

Snowmobile Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
Bangor – DEP Conference Room
February 12, 2014
9:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

Participants

Council Members:

Marie Candeloro, Kokadjo Roach Riders
Terry Hill, Bowlin Matagamon S.C.
Richard Merrill, Snow Valley Sno-Goers
Jim Yearwood, Northern Outdoors - The Forks
Frank Clukey, E. Millinocket, Millinocket, Medway Recreation
Maurice Marden, Club Grants – MSA
John Monk, MSA
Steve Edwards, Birch Point Lodge

Guests:

Scott Clements, Newburgh Country Side Riders
Bob Meyers, MSA
Jim White, MSA
Jon Holmes, Poodunck Snowmobile Club

Off Road Vehicle Unit Staff:

Will Harris, Director, Bureau of Parks and Lands, Clerk of the Board
Scott Ramsay, Director, Off-road Recreational Vehicle Office
Joe Higgins, Snowmobile Program Coordinator, Off-road Recreational Vehicle Office
Lana LaPlant-Ellis, Senior Planner, Off-road Recreational Vehicle Office

Will Harris, Clerk of the Board opened the meeting with introductions and ran through the agenda items.

Review of Minutes:

Dick Merrill moved to accept the minutes and Frank Clukey seconded. Vote unanimous.

Marie Candeloro asked Will why Paul Napolitano was let go from the board. Will explained that Paul sat in a seat on the board that represented municipal grant administration. When Paul no longer administered a municipal grant he no longer “fit” the slot on the board. Will mentioned that Bob Meyers provided the Department a list of nominees. Marie asked Bob if he provided a list and Bob said - yes but the list was to fill vacant positions not to replace anyone currently on the board. Marie asked if anyone else was replaced that had not termed out? Will explained that Ken Ingalls also was not termed out and he was replaced by John Monk. These appointments are made by the Commissioner and members can be replaced at any time.

As a point of clarification: Ken Ingalls had served one term and could have been reappointed to serve a second, if the Commissioner so chose. However, the Commissioner replaced Ken with John Monk. Paul Napolitano was replaced by Frank

Clukey, Scott Clements was replaced by Maurice Marden, and Rick Levassuer was replaced by Steve Edwards

Elect Chair and Vice-Chair:

Terry Hill asked Jim Yearwood if he would be willing to serve. Jim said “no”
Scott Ramsay explained that the Chair is engaged in agenda items, runs votes and is a formal position with the Secretary of State. Scott Clements stated that Terry Hill is open minded and non-biased. Terry said she is not ready to be Chair but would consider the Vice-Chair position. Marie Candeloro said she would consider the position of Chair.

Dick Merrill moved to nominate Marie Candeloro as Chair and Terry Hill as Vice Chair. Frank Clukey seconded. Vote – unanimous.

Review of the report to the legislature on PL 48:

Will reviewed the report that was submitted to the Legislature that contains some tasks for the Snowmobile Advisory Council. The report has 4 parts.

1. Year-end balance and Disaster Relief Grant Program
2. Establish a quarterly reporting system
3. Explanation of the process for applying/reviewing/receiving grants and establish a grant education program
4. Develop a plan for the elimination of the State-administered snowmobile trail grooming projects over a two year period

Begin work on draft rules for catastrophic event trail grant:

Will handed out the Draft of the Disaster Relief Program Rules. Will explained how this rule is structured for the new members on the board. At the end of the fiscal year, when the books close, the goal is to carry over a cash balance in the Snowmobile Trail Fund that is equivalent to 10% of revenue (actual revenue averaged for the past three years). Funds over the target and otherwise approved by the administration up to \$100,000 becomes available for one-time Disaster Relief Funds for special projects from clubs and municipalities. The annual amount that is available in the Disaster Relief Fund will be recommended by the Snowmobile Advisory Council. Grants will be awarded up to \$20,000 and be approved by the Council. These would be for catastrophic events on ITS trails only. Catastrophic events include: bridge failure/replacement due to weather event, erosion due to storm event, vegetation management due to storm event, and catastrophic equipment failure.

A discussion ensued:

- How many miles of ITS trails does Maine have? Approx. 3,500 miles out of 14,000 miles of trail, so approx. 10,000 miles will not be covered under the existing language. There was concern voiced that this should cover all trails. Will said the commissioner’s committee discussed this grant program only covering the “big” trails to keep things moving. This Committee can decide the parameters for trail inclusion. Scott advised there is no way this proposed grant program can cover 14,000 miles of trail. There was discussion of adding municipal trails to the rule language. Scott will provide the Committee with a list of catastrophic events, cost and reimbursements through the program over the past few years.
- There was also discussion that the catastrophic equipment failure should be removed from this grant program and it should only pertain to natural disasters.

- There was discussion of having groomer repair costs come out of the Capital Equipment Fund. A need was expressed that a repair fund should be considered. Scott explained that the statute allows the Committee to approve repairs out of the Capital Equipment Grant Program, however, the previous Committee voted not to approve such repair grants until more money was available.
- The subject of the Disaster Relief Fund covering “spontaneous ITS relocations” was raised.
- There was discussion of adding the requirement for a financial statement to the application process.

Will and Scott both encouraged the Committee to review the draft and put together recommendations for the next meeting. There need to be definite guidelines for the Committee to follow to award these grants.

State Maintained Snowmobile Trails:

Will reviewed the subject of discussing the elimination of the state maintained snowmobile trails. Scott indicated that the Council should set the priority and the timing of these discussions.

Evergreen Valley – 37 miles – approx. 18 miles ITS
 Mount Blue – 38 miles – approx. 17 miles ITS
 Beddington – 47 miles – 47 miles ITS
 Frye Mountain – 26 miles – approx. 3 miles ITS

Priority of trail in system:

1. Frye Mountain is the lowest priority
2. The others are all even

Cost (highest to lowest):

1. Mt. Blue
2. Beddington
3. Evergreen Valley
4. Frye Mountain

The Commissioner’s Committee asked what legislation would be needed for transferring grooming equipment. Right now the procedure would be to send them to Surplus Property where they would go out to bid (15% of the money would go to general fund and 85% would go to the snowmobile trail fund). If we wanted to turn these groomers over to clubs/municipalities, then legislation will need to be introduced to allow such a transaction. The state requires that the groomers would need to be sold at “fair market” value. Joe already has met with some clubs in some of these areas. Additional meetings will be set up to discuss options with clubs/municipalities/businesses in the area.

As a point of clarification: The Commissioner’s Report on the Review of the Snowmobile Trail Fund presented to the Legislature includes the following language concerning state maintained trails – “The Bureau will look at potential cost savings, rerouting or designation of ITS trails to other systems, and include an option to simply close the systems down. The Task Force agreed to a two-year timetable to achieve this transition with the understanding that at the end of that time

if ORV program staff are not successful with the transition out of State administration for less money than is currently spent then sections of the trail may have to close.”

Quarterly Report Overview:

Will reviewed the report and said it would be sent out every month.

There was a question about what the “Transfer” column is. Scott explained it was a state charge (2.461%) that goes into the general fund for all expenditures, excluding grants. “DICAP Transfer” (10.539%) is a Department transfer on all expenditures, excluding grants. This money is used to pay for administrative functions such as payroll, HR, etc. “Rents” are for vehicle rental and office space rental.

Discuss groomer repair for Capital Equipment Grants:

This topic was discussed earlier in the meeting. Once again there was expressed a need for groomer repair grants. It was suggested that this not include maintenance items such as tracks, etc. but major engine failure.

Scott suggested there are two possibilities: 1) add repairs to the capital equipment grant program or 2) consider engines as part of the grant package. (i.e. add engine onto the cost of the machine).

Maurice Marden moved to not allow repairs to come out of the Capital Equipment Grants Program for this current fiscal year. Dick Merrill seconded. Vote 7 in favor and 1 abstained.

This issue will need to be addressed soon because clubs are running old equipment that is just getting older. The Council needs to work together with MSA to get a fee increase.

Jim Yearwood asked if the grant program would ever get to a point where it is not micro managing and only paying the clubs for actual groomer hourly rates? Scott asked if this meant 100% of the cost? Jim said maybe 90% of the actual hourly rate and that things may need to collapse before any one will react. Reducing the trail mileage was discussed.

Next Meeting:

Finalize Rule – catastrophic grant language
Discuss tightening up grants – reducing mileage

Next meeting Thursday, March 20th, 9:00 AM same location – DEP Bangor

Adjourned – 11:50 A.M.