



Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 28th, 2024
Dale's Weston Lanes, Weston, Wisconsin
And via Zoom

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

DNR Staff: Jillian Steffes, Cathy Burrow, Pat Anderson, Kurt Byfield, Jeremy Holtz, Jeff Pennucci

Public: Randy Harden (WATVA), Dave Kafura (WCFA), members of the Snowmobile Council (Sue Smedegard, Mike Holden, Don Mrotek), and members of the public

1. Call to order – 8:30 AM by Rob

2. Approval of previous meeting minutes

Motion to approve previous minutes by Jim, 2nd by Dave. **MOTION PASSED**

3. Agenda Repair

- None

4. Chair & Vice Chair Report

- **Rob McConnell**
 - We have a lot of requests but not a lot of money. Registration and machine sales strong but costs/expenses of projects have gone way up. We'll have to decide which ones *need* to be funded, and defer the rest. In the future, if we can't afford all these projects, should we consider funding less than 100% to spread the funding further?
 - Met with the Governor's Office recently to talk about Stewardship, but also mentioned the problem in Trego with DOT. Other issues with trail crossings with DOT, may need to address legislatively in the future.

5. Public Comments

- Randy Harden (WATVA)
 - Met with Wisc County Highway Assoc, good relationship building opportunity to assist with coming together for future efforts.
 - "Wisconsin Life" episode on PBS episode filmed in Hidden Bear Trail Club and Dusty Trail Ambassador and will air this fall.
 - "Discover Wisconsin" episode coming out this spring on road route riding opportunities in Green Co, Black River area, Rice Lake, Mauston. Tourism coming not just to ride trails, but routes as well.
 - Continuing work with Ride Safe Foundation on educational efforts.
 - Met with Gov Office on the Stewardship program to discuss the future of that program, and also discussed Trego DOT problem, and an increase to the Ch 20 spending authority.
 - VIP Ride at Dyracuse on Oct 18th. Well attended by lawmakers.
 - May 2-4 "Let's Ride Expo" in Oshkosh, focus on consumer show and hope to draw engagement from general public and highlight the value of club membership.

6. DNR Report

- **Jillian Steffes (Grants)**
 - HANDOUTS
 - ATV/UTV Registration Summary for Last 5 Years
 - Non-Resident Trail Pass Sales – 5 Year Summary

- ATV/UTV Trail Aids Program Financial Statement
- Available Funding for 2024-25
- Spreadsheet of FY25 Grant Requests
- Grant request figures have been steadily increasing. A few years back we generally saw around \$6 million in requests annually, but this year the request is at \$11.4 million.
- We're committing \$3 million to maintenance. With the spending cap, we can award up to \$3.3 million to development and rehab projects. Another \$4.2 million sits in the program that we cannot access at this time.
- A group of county coordinators met with Groomer Tracking Systems to brainstorm what an ATV version of SNARS would need to have to be useful for ATV maintenance tracking. GTS will work on a cost estimate and proposal for consideration.
- NR 64 will be open for revisions, with Law Enforcement leading the effort. No activity yet, but coming soon...
- **Jacob Holsclaw (Public Safety and Resource Protection) – Provided in writing after the meeting**
 - Sitting at 30 fatalities this year – unfortunately may surpass last year with 32 fatalities. Due to this alarming number, a second “Think Smart Before you Start Campaign was initiated the weekend after Labor Day. The first was held the first weekend in August.
 - We are seeing ATVs and UTVs being used year round more then ever before. With increase in road routes, these machines have become everyday vehicles.
 - The majority of our injuries and fatalities are occurring because of occupants not wearing helmets or seatbelts
 - Main contributing factors are speed, inexperience, and alcohol.
 - Several top ATV / UTV citations issued by law enforcement officers in 2023:
 - 386 Illegal operation on a highway
 - 323 no helmet
 - 192 no safety education
 - 170 OWI arrests
 - 120 Careless operation
 - 81 no seatbelt
 - We did make some minor adjustments to the ATV regulation booklet but pending some anticipated legislative activity there may be additional adjustments next spring.
 - In 2023, 13,381 students certified in both online and in-person safety classes.

7. Discussion & Action: Troute Funding

- “Troutes” (trail-route hybrids) were defined in NR 64 in early 2012, as a way to provide some funding assistance to low or non gas tax roads that are an integral part of a trail network. The funding references for troutes refer to a portion of the ATV maintenance rate. They make no mention of UTV maintenance rate. When it was written, UTVs were very new on the landscape. DNR maintenance grants for approved troutes have been following the letter of NR 64, and funding based on the ATV rate. Should DNR make the leap of faith that UTVs should be included in that calculation?
- Cost to the program if troute rate is based on ATV and UTV would increase from approx. \$50,000 to \$100,000
- Council members comment that those troutes receive quite a lot of traffic, and maintenance is a priority.

Motion to recommend to the Department that the troute maintenance rate include the UTV trail maintenance rate in its calculation by Dave, 2nd by Ed. MOTION PASSED

8. Discussion & Action: Chapter 20 Spending Authority

- Chapter 20 outlines how much the Department can spend on trail aids (grants). A portion of the funds collected via registration, gas tax and trail pass sales is inaccessible due to the dollar amount established in Ch 20. An

increase would allow additional grants to be awarded if the funds are available in the program. As a practice, we do not award more grants than we have funds in the account, regardless of our spending authority.

- Wisconsin ATV Association has asked members of Joint Finance in the past to raise the spending cap, but haven't gotten any action to date. Support from the Governor's ORV Council might help.

Motion to draft a letter to the Governor's Office and Joint Finance requesting that the Chapter 20 spending authority be increased by Jim, 2nd by Ed. MOTION PASSED

- Over the course of the year, some projects will ultimately not move forward, or will come in under budget. Can we access those funds and award new grants? Yes. Council will reconvene in December to consider commit funds to projects that hadn't yet been funded. Department will let Council know how much funds have been 'returned' to the program at that time.

9. ACTION ITEM: Review of and funding recommendations for grant applications

- See meeting attachments for detailed list of projects and motions.
- In addition to the routine project review and funding recommendations, the Council discussed the situation in Trego where a DOT highway reconstruction project eliminated a trail crossing of Hwy 53. In order to reestablish a safe crossing, Washburn County proposes to develop a bridge over the highway, or an underpass. The ATV Trail Aids Program does not have sufficient funds to fully fund this project.

Motion to recommend committing all remaining funds from this meeting (\$272,369.22) to Washburn County's Highway 53 Crossing project by Dan, 2nd by Dave. MOTION PASSED 3 to 1 (Dan, Dave, Rob YES vs Jim NO). Ed abstains from voting.

- Many good projects that we didn't have funds for at this time. Will reconvene in December with 'returned funds' and reconsider those.

10. ACTION ITEM: Review of and adoption of equipment rates

- Snowmobile Council did not suggest any changes this year, and adopted the same rates as last year. DOT rates have increased, but the grant program is short of funds already so an increase is difficult at this time.

Motion to adopt the existing (previous year) rates for the 24-25 season by Jim, 2nd by Ed. MOTION PASSED

11. Council members' matters

- Rob McConnell
 - Need to discuss cost shares of <100%. We spent a lot on trail surfacing to the point that we couldn't look at new trails. Would like to be able to separate necessary trail rehabs (repairing damage) vs. trail resurfacing. Prioritize rehab over resurfacing. Potentially adjust cost share on lower priority projects.
 - Unfortunate that we can't fund even half of the projects this year, but its nice to be able to show the need for raising the Ch 20 spending authority.
 - FYI, we have 65,000 miles of road routes in WI!
 - Would still like to encourage rustic/primitive trails.
- Dave Traczyk
 - Would be nice if we could go back and fund those 'maintenance only' new miles. Goal for Dec.

- Jim Wisneski
 - Disappointing our funding limitations wouldn't allow us to get to new trails.
- Dan Thole
 - When were the last time registration fees were increased? Answer: ~2012.
- Ed Slaminski
 - A ranking tool may help us prioritize projects in an objective and fair way.

Motion to draft a letter to the Governor's Office and Joint Finance to express concerns about the Highway 53 crossing by Dave, 2nd by Jim. **MOTION PASSED**

12. Housekeeping matters

- Future meeting agenda items should include reconsidering the 100% cost share, priority categories, and program priorities
- December (date TBD) - Review applications that were not funded as of yet, and utilize funds returned to the program.

13. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Ed, 2nd by Dave. **Motion carries.**