

**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES
SNOWMOBILE AND ATV ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

OCTOBER 28, 2020 - MEETING MINUTES

Location: Webex Virtual Meeting

Meeting start time: 10:00am

Committee Meeting Attendees:

John Norbeck, DCNR
Alex MacDonald, DCNR BRC
Arline LaTourette, PSSA
Aara Vinsh, DCNR
Eric Bruggeman, PA OHV
Eric Nelson, DCNR Legislative Office
Griffin Caruso, PA House
Harold Shaulis, PA Farm Bureau
Jake Newton, DCNR
Jason Albright, DCNR BOF
Josiah Jones, PA Travel Council
Jack Clark, PA OHV
Leslie Sarvis, DCNR BRC
Matt Azeles, DCNR BSP
Matt Beaver, DCNR BOF
Meredith Hill, DCNR PA Wilds
Michael Hoffman, DCNR BOF
Melissa Morgan
Nicole Faraguna, DCNR Policy Office
Elizabeth Krug, PSSA
Lucinda Barrick
Pat Caulfield, PA Economic Development Assoc.
Bob Monroe, ANF
Bob Pento, PennDOT
Sarah Iversen, PA House
Shea Zwerver, DCNR Policy Office
Dennis Mann, PA OHV
Tim Haydt, PA Game Commission
Timothy Collins, PA Senate
Todd Miller, DCNR BOF
Troy Withers, DCNR BOF
William Jordan

HANDOUTS:

Meeting Minutes – SAAC October 31, 2019

PSSA – “Youth Snowmobile Live-Safety Training: Attendance Analysis and Recommendations”

1) Review Meeting Minutes –

- Liz Krug questioned training fees in last minutes. Michael Hoffman would need to look further into legislation and Troy Withers indicated further research would be required.
 - Instructor training dates in 2020, were instructor training scheduled? Mike Hoffman indicated COVID has delayed the trainings. Training dates to be announced.
 - Liz Krug questioned if dirt bikes converted to a snowmobile use could legally ride on PA Forest Trails? Michael Hoffman indicated only snowmobiles can legally ride on State Forest snowmobile trails.
 - Jake Newton corrected attendees list.
 - Corrected minutes were accepted.
- 2) HB1706 sponsored by Gabler. Eric Nelson indicated DCNR is working with Representatives on a Tioga State Forest Pilot program with the House and Senate back in November 10, 2019. Jack Clark indicated HB1706 had language that local government could take jurisdiction over State Forest Roads. Eric Nelson indicated dirt bikes have a more negative impact on their trails, but no factual evidence was provided.
 - 3) Todd Miller noted DCNR gets \$0.00 back from the online training.
 - 4) Todd Miller reported one ATV Youth safety training in 2019 resulted in 8 new instructors, and was held at Bald Eagle District Office. The DCNR database confirmed 66 active Youth ATV Safety Instructors and 83 active Youth Snowmobile Safety instructors exist.
 - 5) Todd Miller verified 390 students were trained in 2019 and 321 students were trained in 2020 for ATV safety. A total of 42 students were trained in 2019 and 0 in 2020 for snowmobile safety.
 - 6) Todd Miller reported accidents in 2019 for ATVs totaled: 106 reported accidents, with 69 known injuries and 26 fatalities. ATV accidents in the 2020 calendar year totaled: 129 reported with 86 injuries and 28 fatalities. Snowmobile accidents in the calendar year 2019 reported 5 accidents with 4 known injuries and 0 fatalities. In 2020, 3 snowmobile accidents were reported with 2 known injuries and 0 fatalities.
 - 7) Liz Krug commented that it is her opinion students 10-15 years in age are having someone else take the course on-line and the youth are not receiving adequate safety training.
 - 8) Motorized improvements, Michael Hoffman highlighted the following:
 - a. ATVs – Legislation and new ATV policy, proposes to lift moratorium on the construction of new ATV trails on State Forest Land since originally enacted in 2003.
 - b. Eric Nelson indicated there was a draft Amendment to allow motorized use of State Forest Roads in Tioga State Forest for ATVs.
 - 9) Arline LaTourette indicated she is going to lose her certification because of not having students.
 - 10) Jack asked Todd Miller to extend the certifications. Todd indicated not much of a problem, but Troy Withers will be taking the lead on this. **Action Item: Troy Withers to extend trainer's safety certifications.**
 - 11) Liz Krug asked what is legally allowed on snowmobile trails during the winter time. Michael Hoffman indicated no ATVs are allowed on snowmobile trails and there are no proposals to do so.
 - 12) Michael Hoffman indicated de-conflicted use will be goal of DCNR between the ATVs and Snowmobiles.
 - 13) Todd Miller defined the legal definition of a snowmobile as: A legal snowmobile requires two skis on the front and continuous tread in back, so most likely dirt bikes wouldn't be recognized

as a snowmobile. **Action Item: Todd Miller to check with the DCNR registration section regarding if dirt bikes could legally be converted to snowmobiles and used on State Forest Trails.**

- 14) Lucinda Barrett – You can do a conversion kit, it would have a single ski, ATVs and UTVs would have four tracks. Would consider a dual registration. The CMATVA club proposed a large trail system with snowmobile trails proposed as ATV use.
- 15) Michael Hoffman noted a concern over ATV use won't retain integrity for winter snowmobile use. Jack Clark indicated the ATV community is not trying to disrupt snowmobile trails and the ATV clubs would certainly be responsible for grading trails at the end of the riding season, prior to winter use.
- 16) Josiah Jones referenced the fiscal code that referenced the Bloody Skillet and Whiskey Springs ATV trail connections. (1) First stating, in consultation with the department of transportation, develop, open and maintain an ATV trail connecting the Whiskey Springs ATV trail to the Bloody Skillet ATV trail by utilizing existing state roads and state forest roads by April 1, 2020. § (2) second, in consultation with the Department of Transportation, implement the full northcentral Pennsylvania ATV initiative and create a network of ATV trails connecting Clinton county to the New York state border by utilizing existing state roads and state forest roads by April 1, 2024. Josiah Jones indicated neither of these have happened and technically, the state has broken their own law. Last year, DCNR announced they planned a trail connecting the Whiskey Springs and Bloody Skillet ATV trails was so costly, it could not happen in the timeframe spelled out in the fiscal code. Now that COVID has happened, the connector project is seeing less attention.
- 17) Michael Hoffman indicated that trail connection was not feasible. John Norbeck indicated DCNR is working diligently, but DCNR is not the only key to making connections as PennDOT, PA State Police, local municipalities, and private landowners are all factors. In short, the Fiscal code is not currently feasible. Norbeck indicated DCNR is looking at northern connector out of Renovo. DCNR is working with private land owners and a Clinton County Commissioner is helping to make the connection. DCNR is not going to conserve anymore land. Norbeck asked if an acquisition or easement could be done. Clinton County received a DCNR grant for an engineering study north of Renovo, but the selected contractor has not found a feasible, legal route as of this meeting. Norbeck indicated the south side connection to Bloody Skillet is very difficult. A number of constraints were identified in the feasibility study. DCNR doesn't hold all the cards.
- 18) Alex MacDonald confirmed the Central Mountain ATV Association (CMATVA) was awarded a \$78,000 planning design and engineering grant.
- 19) Jason Albright verified cooperation with CMATVA with County has tremendous leadership and will be a model to follow. Albright compared CMATVA to New Hampshire where direct and energetic participation by ATV clubs helps support the expansion of ATV trail connections.
- 20) Troy Withers provided a background since he was recently hired by DCNR to work with Todd Miller and Michael Hoffman. Troy Withers grew up in Treverton, PA. Withers mentioned 2020 Safety Training with COVID needs to proceed with caution. Considering pushing back instructor course for this year.
- 21) Security – State Forest Rangers are limited. Clubs can promote ethics, Larson study, biggest issue is perception of illegal use. ATV community recognizes need for enforcement and can contact officers

- 22) Norbeck summary: Department DCNR response to COVID, front line folks have seen 45 million visitors, which is above average. Outdoor industry up 18% in sales. Some DCNR staff has fighting wildfires in 2020. Instituting COVID related protocols is on-going statewide. State revenues are down, resulting in a 4–5 million dollar deficit.
- 23) Eric Nelson noted there is draft legislation that is looking at a pilot project using DCNR roads/trails to make connections in communities. Rep Owlett is contemplating pilot program within DCNR, draft legislation and looking at doing a sustainable program, but need more comprehensive planning across the region. WV and VA have outdoor comprehensive plans and DCNR needs a good plan. DCNR is looking to purchase more land for OHVs. **Action Item: DCNR to develop comprehensive plan for ATV use. <http://www.repowlett.com/>**
- 24) Norbeck provided a status update for the PA Outdoor Corps (old Civilian Conservation Corps) 15 – 18 years old, adult 18-25 doing trail work. Starting a trail building and trail repairs group in 2021 to focus on ATV trails.
- 25) Nicole Faraguna noted the ATV policy comment period is open until October 23, 2020.
- 26) Nicole Faraguna summarized a policy change where DCNR proposed to rescind the ATV trail moratorium since last enacted in 2003. This policy change would allow for development of new ATV trails and connectors. DCNR is looking at options on both public and private land. Need to designate public roads as ATV use where appropriate. DCNR is review options on private landowners to have an easements in place to make connections.
- 27) After the 60-day comment due March 27, 2020 from social media, DCNR received 857 comments. 75% were supportive and 25% opposed to extending the moratorium. Concerns were related to environmental impacts associated with noise and illegal riding. Lots of comments from northcentral and southwestern Pennsylvania. Response document to be released in next couple of weeks. **Action Item: DCNR to provide response document to SAAC.**
- 28) RULWA – Email received from individual consultant, some concern on liability and need to understand the protection of RULWA. Planning to organize some training and webinars for landowners looking to open for their use. Jack Clark indicated there is a need to strengthen the hold harmless provision. Nicole Faraguna questioned if DCNR has offered suggestive language.
- 29) User group concerns: PSSA Lucinda Barrett provide an attachment on “Youth Snowmobile Live-Safety Training: Attendance Analysis and Recommendations”. The attachment examines the reasons why participation in snowmobile safety training has decreased. The handout also discussed why the online training is not effective.
- 30) Denny Mann – National ATV Training (ASI) developed an on-line version of the training which can be taken entirely online. Once complete the online training generates a certificate and then students bring certification to instructor for hand-on training. On average, Denny does one class a month. Denny feels the online class benefits all riders and feels 2:1 preference vs. 4 hour long course. Lucinda asks how to prove they have taken? Instructor can tell if they took the course or not. Students have records of persons taking the class and the score. Denny contradicted Lucinda and Liz Krug’s opinions in that parents are not taking the online test for the kids.
- 31) Harold Shaulis indicated the RULWA hold harmless clause is imperative for strengthening that bill.
- 32) Other user groups concerns – none
- 33) Public concerns - none

34) Upcoming nominations – Jack Clark: Chair, Liz Krug Vice Chair, Eric Bruggeman: Secretary.
Elections normally in December. Jake Carson suggested the SAAC wait until March 2021 when the next set of members are present.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:22pm