Number 4 at C38, Gaylord – all permissions signed on the trail but one. The local club has been working hard to get everything completed; however, their contact person has advised to close that 20 mile section. County Road Commission has advised unofficially the use of the road right of way. **Mr. Green** is asking that the Department allow this exception and not close that section of trail. Details were discussed on previous agreements. Last year ended the two year previous agreement.

Mr. Moore will send a letter to Jason Fleming explaining the unofficial agreement, with the request not close that section of trail. Mr. Moore doesn't want that section closed either, and realizing there could be trespass. The closure involved could change everything for that trail. He will also copy the SAW with that document.

Equipment Trade-In – Mr. Green had a comment about a grant sponsor that was awarded new equipment that kept their 60\40 equipment as well. The value of the machine is much more than what the club paid – he wants to know, if the Department is tracking equipment purchases to ensure the policy (in the handbook) is followed? He is certain there is one instance in particular that it is not.

Mr. Manson clarified that the club in question is Kalkaska. They have used 100 percent funded equipment for grooming their ORV trail. Are they going to groom those ORV trails again with 100 percent equipment?

Mr. Green also asked if there will be a reimbursement to the snowmobile program from the ORV program for such grooming. He would like to make a recommendation to the SAW to have the Department follow up on trade-ins for values on equipment according to the handbook, particularly for buying back that equipment (using Kalkaska as an example). **Chairman Murray** feels it's a good topic for Equipment Committee. He also requested that this topic be placed on the February SAW meeting agenda.

Mr. Wood added there should be a requirement that all equipment have an estimate of its value made prior to making any decision to replace, keep, trade or a sale is made.

Lewiston Storm Damage – Mr. Green explained the history of major storm damage last year in the Lewiston area. Club did what they could do to get the trail open for groomer; had requested more funds for additional work. They were asked by Richard Kennedy, PRD, to reapply under Special Maintenance grant – in the summer, the Club submitted twice but denied a second time. Rob Pelton, Fire Officer Supervisor, PRD, inspected, and said the trail did not pass inspection. In order to comply, they were told they needed to go out at this time of year and get the trail up to standards.

Mr. Taylor explained further; the staff involved on this particular trail, photos provided, maps, etc., to get that funding to get the trail cleaned up. He said he only has a third of the work done on their trail with the funding they received. Many positive things came out of the recent meeting, but he has not heard back on the remaining damage. They will need Schedule C money to get any additional trees cleared after the next snow system.

Chairman Murray said Jason Fleming mentioned being very optimistic about the trail inspection ride he was on, and feels he is working toward a resolution. He asked that Mr. Taylor keep the group updated on any new information.

Mr. Green would like (at the next meeting) to discuss storm damage funding, in particular Lewiston Fun Ones. Chairman Murray requested that this item be placed on the February agenda.

Mr. Britton said that in the handbook it states that the field contact needs to be contacted first, and if no response is received within 48 hours, the club can go ahead with the cleanup.

Cranberry Lake – Mr. Volkens explained an issue at Trail 47 between DeTour and Drummond Island; closed the end of May by US Fish & Wildlife Service due to a culvert collapse – they weren't aware it was a snowmobile trail. The only reroutes possible were quite bare due to plowing. Nothing moved until August – then **Mr. Volkens** contacted their representatives in Senate and House. A bridge was delivered Monday on site and will be set in place next week. Should be OK,

but someone dropped the ball along the way and didn't move that process forward. **Mr. Moore** said that it will probably be 'set' the week of the 16th.

Mr. Green asked for clarification – is this something temporary for the season?

Mr. Moore explained yes, especially to keep DEQ happy and engineering not involved. Next year abutments would be installed, and should be good to go. Clubs got the engineering dollars and abutments, and DEQ permits available if needed.

Black River Snowmobile Bridge - **Mr. Britton** said they have discussed funding and repairs, and to have the needed equipment pre-engineered. This could eliminate one year in the process. He shared a handout from UP Fabricating, which also indicates a cost savings as well. Soil borings have yet to be done. **Mr. Moore** would like to have a copy of the letter, and he will follow-up, and report to the next meeting under an agenda item.

Equipment Maintenance – **Mr. Britton** shared a suggested maintenance schedule with the SAW, and would like a review and discussion. It will be discussed at the equipment sub-committee meeting. **Chairman Murray** requested that this be added to the next meeting agenda.

Special Maintenance – **Mr. Manson** referenced an e-mail from Northeastern Michigan Snowmobile Council (NMSC) (Indian River, Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Canada Creek and Lewiston) – expressing their concern that they (with the exception of Lewiston) have not received any special maintenance dollars. They are wondering why not - was it a lack of money or what they requested? **Mr. Moore** said that Richard Kennedy specifically stated at preseason meetings, that if anything is critical, it must be noted clearly in order to receive funds. He added that question should be directed to Mr. Kennedy. **Mr. Moore** will follow up and advise the SAW.

Mr. Wood reminded everyone not to confuse the issues of funding; equipment was to be a priority, then special maintenance. **Mr. Manson** looked through requests that some were awarded funds and questioned some that were not. SAW would like to have more information on decision making process on how special maintenance dollars are awarded. SAW has received the Special Maintenance list with dollar amounts, but no mention on what the money funded. Also, more details would be appreciated on how the decisions are made.

Munising Group - **Tom Adgate** explained all the work he's done on their equipment, but has a question on how he can get the trails open - the grant sponsor told him it was not his job to put signs up. **Mr. Moore** said that the group needs to get together with him to discuss how to get the problems ironed out. **Mr. Manson** asked that the SAW be advised of the results of the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Use of Groomer Equipment on ORV Trails and Farms – Mr. Wood said they've once again discussed equipment utilized for other than snowmobile trails – they would like to see the clarification in the handbook on that misuse of equipment. The verbiage in the handbook should be clarified to prohibit that usage. Mr. Moore feels that it is clear; *it is prohibited unless you have written approval from the field contact.*

Motion was made by Mr. Wood, seconded by Mr. Manson that the Department send out clarification on usage of equipment explaining the intention of the language to prohibit groomers for non-trail usage. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Rogers City Railroad Grade – Mr. Manson reviewed the Carmeuse ownership, and reroute around the quarry. A year ago, Jim Radabaugh, PRD, said they would be snowmobiling on that trail this season. DNR needs legal ownership. It was stated that the issue was in Carmeuse's attorney's hands, but not with the City. Elections have brought in new people, and the communication has broken down again. John Houk, Presque Isle Snowmobile Club, would like their club to be updated on the latest. Mr. Manson asked that the Department make a call to the appropriate person and follow-up. Where are we, and has Legal Services checked into it recently? Please advise SAW and Presque Isle Snowmobile Club as well.

Grant Handbook - Mr. Wood explained the recent history of grant handbook changes, and that they were all advised there were no significant changes. However; there were changes made that had implications to some, but the changes were made and sent out anyhow.

Mr. Wood made a motion, seconded by Mr. Britton, that SAW recommend to DNR that all changes to grant handbook regardless of perceived implications shall be reviewed by the SAW first. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Cpl. Morey advised he had no real report, but asked if there had been any movement on defining "snowmobile." Mr. Manson said there was a meeting last week with Representative Frank Foster, Manufacturer's Association, and two off-road companies. Their thoughts were to add that the ski's distance would be no more than 48", add a weight limit, and also to have a continuous track.

Legislation should be introduced in the next 45 days. Discussion continued on other types of motorcycles and ATVs being manufactured for snow trail usage. DNR Director Keith Creagh suggested a Director's Order that says no wheeled vehicles on snowmobile/state designated trails. They will continue working on that issue.

Mr. Manson wanted to thank Cpl. Morey for all his efforts, but wanted to know why with the new snowmobile safety education booklets available, the old booklets are still being handed out. There is a new person in Lansing that is handing out the old ones. Marketing and Outreach is responsible for that information, and the online content for safety education. Comment was made that their club recently received the new books, so hopefully there are no old booklets left.

Mr. Moore advised that in the UP there are 12 approved ORV Routes along state trunk line highways. Eleven of those routes have been signed and have been open since early November. One route in Gladstone will not be signed and open until the spring of 2014 due to Miss Dig issues. All of these routes will be open from May 1 through November 30.

In the Brimley area, they are finally moving to get a bridge across Whiskey Bridge and a reroute within area property. There was one landowner that voiced concerns (riding through their field). **Mr. Manson** recommended doing a title search on area lands. Foresters in that Unit don't feel that a bridge back there would be feasible. **Mr. Moore** continued on the complications of the trail and access. Perhaps maybe the bridge would not have to be such a complicated and costly bridge. **Mr. Manson** suggested having UP Fabricating look at the bridge site and make their recommendation. **Chairman Murray** requested that this issue be put on the next SAW meeting agenda.

SAW Meeting Dates for 2014

February 27 – Sault Ste. Marie (in conjunction with groomer workshop)

June 17 - Location to be determined

Oct 14 - Location to be determined

Dec 4 - Munising

Mr. Manson made one more comment that on the DNR website, Recreation Trail Proposal Status Report – Jason Fleming said he was going to get with the correct person to get that updated; last update was April, 2012. He would like to have an explanation from DNR staff at next meeting.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Ron Corbett, VP MSA would like to bring to the SAWs attention a letter he has received about concerns over signage. He shared the two page letter with the

SAW as well. He explained that he met with the group of people behind the letter and listened to concerns, and wanted to make everyone aware they are educated, business people, and love to snowmobile. They felt that they were not given an opportunity to input their opinions on the signs – they would like to have reviewed the proposed signs. He wants to make sure that concerns are addressed, and he'd like to see more people satisfied than dissatisfied with the program and trails.

Don Reed, MSA addressed hidden maintenance costs on groomers. There have been some issues with Soucy tracks. Original estimates were that the tracks would outlast the lives of three tractors; this is not happening. Cracks are visible, cables broke and wheels cupping due to wear. He would like to have the SAW look into it, since so much money has been spent hoping to extend tractor life. **Chairman Murray** asked repair documents be given to the Equipment Committee. **Mr. Wood** said he mentioned these at the spring meeting, and Soucy has been somewhat arrogant with their response to complaints. Bill Stegenga mentioned that Soucy will be at the groomer workshop. If Mr. Reed meets with any of the reps from Soucy, he will let Mr. Britton know.

Bill Taylor, Lewiston Fun Ones updated SAW on the trail between Lovell's and North Branch that connects to Gaylord. Problem was dealt with years ago, sections were groomed by both Gaylord and Grayling, but three years ago when Gaylord took it over, a portion would be shared. They have a tremendous amount of traffic on it. He said he will keep SAW advised of that trail – they may run out of money at the end of the grooming season. Pelton refused to submit a grant until Richard Kennedy removed that particular section – he is questioning if it is not a vindictive move. Trail 47 is the trail in question. **Chairman Murray** requested that this be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

Bader & Sons have calendars, and Harbor Springs maps are available.

Rock Zahm referenced Munising area grooming and would like to make everyone aware – he would like to see it in writing that the grooming process go smoothly in Munising and working with MSA and the Department as well to make it a good season.

Mr. Wood expressed disappointment in the 'no show' of Department staff.

Chairman Murray wanted to go on record in defense of Jason Fleming, who has been extremely busy and was in constant communication with Chairman Murray prior to this meeting. On occasions scheduling conflicts will come up. Chairman Murray felt that the DNR was well represented with the presence of Mr. Moore and Ms. Cwalinski and he will only be concerned if absenteeism is habitual.

Mr. Britton made a motion, seconded by Mr. Green to end the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 11:59 a.m.