

**Minutes of the
Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council
July 8, 2014**

The regular meeting of the Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council (MSTAC) was called to order by Chair Frank Wheatlake at 10:00 a.m., on Tuesday, July 8, 2014, at the Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center, 104 Conservation Drive, Roscommon, Michigan 48653. The following members were present:

*Frank Wheatlake
James Dickie
Thomas Dunn
Bill Manson
Jim Duke
Drew YoungeDyke
Tim Kobasic
Sandra Batie
Mike Foote
Jason Rolling
Nancy Krupiarz*

The following Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff were present: Jim Radabaugh, Anna Sylvester, Charlotte Kiefer and Amy Swainston, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD); Bill Sterrett and David Price, Forest Resources Division (FRD); and Loretta Cwalinski, Finance and Operations Division (FOD).

Chair Wheatlake reminded everyone of the Council's official name change to Michigan Trails Advisory Council (MTAC). He also acknowledged and thanked Ms. Batie as a member and commended her for her good work and referenced her official withdrawal from the Council.

ACTION ITEMS

MOTION: Ms. Sandra Batie moved to approve the July 8, 2014 meeting agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Michael Foote and it carried unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Timothy Kobasic moved to approve the April 8, 2013 minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thomas Dunn and it carried unanimously.

ORV Event Criteria for MTAC Approval

Ms. Anna Sylvester advised that the ORV Event Permit has had a few changes that have been agreed upon. Changes were reviewed by both groups and will be in place. Ms. Loretta Cwalinski will forward to the group.

MOTION: Mr. Thomas Dunn moved to accept the presented ORV Event Criteria. The motion was seconded by Mr. James Dickie and it carried unanimously.

Pure Michigan Trails Bill Package

Mr. Jim Radabaugh said that the Pure Michigan bill package will be effective September 25, 2014. The summary highlighted changes to the Trailways Act. This bill also included a few additional directions for the Council as well.

Ms. Krupiarz added the designation should aid in promoting Michigan's trails and what we have to offer. Connecting the trails and towns were also important. Volunteers were recognized as a critical component as well.

Mr. Radabaugh added that there was another bill passed for ORV riders on private land not needing helmets any longer.

Governor's Showcase Trail

Mr. Radabaugh provided a handout for information which detailed his briefing to the Natural Resources Trust Fund Board in June. Through several group's combined efforts, it was proposed as two separate trails – bicycle and hiking. He added that many other groups are interested in involvement as well as the federal government and local units of government. North Country National Scenic Trail was part of the discussion.

Mr. Rolling commented about the bicycle route through the UP that was proposed on Highway 2. The Adventure Bicycle group supports road routes, other bicycle groups are not as they prefer trails. He added that there has been great success in certain areas with trails. Discussion continued.

Mr. Foote asked if there is any liability issue covered on Highway 2 and the designation. Jim will ask MDOT to do a presentation in October about these liability issues on roads.

Public Review of New DNR Ecological Reference Areas and Dedicated Habitat Areas

Mr. Price provided a handout with his Power Point presentation. The DNR is required by law to become certified by at least one of two groups - Forest Stewardship Council or Sustainable Forestry Initiative, and are certified by both. Auditors recently noted corrective actions in a few areas that are being addressed by a Plan of Action and currently being resolved. He reviewed standards expected from both certifying groups and the expectations of that certification. Timber and recreation industry were considered in the discussion of these Habitat Areas; initial public review is July 25 – August 22. Discussion continued with potential roadblocks with these certification requirements and trails involved.

FY 2015 Budget

Mr. Radabaugh reviewed a memo that was included in MSTAC's packet with budget information for non-motorized trails, new trails initiatives, the addition of Michigan Conservation Officers and State Park infrastructure

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

John Kren, Trail Coordinator for Roscommon to Higgins Trail Cruisers, withdrew his request to discuss Roscommon to Grayling and north access which seems to be resolved at this point for ORVs. He reviewed the snowmobile trail in the area, and their ORV trail proposal which is currently in discussion. After speaking with Amy Swainston, there may be some opportunities.

John Houk, Presque Isle Snotrails, asked about the Northeast State Trail and resurfacing. He would like to know of any progress on the historic bridge that was damaged. There is a temporary bridge structure that does not support grooming equipment. He also wanted to comment about the Quarry trail. Mr. Manson said that Jason Fleming advised at the SAW meeting that it was in the Attorney General's (AG) office, but currently back to DNR and Carmeuse.

Mr. Radabaugh addressed the historical bridge; the engineering review has occurred and we are waiting for the report. He also clarified that the quarry lease is hopefully back to the AGs office for final verbiage to send back to Carmeuse.

Silver Lake State Park

Charlotte Kiefer reviewed her handout and the ORV Voucher System into the State Park. They are currently working on a reservation process to reserve vouchers to simplify the process and reduce the wait time currently endured by customers wanting to enter. Their recommendation is to charge \$10 per voucher which will have numerous benefits in the long run for both the user and staff and increase safety and efficiency. She is asking for support on their recommendation of the proposed voucher system from MTAC.

Chair Wheatlake asked if this isn't another surcharge for users that expect to have access to use the park already with a Recreation Passport and the ORV permit and trail stickers. Ms. Kiefer reiterated that the feedback from their survey from those users is that this fee is reasonable to improve the process. Discussion continued with more questions for assurance that the intent and solutions have all been considered.

MOTION: Mr. Dunn moved to support the proposed \$10 surcharge for the ORV voucher system into Silver Lake State Park. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kobasic and it carried unanimously.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

State Trails Implementation Plan

Mr. Radabaugh advised that the goals were approved in January by the Director. He has received all comments from staff assigned to guide implementation of the goals and will track the goals to keep in line with the five year plan. This could possibly be part of the biennial trails report as well.

Ms. Krupiarz asked about the last page of the handout reference the DNR committee, and who that would be. That subcommittee has not been formulated yet.

Gold Standard Ad-hoc Committee

Mr. YoungeDyke discussed their conference call where they agreed that communication could be improved. Also discussed was GIS mapping for trails that link timber sale compartments to trails affected (Compartment Reviews). Setbacks for timber harvest were a part of that discussion as well. MUCC intern will look at other states for comparison. The Gold Standard plan is in line with the State Trails Implementation Plan.

Mr. Sterrett advised that they are working on a draft of what FRD does to improve the processes with timber sales and recreation aspects affected. Dennis Nezych, Field Coordinator, FRD has that at this time and is working on a document to be shared soon. Ms. Batie suggested targeting those particular user groups affected by timber sales; notification process should be improved.

Criteria for Priority Trail Connections

Ms. Stine shared a list of criteria to begin the MSTAC discussion for priority trail connections. These are not necessarily in order or importance. Suggestion by Mr. Fleming was made if #1 couldn't be rewritten to include a review every two years to resolve Mr. Manson's concern of important trails not included in original plan to be added. Single-use importance versus multi-use was discussed, and the snowmobile trail proposal system currently in place. Ideally if everyone brings in their user groups priorities, trails and criteria as well, and see what common criteria can be used as final guidance. Decide which top few projects could feasibly be done with any and all funding that can be accumulated. A project could also be packaged in phases if necessary. Local governments could also be involved with support.

Mr. Wheatlake noted that projects should be practical and doable in a short period of time.

Ms. Stine would like MSTAC comments on the criteria list, and a wish list based on criteria for the next meeting. She will provide more information as well before the October meeting.

Trail Interest Group Representation to the MSTAC

Mr. Radabaugh said this is a priority in the 'plan' – Cindy Burkhour will come speak to the committee in October on Accessibility. He is asking the Committee what other groups could come into the discussion. Several groups have been suggested and they would be invited to join in this conversation.

Matt Pegouskie, Chelsea Area Community Foundation spoke about his representation of their group for input; they are very active in their community and health and wellness and are very interested in working with MSTAC and various projects.

Ms. Krupiarz suggested starting one meeting with a topic to discuss and make invitations, and continue to invite those groups. Tourism groups should be added as well. Ms. Batie added that having roundtable discussions with those groups would be helpful. Trails Summit could also be included.

STAFF REPORTS

MSTAC Subcommittee and Workgroup 2013 Performance Reports

Mr. Manson provided information on the successful snow and grooming season last year as well as the expensive equipment repairs/replacement. Equipment replacement will be announced soon. They are still working on permanent easement grants – he will check with Treasury for progress. Indian River club is still working on a route to Petoskey. They are having difficulty acquiring permission for approximately a mile and ½ portion, owner being University of Michigan. Another issue is the bridge between Copemish and Mesick. Also, fuel adjustment was made. Grant Handbook changes as well. And a free snowmobiling weekend to keep up with ORV! Overall it was a positive season in Michigan.

Non-Motorized

Ms. Krupiarz updated everyone on their April meeting where they discussed priorities, worked on their list from last fall, and discussed possibility of another funding source. Statewide survey was discussed to obtain information from what users are looking for. She would like to put the members on their mailing list for updates on their trail progress.

ORV

Mr. Dunn summarized the ORV Advisory Workgroup that met in May and is working with Oakland County Parks to provide a riding park in southeast Michigan. They are also hoping for Natural Resources Trust Fund monies if approved. Jackie Blodgett presented a budget overview. USFS is in discussion with a Memorandum of Understanding between the agencies and Cycle Conservation Club presented Steve Kubisiak, PRD with Conservationist of the Year award. ORV license sales are down from expected levels.

Equine Trails

Ms. Batie updated the group about a grant that was awarded and reallocated to approved but not funded equestrian projects. All listed were approved. They have a \$60,000 balance, and will discuss additional trails for funding. Their group discussed density guidelines for new trails as well. Also regarding Big Oaks campground and trails - should already have appropriate funding and is receiving positive comments. Lee Grande property is also in progress for marked equestrian trails (could easily be connected to Shore to Shore Trail). She closed with saying she will still stay connected with the group and interests, and is proud of the committee's accomplishments.

Kristen Thrall, USDA Forest Service, Huron-Manistee pointed out it's the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act. They have two AmeriCorps members and two student interns working on conservation and education outreach. Their Travel Management rules have changes with public access and forest management activities, budget and outreach.

Ms. Stine will follow up with the group at October's meeting regarding the liability issues with private landowners and easements that were discussed at the last meeting.

Discussion continued on the insurance that is required for groups to do maintenance on trails. There are leases on non-motorized trails, and there are some 'Friends' groups that do carry insurance to do work on trails.

There will be a grouse enhancement project August 13th near Gwinn– they are looking for volunteers (Governor Snyder was the first to volunteer).

Chair Wheatlake would like to have a sit-down with MDOT – Mr. Radabaugh will make that happen.

Meeting adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

Next meeting scheduled for October 28, 2014 at the RAM.