

Governor's Snowmobile Council

April 3, 2024

Present:

Pat Poulin, Chairman
Jenna Reed, Fish & Wildlife
Claire Polfus, Forest Parks & Recreation
Mike Mutascio, Governor Appointee
Jeff Halpin, Governor Appointee
Stan Choiniere, Governor Appointee
Jim Hill, Pending Governor Appointee
Shannon Fasset, Vermont DMV
Marc Poulin, VT Sheriff Association & Washington County Sheriff

VAST Staff Present:

Cindy Locke, VAST Executive Director
Mandy Dwinell, Office & Programs Manager
Matt Tetreault, VAST Trails Administrator
Tina Bedard, Office & Programs Assistant

The meeting was convened at 3:09 PM via Zoom by Pat Poulin.

Approval of Minutes

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

Approval of SSTP Financial Report of February, Matt

Stan Choiniere moved to approve the February SSTP Financial Reports as presented; Jim Hill seconded. MOTION CARRIED.

Agency Reports

Vermont State Police (VSP), Jacob Metayer

Not Present, emailed update:

Online course - 799
In person course - 83
Total students - 882

There is one in person class that the roster has not received. This is due to the Williston barracks address change as the instructor reports mailing it, and we are still waiting to receive it.

Fish & Wildlife, Jenna Reed

Wardens had a few hours of patrol in NEK during the March 23 storm. Receiving and reviewing activity reports and will be sharing with VAST soon. Hoping to connect with the Police Chief and wardens who attended the VT and NY training this summer and possibly create a training plan for next season.

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

Will be moving into the repaired building on April 15.
No activity has been reported since the last meeting.

Police Chiefs & Southern VT Wilderness Search & Rescue, Paul Doucette
Not Present.

Department of Motor Vehicles Shannon Fassett
Nothing to report.

Forest, Parks & Recreation, Claire Polfus

Currently working on reviewing VOREC grants. \$6.5million in requests were received, including a grant request from VAST. Working with Matt to work out details.

Discussion about the eclipse and if there will be physical barriers. Towns are closing roads that lead to trailheads, particularly in the green mountains. State parks and trails will be closed, Some State parks will remain open, but no trails.

FPR supplied links about the eclipse if needed: <https://fpr.vermont.gov/about/total-solar-eclipse>

The outdoor recreation survey had about 2000 respondents. They are currently going through data.

VAST

Online Safety Class vs In Person Safety Classes, Cindy & Pat

At the March Trails Committee meeting, there were questions on the snowmobile safety course and concerns about the online material not being as robust as in-person. The Trails Committee would like to omit the online course.

Cindy connected with Jacob Metayer with VSP, he is open to reviewing online content and possibly making changes to be more specific to VT.

Discussion on reviewing the online study guide in the current course to review what material is covered. VAST to email link to Governor's Council.

The safety committee will be meeting on the 15th. The committee will be figuring out bullet points that should be covered in the course.

Discussion about online course. Course content discussed regarding possibly adding topics on off trail riding, respecting landowners and zero alcohol tolerance. Format and overall course timeframe additional areas for review.

Discussion on whether some safety course instructors would be interested in reviewing the current content of the course to share feedback and be reimbursed by VAST with a copy of the receipt.

Stan to add a safety course to the April Safety Committee meeting.

Discussion on the VSP boater safety course and how that course and the snowmobile course both use the company Kalchamy to build the course and reviewing options of standard vs interactive course options.

TMA sales, Cindy

2 TMAs within the last week.

19,166 TMAs processed to date.

Law Enforcement (LE) Committee, Cindy

Will be emailing all L/E agencies to send EOY reports and invoices by the end of the month.

VAST safety Committee, Stan

They have some ideas for projects.

Main project priority is with the safety course.

Next meeting held on April 15.

SSTP Trail Report, Matt

Clubs have started to remove signs. Many clubs have closed and locked gates.

A few equipment grants and construction grants have been started.

Discussion about the Waterbury Suspension Bridge at the March BOD meeting. The Green Mtn Roamers are doing research, more information to come.

The creation of a Working Group was granted by the BOD at the March meeting. The group has a call to ANR and is waiting for more details.

Discussion on the prior DeWolf estimate and their work experience. As well as the forensic files VAST has and that they are available for reference.

Legislative Report

House Report, Matt Walker

Not Present.

Senate Report, Jane Kitchel

Not Present

Appointee Reports

Northwest, Jim

Stated they are pulling stakes and removing signs.

Northeast, Mike

A few clubs were able to open during the storm on March 23

A few clubs were able to continue with events and fundraisers.

A concern was raised with Fish & Wildlife about water over some sections of the trails.

Potential landowner closing trails in Island Pond and Derby.

Discussion on discrepancies from the VPR segment on Global Warming featuring VAST. Inaccurate information was released in the interview. Frustration shared that the interview was taken out of context.

Clubs working on closing gates in preparation for the eclipse.

Yankee Magazine was working with clubs in the county to promote winter sports.

Central, Jeff

The March 23 snowstorm provided good riding conditions in higher elevations. They opened trails close to parking.

Clubs are starting to collect signs.

Discussion on VT agriculture laws and dates of manure spreading in connection to stake and sign removal.

South, Stan

The March 23 storm allowed for some higher elevation riding in the Chester area.

Other clubs that were open were Woodford, Grafton, Ludlow, Plymouth, and Mount Holly.

Some clubs have started to pull stakes and remove signs.

Discussion on VT state statute for riding on unmaintained class 4 roads.

Discussion on the difference between Vintage and Antique TMAs and their designated purpose.

Next meeting is Wednesday, May 1, at 3pm via Zoom.

Motion to Adjourn:

Stan Choiniere moved to close the meeting at 4:11pm; Mike Mutascio seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina Bedard,

VAST Office & Programs Assistant