

Governor's Snowmobile Council
April 7, 2021
Approved Minutes

Present:

Pat Poulin, Chairman
Trevor Carbo, Vermont State Police
Shannon Fassett, Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles
Sean Fowler, Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department
Dick Jewett, Governor Appointee
Cindy Locke, VAST Executive Director
Tim Mills, VAST President
Gary Nolan, VAST Law Enforcement Committee
Star Poulin, Governor Appointee
Mike Smith, Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles

VAST Staff Present:

Ken Brown, VAST Trails Manager
Matt Tetreault, VAST Trails Administrator

Guests:

Stan Choiniere, VAST Safety Committee Chairman

The meeting was convened at 3:08 PM via Zoom.

Approval of Minutes

Motion:

Star Poulin moved that the minutes of the March 3, 2021 be approved as circulated, motion seconded by Mike Smith. **Motion carried.**

SSTP Financial Report

Motion:

Star Poulin moved acceptance of the SSTP Financial Report as circulated, seconded by Gary Nolan. **Motion carried.** Matt noted that postage will hold at 101% of budget; this line item is typically split with VAST general, so that it should go no higher in the SSTP budget. Some of the expense is the cost of mailing signage. Matt said he was still surprised to see the postage was that high in this Covid year, and he will look into it.

Agency Reports

Vermont State Police
Snowmobile Safety Education Online

Trevor Carbo reported 2,441 participants in snowmobile education classes, a record number and an increase of 800 over last year, as outdoor recreation became especially important in this Covid season.

Enforcement Patrol update

Trevor said it would take some time to collate all the numbers.

Fish & Wildlife

Enforcement Coordination and Trail Patrol Update

Sean Fowler also needs to collect and collate final numbers. He said the department is now chasing ATVs on the VAST trails as the snow has melted. From a law enforcement perspective, it was a good year, he said, with the best coordination between law enforcement agencies ever and little if any duplication of effort. Sean and Trevor Carbo were acknowledged by the Council for their success in working together; what's missing is a link-in from the Sheriffs. Cindy, Sean, and Trevor are working on trying to get improvements in participation from the sheriffs.

Sheriff's Association

Not present

Southern Vermont Wilderness Search & Rescue

Not present

Department of Motor Vehicles

Snowmobile Registrations to Date

Mike Smith reported 21,329 snowmobile registrations this year vs. 20,415 at this time last year. Cindy said there is a difference of approximately 3,337 more Vermont registered sleds than number of TMAs purchased. This is, however, much better than in prior years, which Cindy attributes to increased law enforcement presence. She also noted that there were 285 sled transfers.

Forest, Parks & Recreation

Not present

VAST

Final TMA Numbers

Cindy Locke reported TMA numbers for this year at 23,706 vs. last year at 22,495.

Ice Crossings and Insurance

There was no new information to report since last month's meeting of the Council. Cindy said she is working on a one-page outline for the Long Range Planning Committee identifying specific ice crossings and where they need to be closed and signed.

Muffler Language

Language for exhaust system identification has been included in the bill. Cindy testified before the legislative committee for about an hour on this and on several other VAST-related matters.

She is working on a list of items to get to Mike Smith by early summer for language additions/revisions in the miscellaneous transportation bill.

Action Requested:

Cindy asked that any additions that Council members would like to see included be emailed to her.

Law Enforcement Committee

Gary Nolan reported that the Morrisville Police Department being involved has made a big positive difference in snowmobile law enforcement in that area. He would like to see other departments involved as well, but funding besides a 50-50 match may be needed to bring them on board. Cindy noted the same issue came up in Orleans County: budgets were already passed and they didn't have the money for snowmobile enforcement for this year. She wonders if a one-time startup grant for the cost of two machines would be helpful in addressing this as there are five or six other small enforcement agencies that could make the program stronger if they had the resources.

Action Taken:

Cindy Locke, Star Poulin, Matt Tetreault, and Gary Nolan will work as an ad hoc committee to develop a plan around this idea to present to the full Council.

Trevor cautioned that there are still areas in existing enforcement where coverage is spotty and where, despite the vastly improved coverage, available funding would not have been adequate to fill the gaps that remain. Gary Nolan said he is expecting to have a couple of Law Enforcement Committee meetings during the summer to address coverage gaps. He said the Committee would also like to identify an app that would allow phone documentation of snowmobile safety inspections vs. handwriting with cold fingers.

VAST Safety Committee

Stan Choiniere reported there was a lengthy committee discussion on the possibility of a new platform for the safety class; some landowners have indicated that they don't feel the current online PowerPoint style class is adequate. A video with a Q&A interaction with actual Certified Safety Instructors would be more effective but it needs more assessment for feasibility.

The new helicopter landing zone for accidents with injuries has been identified. Signage has been installed. Additional sites will be addressed at the upcoming meeting.

SSTP Trail Report

Matt Tetreault noted that the season switched really fast from decent riding to nothing. Still, there was good riding statewide for 8 to 10 weeks despite the late season start and early closing. In May, final grooming paperwork and payments will be completed. By next year, GPS will be adequate to track mileage for reimbursement. As ground thaws and mud dries, signage is being collected.

Legislative Report

Legislators not present.

Appointee Reports

Northwest

Star Poulin confirmed that signage and end of season cleanup has started.

Northeast

Not present

Central

Tim Mills said his region went, in a very swift change, from grooming trails to raking the back lawn. Now clubs are getting ready for the construction seminar.

South

Dick Jewett said that, as of a couple of weeks ago, his region still had several signs frozen into the ground, but he expects them all to be collected soon. He said it was a good season with happy riders, and now it's on to construction grants.

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM. The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for May 5th at 3:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy Whiteneck
Recording Secretary