



Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 10th, 2026

DNR Rhinelander Service Center, 107 Sutliff Ave, Rhinelander, Wisconsin
And via Zoom

Council Members Present: Rob McConnell (Chair), Mike Biese (Vice Chair), Bobby Donahue, Ed Slaminski, Daniel Thole, Dave Traczyk, James Wisneski

DNR Staff: Jillian Steffes, Chris Halbur, Pat Anderson, Kurt Byfield, Jeremy Holtz, Jeff Pennucci

Public: Members of the public

1. Call to order – 9:00 AM by Rob

2. Approval of previous meeting minutes

- Deferred till next meeting.

3. Agenda Repair

- None

4. Elections

- Jim nominates Rob McConnell as Chair of the ORV Council. 2nd call for chair, 3rd call for chair.

Motion by Dave (2nd by Jim) to close nominations for Chair of the ORV Council and cast unanimous ballot for Rob McConnell as Chair. MOTION PASSED

- Rob nominates Mike Biese as Vice Chair of the ORV Council. 2nd call for vice chair, 3rd call for vice chair.

Motion by Dave (2nd by Ed) to close nominations for Vice Chair of the ORV Council and cast unanimous ballot for Mike Biese as Vice Chair. MOTION PASSED

5. Chair & Vice Chair Report

- **Rob McConnell**

- Last funding cycle, we did not have sufficient funds for many of the grant requests. We could only address some rehab, and didn't get much further.
- The Cheese Country Trail has begun obtaining professional bridge inspections, and are finding that many of their bridges are in worse shape than expected. Inspected 43 of 68 bridges, and have needed to close 6 bridges, and need to replace 42 bridges in the next 15 years. Most of these bridges are 75 to 100 years old, wooden rail bridges. Some reroutes are in place and reasonable, but Bridge #30 does not have a reasonable re-route for ATV, and none at all for snowmobile. How do we fund this upcoming demand? What are some of our other systems bridges looking like?
- Snowmobile program is likely to get an increase in their registration and trail pass prices, which will bring more funds to their program to match ours. WATVA will try to introduce similar increase legislation in the next legislative cycle.
- If even just the UTV registration price doubled, that would bring over \$3 million into the program annually. Spending authority would also need to be increased.

6. Public Comments

- None

7. DNR Report

- **Jillian Steffes (Grants)**
 - HANDOUTS
 - ATV/UTV Registration Summary for Last 5 Years
 - Non-Resident Trail Pass Sales – 5 Year Summary
 - Available Funding for 2025-26
 - Spreadsheet of Cost Increase Requests
 - Recent snowmobile council meeting included a presentation on Bridge Inspections by William Knaack Jr, P.E. of KBIS, Inc in Phillips, WI.
 - Presentation covered the basics of a bridge inspection by a qualified engineer.
 - Typically, the engineer a county uses to do bridge inspections for their road bridges can also do their rec bridge inspections. KBIS charges around \$500/bridge inspection. This provides a report on the condition of the bridge, often broken out into condition of the substructure, superstructure, etc.
 - This is NOT the same as a load calculation report. That requires much more work and is a higher cost product.
 - Vital maintenance to extend the life of your bridge – keep the bridge decks clear, remove gravel. Remove brush and trees from around the bridge.
 - County bridge inventory exists in SNARS to help the program understand the future needs of the program. County or DNR staff can update the content. If clubs see something that needs correction to a particular bridge, reach out to county for updates.

8. Information and Action: Trail/grant issues

a) Action required on grant, storm damage and/or amendment requests

- See project spreadsheet in meeting attachments.

b) Ranking and prioritizing rehab projects

- A numeric scoring system may help prioritize the projects of greatest need.
- Using the Snowmobile bridge ranking as a starting point, the Council made a few minor changes to better represent their need. Final version in meeting attachments. Will be utilized for the April 15, 2026 application cycle.

**Motion to adopt the bridge rehab ranking tool as discussed by Mike, 2nd by Jim.
Motion carries.**

9. Council members' matters

- Rob McConnell
 - Omnibus legislation headed to the floor soon, includes a number of minor changes to clarify law enforcement and safety issues.
 - Changes to NR 64 have some changes in progress.
 - Let's Ride Expo in Oshkosh, May 1-2 2026. Focus on safe motorized recreation.

10. Housekeeping matters

- The Council will meet again in June or July to do a preliminary review of applications received by April 15th. This is an opportunity to ask questions and get follow up info, prior to our August funding meeting.
- DNR is compiling an ATV bridge inventory, so we can better understand the future needs of the program.

11. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Mike, 2nd by Jim. **Motion carries.**