

MICHIGAN SNOWMOBILE AND TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL (Council)

MEETING MINUTES

July 26, 2010

Approved September 13, 2010

**Roscommon Operations Service Center (OSC)
(Large Conference Room)
8717 North Roscommon Road, Roscommon, MI 48653**

PRESENT FOR THE COUNCIL

Frank Wheatlake, Chair
Bill Manson
John Gonway
Carolyn Kane
Erin McDonough
James Duke
James Dickie
Greg Yager
Tom Dunn

PRESENT FOR STAFF

Frank Ruswick, Deputy Director, Stewardship
Lynne Boyd, Chief, Forest Management Division (FMD)
Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, FMD
Loretta Cwalinski, Administrative Assistant, FMD

PUBLIC ATTENDEES

Martin Cottle, Soo Snowmobile Association
Roger Kilbury, Public
Dick Ranney, American Motorcycle Association, D-14
Pat Brower, Great Lakes Four Wheel Drive Assn. (GLFWDA)
Dan White, Ogemaw Hills Snow Club (OHSC)
Bud Martin, OHSC
Norman Rockwell, OHSC
Bill Gilbert, Michigan ORV Safety Association
Chris Zuwala, Public
Rose Ingram, Huron-Manistee National Forest
Rich Filley, Grayling Snowmobile Association
Tom Gallagher, Michigan Recreation Vehicle Association
LaVerne Longroy, OHSC

Chair Wheatlake waited to officially call the meeting to order while waiting for all Council members to arrive.

Chief Boyd reviewed costs to run these meetings and the funding sources. The subcommittees and the Council meetings will cost approximately \$95,000 annually. Snowmobile and ORV groups are the main attending funds. The creation of the Council came with no funding appropriation. Snow and ORV programs can cover motorized council members. Nonmotorized has no dedicated funding – staff requested use of the Trailways Fund, which has approximately \$30K available this fiscal year.

Chair Wheatlake asked for update on equine representation. **Deputy Director Ruswick** said he is still waiting to hear from the Governors' office on the representation, hopefully any day now.

Erin McDonough asked if there's anything that can be done to help with costs or assist with meeting minutes. Unfortunately many of those costs are fairly minimal. Travel is the largest issue, and staff time to prepare and follow up on work after the meetings. **Bill Manson** offered cold sandwiches for lunches.

Chief Boyd passed around the new Recreation Passport information cards and explained the program. Basically a \$10 fee when renewing license plates which gets you into all State Parks and Boating Access Sites, plus many more recreation areas and benefits, and the state forest campgrounds and nonmotorized trails will receive two percent.

WELCOME

At 10:07 a.m. guests, DNRE staff, and Council members introduced themselves.

MINUTES

The minutes of the June 28, 2010 Council meeting were acknowledged.

Motion was made by Jim Duke, seconded by John Gonway, to adopt the June 28, 2010 meeting minutes. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

List of User Groups Goals/Actions to Enhance Programs, Including Program Conflicts -
Chair Wheatlake reviewed FMD handout on various trails and groups being represented. This list also included federal lands trails as well. He asked for comments.

John Gonway said that the subcommittees will be good to get them together, and decide how to work with the Council.

Carolyn Kane said she has concerns about their charge, how they're going to get there and wondering how they fit into what they are to do. One task she's worked on with Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance is getting three counties to work together on such items as funding, statewide trail database, property issues, easements and titles, etc. The document she referenced is Connecting Michigan; available at <http://www.michigantrails.org/projects/connecting-michigan/>

Greg Yager feels the Council's hands will be full in connecting all the trails and users coming together.

Bill Manson said the subcommittees need to work on connecting the snowmobile trails and due to current economic times that more cities and towns are thinking twice about allowing the trails to come into their communities. He noted that the UP has been easier to connect so far.

Jim Duke added that in the UP they are dealing mostly with multiple use conflicts, due to mainly ATV damage. There's no organized group to clean the trails up, so they're looking to the snowmobile clubs. He's concerned that the motorized trails are where the challenge is right now.

James Dickie said that the cost of replacing bridges will be a challenge. He thought reroutes would be much less expensive.

Chair Wheatlake asked about the DEQ permits for bridges – **Chief Boyd** said the Black Mountain permit is moving along, but it has taken quite some time to get all that resolved. The DNRE had to do wetland restoration and they are moving forward.

Deputy Director Ruswick said that legislature created a wetland workgroup and there has been discussion on refining that process for wetlands and the permitting process.

Erin McDonough wanted to concentrate on hunting and fishing opportunities, access and keeping those areas funded by hunting and fishing dollars is important. MUCC would like to see cooperation with all users.

Carolyn Kane mentioned a specific area that they would like a connection - Hartland Trail through the Stanton Game Area to Montcalm Community College. This would open up access to the whole community.

Erin McDonough mentioned concerns about setbacks for hunting opportunities.

Chair Wheatlake asked about the Pittman-Robertson Act monies to purchase land in the PRC (Pigeon River Country State Forest).

Chief Boyd said that land in the PRC is monitored by the federal government as to activities. She suggested to get information from Wildlife Division to see what those parameters are that would need to be followed. She also added that the Council might want to revisit the definition of a State Forest Road, and designate access points to State land, either by motorized or nonmotorized vehicles.

Tom Dunn said they need to address the multi-use trails and who will maintain them. He'd like to see discussion on the interconnecting system, and more continuity in the Units of the DNRE – hopefully addressed more in subcommittees.

Chair Wheatlake feels that the quicker the subcommittees are pulled together, the quicker the individual concerns can be addressed. ORV, snowmobile and nonmotorized subcommittees are to be created.

Inventory of Trails, Types and Miles – **Jim Radabaugh** will have this information at the September meeting.

Chair Wheatlake asked Rose Ingram to explain the federal standpoint on these trails issues.

Rose Ingram said the concerns in the UP are snowmobile trails through wetlands, and ORVs using them. Also trails being used or created by ORVs that are not designated for that use. Constructing bridges are a concern. Connecting communities and trails are a good thing. She said that they are currently updating trails information in the Huron Manistee. Discussion continued on monies available for trails from the federal government. It is an extensive process as well.

Chair Wheatlake asked if the subcommittees could come to the feds and apply for funding for new trails.

Erin McDonough asked about the federal 'roadless' rule and what it is.

Basically it's an assessment process; go through the lands, and what has the potential for closing roads. They look at what characteristics are on the land and other criteria to consider.

Rose Ingram said it could be under a 'trail management' rule instead. Trail Management rule is a national policy in place to identify motorized trails (excluding snowmobiles). User-created roads in some of those areas have been closed. She also added that they get plenty of trail proposals, and evaluate them as they come in.

Jim Radabaugh reviewed definitions of trails found in statute and administrative rules. The Recreation and Trails Section program staff is referring to these definitions when they discuss any state trail that is formally designated, signed and maintained as part of the state recreation trail system. He pointed out that the public may be using a two track in the forest and refers to it as a "trail" in their use of it; however it may never have been part of the designated state recreation trail system.

Chair Wheatlake asked if we have any interest in rail trails currently – **Jim Radabaugh** said that there is a grant request for an additional rail trail corridor in the UP.

Chief Boyd wanted to add that they are setting up an Access Plan starting with the PRC. There is a workgroup, which includes all user groups that are charged looking at those access points into the PRC.

Chief Wheatlake wanted to clarify subcommittees – **Chief Boyd** said that the Chair can appoint with input from the Council.

Bill Manson explained the role the SAC played (before it was abolished) and their members, and their involvement with the Grant Sponsors who maintain the snowmobile trails.

Chair Wheatlake asked staff's input on their relationship – **Chief Boyd** said it was a good relationship and had evolved into a very worthwhile relationship.

Discussion continued on what the role will be of the subcommittees. **Chief Boyd** said the roles of the Council are very broad.

Bill Manson added that they would like to not have the Council deal with the day to day snowmobile issues, but the subcommittees to do the detail work and comprehensive plan and bring it to the Council.

Dick Ranney said that they made some steps forward with the ORV Trails Advisory Board. They submitted maps and had input on legislation activities. They had quite a diverse group of members as well. However; he felt that the members did not communicate very well together, and had different viewpoints.

James Radabaugh said he thought it was good because there were many different users with different input, and he thought it worked well.

Greg Yager pointed out that the users of those activities had input at the public meetings which was important.

The overall consensus for number of subcommittee meetings was four times a year.

Tom Dunn said that a good cross section of input is important, and to have law enforcement input is critical. Discussion continued over involvement in meetings.

Chief Boyd said there needs to be diverse groups and the subcommittees should be primarily advisory. She also added that they would like involvement in each of the subcommittees as well, similar to the motorized trail programs as before.

John Gonway addressed the nonmotorized side and said he would like to see the DNRE involved also.

Carolyn Kane said she felt the perfect nonmotorized subcommittee would be MUCC, MTGA, LMB, and MMBA. They've worked together, but never had table meetings before – she feels it would be important. She mentioned that an MDOT representative would also be good – they deal a lot with them. In addition, the health and medical community should be brought in as well.

Chair Wheatlake added that staff will be involved in the subcommittees, but noticed that one type of group that has not been involved is the disabled sector.

Erin McDonough added that there is a Disabilities Workgroup; they could have a member brought in.

Deputy Director Ruswick agreed that a person from that Disabilities Workgroup should come in and have an open discussion with the Council. Discussion continued. For the next meeting, an agenda item will be added to have a disabilities accessibility person attend.

Chief Boyd explained the equestrian subcommittee and said it was established in statute – their charge is to put together a plan within the year of statute for a trail plan proposal. She feels it is a pretty tight deadline. The group has not met yet. They will make a recommendation to the Council. That subcommittee will have six members, who are appointed.

Chair Wheatlake said that the subcommittee members will not be decided today, but to have appointees discussed and ready for the September meeting. There are to be five members on the nonmotorized, five for the ORV and five on snowmobile subcommittees. That number has more to do with costs than anything else.

John Gonway asked if conference calls are acceptable; with public meetings it is difficult to adhere to the Open Meetings Act. Subcommittees are open to have day or evening meetings.

Bill Manson presented his handout of the proposal for seven members for the Snowmobile Advisory Subcommittee and discussed.

Chief Boyd suggested amending the bylaws to address subcommittee term limits. She said to make a change; the advice would be to the Director, not staff.

Deputy Director Ruswick suggested that the Council empower the subcommittees and **Bill Manson** added he hoped that the subcommittees should be able to work out their concerns in those meetings.

Chair Wheatlake said that every meeting the Council will be updated by the subcommittees.

Deputy Director Ruswick suggested it would be a good idea to have the subcommittees meet together occasionally.

Chair Wheatlake suggested getting started and fine tune as we go. From a bylaw perspective for Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup members:

- Lee Murray, Chairman, 1 year term (at his request)
- Jim Duke, 2 year term
- Bill Manson, 2 year term
- Al Green, 1 year term
- Don Britton, 2 year term
- Rich Filley, 2 year term
- Bruce Wood, 1 year term

October 19, 2010, is their proposed first meeting.

As for the ORV Advisory Workgroup; **Chair Wheatlake** asked **Tom Dunn** and **Greg Yager** to get together with recommended names etc. John Gonway and Carolyn Kane will come back with recommendations in September for the nonmotorized subcommittee.

Adoption of Rules of Procedure – **Chair Wheatlake** suggested waiting until the final two Council members are appointed.

Appointment of Vice President – **Chair Wheatlake** said that it's a bit premature, but to anyone interested in being Vice Chair, to please call him.

Chair Wheatlake wants to know where we're at in this trail planning process.

Chief Boyd said she feels we're behind a bit. She suggested looking at what trails are on the ground, and discuss what planning objectives can be done in these two years.

Chair Wheatlake's hopes are that all members are in place by September, and have the subcommittees to have had one meeting by December.

NEXT MEETING DATE

September 13, 2010, at the Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center.

December 1 is the recommended date for the following meeting of the Council, at the Roscommon OSC, from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Bill Gilbert, President Michigan ORV Safety Association wants the Council to understand the concerns he has over House Bill 6161 on how instructors are certified. He feels the DNRE is running the program with no rules in place. He continued with what he said was a disturbing complaint he received about an ORV safety certification course. He said House Bill 6161 does not address the inadequate certification issue and it will allow these instructors to continue teaching.

Discussion continued on certifying safety instructors. Varying opinions were noted on how students should be taught and how long, etc. **James Radabaugh** said that staff has been discussing this issue with Law Division and other groups.

Chair Wheatlake said that Bill Gilbert should be able to have legislative input, but **Bill Gilbert** said he was told he did not.

Pat Brower, Great Lakes Four Wheel Drive Association asked about Rose Ingram's new database and if it includes legal easements. He was wondering about some particular roads they used to ride that are no longer considered legal. **Rose Ingram** said their database will include designated roads and trails in the system.

Pat Brower asked about the disability workgroup – the Accessibility Advisory Council information can be found on the DNRE website at www.Michigan.gov/dnr. Click on Inside the DNR, then Accessibility.

Bud Martin mentioned gravel pits for biking and to look into gravel pits for trails.

Meeting adjourned at 1:42 p.m.

James Duke asked to have added to next meeting's agenda that it is necessary to sign up ahead of time to speak at the Council meetings.