

**MICHIGAN SNOWMOBILE AND TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL (MSTAC)
MEETING MINUTES**

April 23, 2012

Approved July 31, 2012

**Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center
104 Conservation Drive, Roscommon, Michigan 48653**

PRESENT FOR THE MSTAC

Frank Wheatlake, Chair
Sandra Batie
Jim Dickie
Jim Duke
Mike Foote
Carolyn Kane
Bill Manson
Erin McDonough
Greg Yager

PRESENT FOR STAFF

Donna Stine, Policy Coordinator, DNR
Ron Olson, Chief, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD)
Jim Radabaugh, PRD
Andrea Turner, PRD
Annamarie Bauer, PRD
Todd Neiss, PRD
Paul Yauk, PRD
Maia Stephens, PRD
Lieutenant Andrew Turner, Law Enforcement Division
Kristin Phillips, Marketing and Outreach Division
Kristen Thrall, Huron-Manistee National Forest, U.S. Forest Service

PUBLIC ATTENDEES

Emily Meyerson, AICP, Community Planner & Northern Lower Peninsula Trailways Coordinator
Nancy Krupiarz, Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance (MTGA)
Lewis Shuler, Cycle Conservation Club of Michigan
Sue Thrushman, MMRC - ATV Off-Road Club

WELCOME

Chair Wheatlake called the Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council (MSTAC) meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Chair Wheatlake welcomed everyone and introduced himself, followed by introductions of the MSTAC members, and all other attendees.

MINUTES

The minutes of the February 21, 2012 MSTAC meeting were acknowledged. **Sandra Batie** asked that corrections be made to page 2, under *Equine Trailways Subcommittee* report, change "identify her" to "identify Jane Carmichael;" page 3, under *Review and Approval of Plan Outline*, change "overwhelmed" to "concerned;" and page 4, under *Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Agenda*, change "Sandra Batie asked..." to "Sandra Batie asked that the *Finalization of the ETS 2011 Recommendations Report* be added to the next meeting's agenda so that MSTAC members could comment on it. The comments then could inform the equestrian workgroup plan for the MSTAC's overall trail network plan." **Motion to adopt the revised February 21, 2012 meeting minutes unanimously carried.**

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Proposed Marketing Plan for Trails and Results of Trail Survey

Maia Stephens, Recreation Programmer, PRD, is currently assisting with marketing trials.

She began with a PowerPoint presentation on the results of two surveys (*January 2012 FM Employee Survey* and *2012 Trail and State Forest Campground Stakeholder Survey*) that were prepared by PRD.

The employee survey was sent to approximately 85 staff and 46 responses were received. The stakeholder survey was sent to approximately 110 people and 416 responses were received (survey was forwarded/shared with other interested individuals).

Maia Stephens stated that the survey results were not statistically verifiable, as they were not done in a controlled environment. It appears from some of the comments, that the public may not have a full understanding of DNR policies/procedures (land use, funding restrictions, etc.). She also commented that the feedback provides a huge educational opportunity.

Donna Stine stated that she plans on conducting additional in-depth surveys on behalf of the Statewide Trail Network Plan (STNP); results will be provided as they become available.

Discussion followed.

Jim Radabaugh has been working on a short-term marketing strategy with Maia Stephens and Kristin Phillips. He gave a brief overview of the *Trails Marketing Phase I Communication Strategy* handout dated April 13, 2012, which included the following categories: Goals, Primary Audiences, Print, Programming, Electronic Media, PR, and Stakeholders and Staff.

There was discussion regarding how the public preferred to access web information (Pure MI site), the need for a URL to trails, and a separate calendar of events for trails or availability to search by event.

Discussion continued regarding marketing ideas. **Donna Stine** commented that one way to assist in becoming "the trail state" is to apply for recognition (awards). She also stated that sponsoring articles in trail magazines is a good advertisement investment.

Chief Olson commented that the staff had been in contact with MDOT regarding the distribution of marketing publications at Michigan Welcome Centers. Discussion followed.

Kristin Phillips, Marketing Manager, Marketing and Outreach Division, presented a *Long-term Plan for Marketing*. The long-term plan included SWOT, Inventory of statewide trail properties and activities, Identify audiences, and Prioritize opportunities base on resources.

Kristin Phillips asked who has a website that we could all join in with - have all information in one place. **Erin McDonough** said that connectivity is the issue, not just the trails. **Maia Stephens** said the Eastern UP asked the DNR "what can you do to help us." The response was to stop thinking of just trails and think outdoor activities – what can you do, where you can go to eat, etc.

Nancy Krupiarz asked what the reaction has been from Pure MI. **Maia Stephens** responded that from a programming side – Pure MI has been fully cooperative. Recreation 101 has 400 events planned. Give us the information and we will promote it.

Sue Thrushman asked if the information was done by county. **Lewis Schuler** asked if ORV opportunities were included in Recreation 101. **Maia Stephens** responded yes.

Chair Wheatlake asked how success would be measured. **Donna Stine** responded that metrics will be developed by the STNP Outline.

Update of the Trails Plan

Donna Stine reviewed the updated *STNP Outline*, which included the DNR staff names and assigned responsibility. She also referred to the *STNP Timeline* handout and stated that staff would be meeting monthly throughout the year.

Bill Manson asked if the snowmobile staff was to meet separately. **Donna Stine** replied that the Chair of each workgroup should work with DNR staff and then present information to their workgroup.

Erin McDonough asked how we were doing on roads – are they being incorporated. **Donna Stine** said yes, they are part of the trails inventory.

Update of Forest Recreation Staff Merger with the Parks and Recreation Division

Chief Olson distributed an *Organizational Action Plan for DNR Parks and Recreation and State Forest Recreation* memo, dated March 26, 2012. The transition of staff became official April 15, 2012. He highlighted communication, support, image, and customer responsiveness. He referenced the new Trail Programmer position on page two of the memo.

Chair Wheatlake asked specifically about the Co-Field Operations Section Chiefs. **Chief Olson** responded that those positions had not been posted yet.

Sandra Batie asked "who (DNR staff) is doing what." **Chief Olson** replied that a functionality chart will be developed and distributed.

Chair Wheatlake asked what type of political feedback has been received regarding the state forest campground (SFC) fees being lowered. **Chief Olson** responded that he, along with Director Stokes and Legislative Liaison Trevor VanDyke, had met with legislatures and explained the institution of the Recreation Passport, the lower camp fees, and ability to reserve campsites. There was a question regarding “who enforces the Passport?” There have been meetings with law enforcement to identify the party/trouble areas and will target enforcement.

Blue Ribbon State Park Committee and Its Linkage to Trails

Erin McDonough distributed a *Panel Process Flow Chart*. She stated that they are trying to link work, not duplicate or recreate what is already done. Discussion followed regarding the timeline and working with the MSTAC. **Erin McDonough** stated how important it is to be a partner with the communities rather than telling them what to do. See referred to Tahquamenon Falls State Park and how well they work with the community.

Sandra Batie/Paul Yauk commented that the community of Chelsea had partnered with the local hospital and Wellness Foundation. **Chief Olson** said that they have sponsored (paid expenses) employees to attend conferences.

Carolyn Kane commented that it sounds like an opportunity to give the government an incentive regarding funding; small communities not able to do projects (not able to even match grants). **Erin McDonough** said communities need to backup their “need” for funds. She referenced a template for recommendations – communities can’t just ask for funding and expect the DNR to do the work. **Carolyn Kane** responded that there is tremendous community investment; not always money but involvement.

LUNCH BREAK

Chief Olson said the Blue Ribbon Panel had a good session last week, things are going well. **Erin McDonough** asked Chief Olson if he agreed that the MSTAC should be incorporated – he replied yes. An invite will be sent to the BRC to attend the July 31 MSTAC meeting.

Trail Town Presentation

Emily Meyerson, Northern Lower Peninsula Trailways Coordinator, Top of Michigan Trails Council. She has been at her current job for the past nine years and previous to that, worked as a planner in local government for seven years.

The *Trail Town Program* began in Pennsylvania by the Allegheny Trail Alliance. It is an economic development and community revitalization initiative working in “Trail Towns” along the Great Allegheny Passage. The program’s purpose is to ensure that trail communities and businesses maximize the economic potential of the trail.

The program also works to address trail-wide issues and opportunities through regional cooperation and to build the connection “between trail and town,” so that there are safe and well-marked routes into the towns.

Emily Meyerson gave an overview of the Program History and Program Goals, which include the following:

1. Retain, expand, and increase revenues of existing businesses
2. Recruit sustainable new businesses

3. Facilitate collective action by the Trail Towns to create a world class recreational destination
4. Improve the buildings and infrastructure in each town to create a visitor friendly destination.

Finalization of the 2011 Recommendations Report of the Equine Trailways Subcommittee

Sandra Batie asked if there were any comments from the various workgroups. Nancy Krupiarz responded on behalf of John Gonway, Chair of the Nonmotorized Advisory Workgroup, that they had draft comments and will work with Sandra Batie.

Subcommittee and Workgroup Reports

Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup

Bill Manson reported on behalf of Lee Murray, Chair. The SAW approved Draft 6 of the *Michigan Motorized Sign Handbook* (long process). The SAW is hoping that the new guidelines will help slow snowmobilers down, instead of driving "sign to sign" they will "drive the trail." The next big push will be an official notice, via magazine articles, announcing the sign changes. The deadline for submittals is July 1. **Todd Neiss** suggested adding an educational component to the official notice – Groomer Standards/Inspections, and Reimbursement Fees. **Bill Manson** referenced a presentation that was given at the last meeting regarding trail issues off trail and on hill. He stated that lack of snow has made this the lousiest season for the snowmobile program and permit sales were down.

Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Workgroup

Tom Dunn, Chair, was not able to attend the meeting. He sent the following update via e-mail to Chair Wheatlake:

The last meeting was held on March 7, 2012 in Lansing.

A presentation was given by Sam Boumis and Elise Lancaster, Scofes & Associates Consulting, representing Polaris. They provided an overview of why their client believes there is a need to change the legal definition of ATV in Michigan. He also distributed ATV definitions from other states, proposed changes to Michigan's ORV definitions.

The ORVAW commented that the side by side's already fall with in the ORV definitions and that Michigan provides more side by side opportunities then any other state already with ORV. Polaris officials will be present at the next meeting.

Jim Faiella has set up a June Legislative ORV ride with the help of Yamaha.

The ORVAW is still working to get user groups to agree to a feasible permit increase and there are several bills to be introduced soon but no legislature will carry a fee increase at the time.

Again my apologies for the late notice, I will ask Lew Shuler if he could answer any questions in my absence.

Lewis Schuler added that Polaris' side by sides are up to 65 inches wide (Michigan ORV trails are limited to vehicles that are less than 50 inches in width). He also invited everyone to the 8th Annual Arbor Day Tree Planting in Kalkaska this Sunday, April 29, 2012, at 9:00 (meet at the fairgrounds).

Nonmotorized Advisory Workgroup

Nancy Krupiarz, on behalf of Chair Gonway, reported that the response to the ETS Plan was reviewed at the last meeting and is being finalized. She also stated that a vacancy still exists within the NAW, as a candidate withdrew his candidacy. **Nancy Krupiarz** also mentioned that Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance (MTGA) will be host two free technology webinars in May; *Google Mapping for Trails* on May 2, and *Navigating Social Media* on May 16. Additional information is available at www.michigantrails.org.

Equine Trailways Subcommittee

Sandra Batie, Chair, reported that the last ETS meeting was held February 27. ETS member Richard Kleinhardt is serving as co-chair of the Pigeon River Country (PRC) Equine Committee. The vacancy left by Jane Carmichael has been filled. Ms. Joni Gleason has been appointed to the ETS and will serve as the Upper Peninsula representative. **Sandra Batie** is currently working with DNR staff to schedule the next three meetings. **Sandra Batie** also stated that Paul Curtis, along with other DNR staff, have been involved with the statewide equine trail inventory and have expanded the scope to include all state lands. A student assistant in PRD is working on trends. Other areas are also being explored: user experiences/what is needed, focus groups by region, and process to identify/fix gaps.

STAFF REPORTS

Lt. Turner reported the new helmet law, for the most part, has no affect on ORV. However, there may be obscure scenarios where a street licensed two-wheeled ORV may qualify to operate without a helmet. Further clarification and interpretation is pending.

Kristen Thrall reported that a contractor will be completing a trail condition inventory of 1,300 miles. She also stated that a new requirement CFR215, allows for a 30 day comment period.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Chair Wheatlake asked the MSTAC members to comment on how they felt things were going. The overall response was that things were going well. A few members expressed their thanks and said the DNR staff was appreciated. Ms. McDonough was impressed by the efficient and positive transition of staff to PRD, and added that this was the best meeting to date. Mr. Duke stated that there has been huge turn around from two years ago.

Mr. Foote asked on behalf of the Michigan Horse Council, who to go to for disability clarification regarding vehicles on equestrian trails? Also, can a cart be taken on an equestrian trail and is hunting off of horseback allowed? **Chief Olson** responded that he would check the status of ADA amendments.

NEXT MEETING

July 31, 2012, Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center

Meeting adjourned at 2:26