

Michigan Trails Advisory Council
Draft Minutes
October 9, 2018

The regular meeting of the Michigan Trails Advisory Council (MTAC) was called to order by Chairman Frank Wheatlake at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, October 9, 2018 at the Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center in Roscommon. Members present: *Chairman Frank Wheatlake, Jim Duke, Bill Manson, Mike Foote, Jason Rolling, Tom Dunn, Tim Kobasic, and Steven Davis.* Robert Wilson joined via telephone.

The following Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff was present: Paul Yauk, Anna Sylvester, Barbara Graves, Michael Morrison, Greg Kinser, John Morey, and Bill Sterrett.

Guests: Lewis Shuler, Cycle Conservation Club, ORVAW; Dave Jaunece, USDA Forest Service; Robert Magon, USDA Forest Service; Kenny Wasczyk, North Country Trail Association; Joe Kuchnicki, Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup; Jim Keltz, Michigan Snowmobile Association; Ray Wlosinski, St. Helen Snowpackers/Dirt Packers; Jenny Cook, equestrian.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Wheatlake welcomed everyone and asked them to introduce themselves.

ACTION ITEMS

Mike Foote moved the motion to approve the October 9, 2018 meeting agenda. Bill Manson seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Jim Duke moved the motion to approve the July 23, 2018 meeting minutes. Mike Foote seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

UPDATES

Michigan Trails Week

Bob Wilson reported that they had their second annual Michigan Trails Week. A ceremony was held at the Capital on Thursday, September 27, in the rotunda where they recognized several individuals for their work on non-motorized trails. Roger Storm, the railway acquisition specialists from the DNR, received an award for DNR Agency Employee of the Year. Senator Goeff Hansen and Representative Holly Hughes received legislator recognition awards for their work on trails legislation and general trail advocacy. They also celebrated their Volunteer of the Year, Dave Mestry from Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation, and Non-Profit Employee of the Year, Kenny Wawsczyk from North Country Trail Association.

Recently, Representative Wentworth introduced a resolution about the value of both motorized and non-motorized trails in Michigan and it was unanimously adopted by the

House. Senator Zorn passed an almost identical resolution the next day. Senator Meekhoff is following behind their work on both water and land trails. They had a legislative outing last month on the Huron River and Sen. Meekhoff was on that trip. They have a lot of great folks in the legislature who support what they are doing.

Pending Legislative Issues

Bob Wilson reported that the Senate passed SJR O before they broke for the summer and it is in the House waiting for action. It would allow for more development dollars from the Trust Fund. It is a big initiative for both motorized and non-motorized trails communities. The governor has it on his priority list to get done during lame duck. There has also been some talk about recreation passport opt-in to opt-out also during lame duck, although the strategy has not been set yet.

Pure Michigan Trails and State Water Trail Designation

Bob Wilson said he has been involved with the department on both programs. He and Michael Morrison recently presented on the Water Trails Designation program at a conference. Both programs have been welcomed for many years by the non-motorized community as a way of distinguishing the best-of-the-best trails. They are excited about the potential to promote the trails through both programs.

Michael Morrison updated the group on the Pure Michigan designation. They will see what will come through in the next few weeks for applications. The next round application deadline will be July 1 of next year. As far as water trails, they have a draft proposal and application in the works that is waiting for final approval from the department.

Wyoming's Proposal for a Non-motorized Trail User Fee

Bob Wilson spoke of a proposal that is being discussed by the Wyoming legislature to fund their state trail system by creating a non-motorized trail user permit that would cost each individual \$10 and the money would go into a restricted fund. An amendment to that would allow some who either could not pay the fee, or some who already donate volunteer hours, to waive the fee. He sent the proposal to members of the Non-motorized Advisory Workgroup for discussion to see if it might be something they want to replicate. He wanted to bring it to the Council's attention to inform them that they are trying to work through issues like this as a way of supporting trails.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Subcommittee Reports

Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup (SAW) – Bill Manson

The October 19th agenda will include reports from the Equipment Subcommittee, LEAN Action Team update, and preseason meetings briefing. The pre-season meetings in the Upper Peninsula are happening this week. They are also going to finalize the Free Snowmobile Weekend proposal. They have proposed some different trespass signs for consideration. They are waiting for the local grant sponsor to give their opinion and the department is working on it with the Eastern U.P. people on the Drummond Island Jeep Jamboree. He and Paul Yauk need to discuss extending the grooming season and vet

it through SAW and MTAC. Chair Wheatlake suggested getting it done through phone calls before the end of the season. He also said that the two motorized groups need to work together on grooming trails that are used by both snowmobiles and ATVs.

Equine Trails Subcommittee (ETS) – *Mike Foote*

The Courtney Lake Campground was to have a meeting with Michigan Trail and USDA Ottawa National Forest to discuss a recommendation of opening a few campsites at the campground. A proposal was put in for the Tin Cup Springs Campground. Extensive work bees have been completed in the Pigeon, hosted by Back Country Horsemen. Also worked with MTRA to clean up the South Branch Camp. Big Oaks has been abandoned by the previous friends group and the Alpena Horsemen's Association has stepped up to take over. Ionia has installed a pavilion. Sleepy Hollow continues to do trail maintenance and the park itself has made five walk-in campsites for hikers, boaters, or equestrians. Yankee Springs is adding corrals to two more campsites, for a total of seven. Fort Custer is working on process for an equine campground and a day staging area. They also replaced a bridge that was out in their camp. The Highland Trail Riders had a match grant with the DNR for a 20 x 30 pavilion and also looking at a proposal for electricity in the campground. Pontiac did a fundraiser for the Pink Derby and provided a lot of money and volunteer hours for it; it was a big success. The Michigan Horse Council delineated money to have the economic impact report for the horse industry as part of the overall study that the American Horse Council Foundation did (see attached). The Legislative Day of the Horse was put together by the Horse Council and due to the success of the program they are going to repeat it in 2019.

Jenny Cook, an equestrian, thanked the group and the department for allowing her to speak today. She gave an update on the Great Lakes shoreline pilot rides she has been organizing with the department (see attached) and an update on the upcoming pilot ride on November 3 at Silver Lake State Park, after the park has closed to ORVs.

Mike Foote wanted to acknowledge Back Country Horsemen and thank them for their work on the ride in Muskegon. The next ETS meeting will be October 17 at the Doherty Hotel in Clare.

Nonmotorized Advisory Workgroup (NAW) – *Bob Wilson*

Their last meeting included discussion on trails week, legislative issues and Pure Michigan and Water Trails designation, which were already reported on.

Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Workgroup (ORVAW) – *Tom Dunn*

The ORVAW held their last meeting on September 12, 2018 in Lansing. The members heard testimony on Winching Safety in Publications – Capt. Steele from LED reported that he discussed with a department legal adviser about putting winching in the handbook and was told it was an inappropriate place to put it in such a limited fashion due to liability and limited space. They will instead refer people to their owner's manual. Discussion ensued with and a motion was made to ignore legal advice but was defeated. The Publication will be printed as presented by Captain Steele for distribution in the upcoming season. All old publications will be destroyed due to inaccurate information. Discussion was held on Winter ORV events on shared trails (Snowmobile and ORV) about which programs vehicle take precedent. The two programs and

Department worked together to take care of the situation. 2018 NOHVCC Conference Review – 40 states and five Provinces of Canada participated. The DNR was a great partner, and Jim Faiella from Peacock Limited made sure the workshop was as good as it can be. Yamaha, Honda, Polaris, and Can-Am were present. Kim Kennedy gave an update of the new interactive ORV trail map. It can be found on the DNR website under “Things to Do”, then “ORV/ATV”. The Department gave an overview of the progress and assessments of the storm damage in the western U.P. and storm damage reports from the tornadoes and high wind damage in the lower Peninsula. Updates were given for Public Act 288. The members are looking into how to get the information of what roads are open and those of Public Act 240 of 2008 (county roads) in an easy access point for our users so that they may ride in the proper places. Asked the Workgroup to review and be prepared to work with the department on the trail plan, priorities and wish list and vision for future.

Chair Wheatlake will talk to Paul Yauk about subcommittee and workgroup vacancies after today’s meeting.

2019 Meeting Dates

Chair Wheatlake suggested the subcommittees work out their 2019 dates and then the MTAC will schedule around them. Tim Kobasic suggested that the October MTAC meeting be held in conjunction with the October NRC meeting that is held in the U.P.

Hiawatha Grade

Tim Kobasic reported that their proposals has been stalled again. He proposed an endorsement from the Council and the department to get things moving again. Dave Jaunece volunteered to see what he can do to help move things.

Note: After the meeting Tim Kobasic informed the group that he received contact from the USFS and that the proposal was back on track for proposed reviews in the spring.

Staff Reports

P.A. 288 Update - Bill Sterrett and Anna Sylvester gave updates on P.A. 288. Public hearings and reviews are ongoing. This Thursday they will also be taking public comment at the NRC meeting and the November NRC meeting. Next year a map will be provided for the UP and for the SLP. Paul Yauk complemented everybody involved.

Houghton County Damage - Paul Yauk reported that staff from the department, MDOT, DEQ, the federal government and the National Guard continue working on the Houghton project. Crews are currently working with FEMA. They have identified \$21M worth of damage, but any reimbursement will probably be only 75%. Anna Sylvester reported that they have staff working on reinstalling fences that have been taken down by people that want to ride through the damage and it is very dangerous. They are trying to get the message out to the clubs and groups that if the gate is there, do not go there. Officers will be there to enforce the land use order that says they are closed and will start writing tickets.

Paul Yauk reported that they are moving forward with the Five Year Trail Plan and will be working with MDOT, who has a similar plan.

Paul Yauk updated the group on the planned gift to the trails and recreation programs from the Ralph Wilson Foundation to southeast Michigan. One of the big projects will be working on the Iron Belle Trail. There has been progress made on the Iron Belle, from Wayne County to Washtenaw County, and the Lakelands. They have ribbon cuttings this week on the White Pine and on the Lakelands.

Paul Yauk said that the southwest trail specialist position will be filled soon and the new staff person will be housed in the Plainwell office.

Bill Manson suggesting putting out a press release on the redo of the trail in Gaylord along Otsego Lake stating that it is still part of the snowmobile trail.

Greg Kinser reported that staff is currently working on ORV grant reimbursements, trail proposals, and lining up fall grading in preparation for snowmobile season. The Gaylord south project stalled due to a labor dispute but is back on and moving forward. Alpena to Hillman surfacing and the Little Black River Bridge came in significantly over bid, so they are having to revisit those projects. Resurfacing on the White Pine is done and a ribbon cutting will take place. They just had a ribbon cutting for the Lake Station Trailhead on the Pere Marquette Trail. Six tornadoes touched down in northern Michigan among other significant wind events that caused a lot of damage and they have been working very closely with grant sponsors, FRD, and federal and local partners to re-open or re-routed as appropriate. Significant challenges are in Wexford County where a lot of trails are closed due to large blowdowns. Partners came together to remove over 400 trees from various trails such as the White Pine Lincoln Hills Route, Little Manistee, and Pere Marquette.

The Cadillac Pathway parking lot expansion project is complete, adding 30 additional parking spaces. They are moving forward with the Michigan Mountain Biking Association funded pavilion. The Tin Cup Springs project has been entered for review.

There will be a culvert replacement for snowmobile trail 6 and 7 in Roscommon. They are currently coordinating reroutes with the military and the Crawford County Road Commission. They have had some interest in the West Branch area on establishing a trailhead in the area and initial meetings have taken place. They have a forest certification audit coming up in the Roscommon area on Thursday. They are currently looking at an Iron Belle connection plan within Bay City State Recreation Park.

Tom Dunn wanted to commend staff on opening things back up after the storm damage.

Law Enforcement Division – *Brandon Keift, District Supervisor, Roscommon*
Off-road vehicle hours worked were roughly 20,000 hours last year, 1,750 arrest or citations, just under 600 complaints, 4604 warnings, and 23,000 off-road vehicle contacts. From snowmobile, roughly 15,000 hours worked, 881 arrests, 174 complaints, 2,402 warnings, and just under 30,000 contacts. Sound enforcement has been ramped up with snowmobiles.

U.S. Forest Service - *Dave Jaunece, Manistee*

Three and a half more miles of trail were added near the Hungerford equine campground; Trail 25 was added to Trail 24, creating a loop. Installation of new assurance markers on ORV trails is being done; most of the 50" trails are completed. They are working with Pines Point and Beyond partners to have another equestrian area (non-moto, multi-use) at Pines Point. They are working on a snowmobile connector trail to Trail 19, from west of Baldwin to North Muskegon/Hart area. An assessment was done on North Country Trail (NCT) to come up with a long-term plan and to prioritize projects. Rebuilding bridge on NCT this weekend. EF0 and EF1 tornadoes hit just east and west of Baldwin and every available person was out cutting and clearing roads, trails, and rivers. They received a lot of help from snowmobile clubs and liveries. Work will continue for weeks to come. They are working on an E-track system for inventory efficiency.

Bob Magon, USFS, reported that they are getting their snowmobile trails ready for the season. They have a lot of culvert issues they are working with. Working with the snowmobile clubs on signing. ORV use is high. There is an Oscoda County ORV club that is trying to get initiated. They put a new toilet in the Luzerne horse trail camp, with a partnership with the Michigan Trail Riders Association. They reconstructed the Big Creek pad boardwalk.

Anna Sylvester reported that rail trails will be an item on the NRC agenda. It is an administrative item that will legally transfer some property from Forestry to Parks and Recreation.

Paul Yauk presented a Trail Champion plaque to Chairman Wheatlake, thanking him for his years of service working with the department and the advisory councils. Chair Wheatlake said he has enjoyed his time working with the conservation group and thanked everyone.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

September 25, 2018

Report on our equestrian shoreline progress.

1. We're happy with the results of the Muskegon State Park shoreline ride on September 22. There were 69 riders of the 76 registered that attended the ride. Back Country Horsemen supplied liability insurance and organized the ride. See Riding Permit example. There were three (morning, afternoon and evening) sessions scheduled with 20-25 riders per session. We allowed one hour between each session for parking rotation. There were many positive comments from the participants and the general public alike. DNR Event Coordinator, Elissa Buck, collected surveys from the public, participants and DNR staff.



2. Local equestrians are planning a Rockport SP ride with the DNR on October 16, 2018.

3. Grace Adventures is planning a ride at Silver Lake SP on November 3rd. We're hoping DNR Barbara Graves and DNR Jacklin Blodgett will join us on this ride.



4. Lakeport SP has a small but worthy shoreline for equestrians. The entrance is sandy and gradual. The day use parking area is gated and fenced off from the road, so there will be limited shoreline foot traffic after Labor Day until Memorial Day. This is not a Piping Plover potential nesting area. Lakeport SP is an excellent equestrian shoreline location for Spring and Fall.



5. Van Buren SP has a small but worthy shoreline for equestrians. There are several miles of equestrian trails nearby. Manager, Kurt Maxwell has offered his staff to drive us in a 4 x 4 to pick up manure along the shoreline. There is a potential for loud sirens to go off at Palisades nuclear power plant at any time. Siren testings are on the first Tuesday of each month.



6. Petoskey State Park has a small but worthy shoreline for equestrians. The parking is paved but is adequate for several rigs right at the beach. Although the entrance is narrow with curves and could be a challenge for some larger rigs. The shoreline is very rocky in some areas. The campground closes on October 15. Due to the limited shoreline, equestrians should visit after that time.



I am happy to coordinate and attend any of the organized rides.

Best Regards,

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