

Governor's Snowmobile Council

April 2, 2025

Present:

Pat Poulin (Chair)

Jacob Metayer, VSP

Claire Polfus – Forest Parks & Recreation

Stan Choiniere - Governor Appointee

Mike Mutascio – Governor Appointee

Jeff Halpin – Governor Appointee

Cindy Locke, VAST Executive Director

Patty Companik – VAST President

Shannon Fassett – Vermont DMV

Jenna Reed – Fish and Wildlife

VAST Staff Present:

Mandy Dwinell, Programs & Trails Manager

Matt Tetreault, VAST Trails Administrator

Tina Bedard, Office Manager

The meeting was convened at 3:05 PM via Zoom by Pat Poulin.

Approval of Minutes

Stan Choiniere moved to approve the March minutes as presented; Mike Mutascio seconded.

MOTION CARRIED.

Approval of SSTP Financial Report of February Matt

Mike Mutascio moved to approve the SSTP Financial Report for February as presented; Jenna Reed seconded. MOTION CARRIED.

Matt explained that next month's report will look a lot different. Plowed parking is over budget, and he will be requesting approval of payment from FPR.

Agency Reports

Vermont State Police (VSP), Jacob Metayer

Education numbers: 56 in person and 1119 online for a total of 1175. 1 person has completed the online.

Patrols are wrapped up, and reports are being made.

Safety class updates were changed as requested.

Discussion on the length of the online course and possibly revising the online length requirement.

Fish & Wildlife, Jenna Reed

Transitioning from winter to spring/summer.

About 640 hours were done on trails by wardens or paperwork. Will have numbers soon.

Sheriff's Association, Marc Poulin –VT Sheriff Association & Washington County Sheriff

Not Present.

Discussion on Sherriff's participation and some departments are reconsidering.

Police Chiefs & Southern VT Wilderness Search & Rescue, Paul Doucette

Not Present.

Department of Motor Vehicles, Shannon Fassett

As of 3/31/25, 17,429 snowmobiles were registered, with a revenue of \$445,851.

3/31/24 registered snowmobiles were 18,184 with a revenue of \$464,144.

Forest, Parks & Recreation, Claire Polfus

Nothing to report.

Discussion on Trail Finder and what information is available about snowmobiling on it.

VAST

Update

- Cindy will be attending Congress in June. There will be full-day meetings that they will be attending. There are workshops available as well. Jeff Fay, Patty Companik, and Mark Reaves will also be attending. Matt and Cindy will be attending full-day IASA meetings, and Mandy will be going to workshops.
- Cindy is working on end-of-year reports and will have them to share soon.
- Update on the social media committee is that they have not really met much. The discussions they have had seem to lean more towards marketing. But they are making progress
- Cindy and Mandy have a meeting on 4/3/25 with Lee Whiting about Klim gear.
- Discussion about fees being raised, the maximum being \$800.00. Cindy will be discussing this further when she has more information. The Judicial Committee does not meet again until August.
- TMA sales as of now are 20,921 with a revenue of \$3,226,494.
- Discussion about grants and the grant process.
- Cindy is compiling law enforcement and VSAP reports.

Law Enforcement (LE) Committee, Gary

Not present.

VAST Safety Committee, Stan

Met last month and are working on formulating ideas. Cindy and Mandy filmed safety videos, and they will be used next season. Stan had received a question about kids crossing roads on snowmobiles. He would like to make a message so parents understand the safety hazard and why. Discussion on modifying the map to display all road crossings, allowing parents to plan trips more effectively to avoid them.

FY26 SSTP Budget Preview

This is not ready yet. Matt needs to meet with Sheila. It should be ready to view next month.

SSTP Trail Report, Matt

For FY 25, the budget was based on 18,200 registrations in total. 17,429 registrations are being reported by DMV. This is 700+ short of what our budget was based on, but we are looking okay with revenue, which would indicate that DMV likely sold more non-resident registrations and fewer resident registrations than what we forecasted in the FY 25 budget. So, we are looking okay for FY 25.

As we look ahead to the FY 26 budget, it should be very similar to the budget passed in FY 25. It may be based on fewer registrations or, at the very least, a different configuration of resident vs non-resident. It would ideally be based on something close to the registration figures actually sold this year.

A few items to note are the gas tax line item and the plowed parking area line items. We will likely be over budget in FY 25 for plowed parking areas and likely over the 10% that is allowed, which will require permission from FPR. We will need to be careful about adding any new parking areas as we are already over budget with those that we currently plow. With no additional revenue source in the form of registration sales, we cannot continue to add more parking areas to the list of those we plow.

Discussion on Plowed parking areas and who approves new ones. It was discussed that the trails committee does the approval for this.

Discussion on what the Gas Tax Funds are used for. They are used solely for the purchase of grooming equipment/equipment grant-in-aid programs.

For Equipment grants in the FY 26 budget, we will utilize the \$148,000 gas tax funds as we have in the past. However, this is not enough funding, so we are looking to supplement it somehow. Cindy and Matt have been talking about the possibility of using some funding out of the Trails Budget to provide equipment grants as well. This year, several clubs are looking for equipment, and we can hopefully have an alternate funding source from the trails budget to supplement the gas tax funds. We used to pull funding from both budgets 15-20 years ago for equipment, and it makes sense to investigate doing this again.

Discussion on when VAST stopped using funding from the Rails and SSTP budget. It was voted on before Irene hitting to spend down the reserve funds. Once Irene had hit, there was a financial struggle. The equipment line item was taken off, and it has not been added back on.

It was discussed that the SSTP needs to be supplemented in other ways as well. VAST has been using the reserves in SSTP for the past 5 years to balance the budget. This can only happen for so long. We are looking for alternatives.

A draft version of the budget will be available at the next meeting in May and will need approval in June.

2024 Vermont Snowmobile Regulations update

This is being worked on.

Legislative Report

House Report

Not present.

Senate Report – Pat Brennan

Not present.

Appointee Reports

Northwest, Jim

Not present.

Northeast, Mike

Closing gates, picking up signs. End-of-season stuff is being done.

Central, Jeff

Also closing gates, picking up signs.

South, Stan

Signs are being picked up. An ice storm last weekend caused tree damage. It will be a lot easier to fix than flood damage.

Motion to Adjourn:

Stan Choiniere moved to close the meeting at 4:03 pm; Cindy Locke seconded. *Motion carried.*

Next Meeting: The next Governor's Snowmobile Council scheduled meeting will be May 7, at 3:00 pm via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,
Tina Bedard
VAST Office Manager