Snowmobile Recreational Council
Meeting Minutes

August 24th and 25th, 2026

Rib Mountain Conference Center & Dales Weston Lanes, Weston and via Zoom

Council Members Present: Bob Lang – Chair, Sue Smedegard – Vice Chair, Lynsey Burzinski, Ann Degenhardt, Abby Haas, Tanner Hiller, Gary Hilgendorf, Tara Krall, Mike Holden, Sam Landes, Don Mrotek, Holly Tomlanovich, Erica Volker

DNR/Tourism staff attendance: Jillian Steffes, Pat Anderson, Kurt Byfield, Chris Halbur, Jeremy Holtz, Annie Loechler, Jeff Pennucci, Sarah Steinbacher

Public attendance: Lori Heideman (AWSC), Dave Newman (AWSC), Jim Wisneski (ORV Council), Rebekah Luedtke (WCFA) and other members of the public

Day 1 (Mon Aug 24)

I. Call to order at 12:15 PM

1. DNR Report (Jillian Steffes)

- Handouts
  - Snowmobile Funding Report & Available Funds
  - Snowmobile Trail Passes Sold
  - Snowmobile Active Registrations

- Trail pass numbers were up from previous two years. Registration numbers a bit decreased overall, but renewals were up from last year.

- Received $2.8 million in supplemental requests. Revenue from NR trail pass and gas tax multiplier go to supplemental first – not quite enough to cover all the supplemental requests, but we can use the other revenue sources for supplemental.

- Starting in the 27-28 season, grant funds will be based on the GIS miles from Groomer Tracking System. Some counties will see a slight increase, and some a slight decrease, but statewide total miles remain the same. DNR will begin to reach out to counties in the coming months to discuss, so it won't be a surprise come next season.

- Attended International Snowmobile Congress (ISC) and International Association of Snowmobile Administrators (IASA) in June in Nebraska. Hot topics included trespassing, ATVs on snowmobile trails, GPS tracking, etc.

II. Finance Committee Meeting

1. Call to order - Chair, Abby Haas
   - Members: Abby Haas (Chair), Ann Degenhardt, Tanner Hiller, Erica Voelker, Bob Lang, Sue Smedegard

2. Agenda repair
   - None

3. Acceptance of minutes of previous meeting

- Motion to accept by Tanner Hiller, second by Ann Degenhardt. MOTION CARRIED

4. Committee Chair comments
    - We have $2.9 million available for $4.7 million in JUST bridge rehab requests (top priority category). Take a look at inspection reports when making funding recommendations.

5. Public comments
    - None

6. Proposed Changes to Registration/Trail Pass (Revenue)
    - Legislation was introduced last session to increase registration and trail pass fees, to bring in additional revenue to the program. Proposal was to increase AWSC trail pass from $10 to $20, the regular resident trail pass from $30 to $50, and the non-resident trail pass from $50 to $70. Registration would increase from $30 to $45. It was well received but ultimately never made it to the floor for a vote. We'll have to start over next session. Lori Heideman and Sam Landes met with DNR budget writers to encourage DNR to include the increase in their budget recommendations.

7. ACTION ITEM: Funding amount recommendation

Recommend to the Council to allocate $2,907,049 to fund supplemental in full, and grant applications.

Motion by Ann, 2nd by Tanner. Passed Unanimously.

8. Member reports/comments
    - None

9. Items for next meeting
    - None

10. Adjourn

III. Infrastructure Committee Meeting

1. Call to order – Chair, Gary Hilgendorf
    - Members: Gary Hilgendorf (Chair), Mike Holden, Tara Krall, Don Mrotek, Bob Lang, Sue Smedegard

2. Agenda repair
    - None

3. Acceptance of minutes of previous meeting
    - Motion to accept by Tara Krall, seconded by Mike Holden. Motion carried.

4. Committee Chair comments
    - Will be addressed in remaining meeting items.

5. Public comments
    - None

6. Discussions with Dept of Transportation
    - Department of Transportation was invited to attend this meeting but are not here. On the topic of thermoplastic coating, their response was that it is required on a case-by-case basis. Ultimately they have waived the requirement for the Oneida County crossing that has been contentious. The Council still has questions about thermoplastic coatings in general (longevity, cost effectiveness) and will invite the DOT to attend a future meeting for those discussions.

7. Discussion on Culverts and At Grade Road Crossings
    - Bob Lang led the discussion on different material types and their longevity and cost advantages. This can be further discussed with the clubs at the AWSC workshop, and an article can be circulated by AWSC.
    - At Grade Crossings would save the program significant money if they could be used instead of a bridge. In particular, one of the Cheese Country bridge requests. Because this is a rail grade that could, theoretically, be returned to rail use, DOT will not allow for the grade to be altered.

8. SNARS & Groomer Tracking Systems
    - As discussed in the DNR update, the # of trail miles in the grant agreements will be adjusted for 27-28 to match what is in the GIS layer maintained by GTS. Each county can get a copy of their GIS snowmobile trails layer from Nathan.
    - GTS will be piloting a new platform this winter.

9. Information & Action: Equipment Rates
    - The Infrastructure Committee took a look at the rates in June, but don't feel we can increase anything at this point given the financial situation (more grant requests than available funds).

Recommend to the Council to keep the maintenance/equipment rates the same for the 2026-27 season.

Motion by Don Mrotek, 2nd by Mike Holden. Motion Passed.

10. Member reports, comments and items
    - Mike Holden - Engineering costs continue to be a significant portion of project costs. Is there anything that can be done to keep those costs down? Is the county capable of doing the engineering? Or can we ask for an itemized breakdown of the engineering costs?

11. Items for next meeting
    - None

12. Adjourn

IV. Law Enforcement & Safety Committee Meeting

1. Call to order - Chair, Sam Landes
    - Members Sam Landes (Chair), Mike Holden, Don Mrotek, Holly Tomlanovich, Erica Voelker, Bob Lang and Sue Smedegard.

2. Acceptance of minutes of previous meeting
    - Motion to accept the minutes by Mike Holden, second by Holly Tomlanovich. Motion carried.

3. Agenda repair
    - None

4. Committee Chair comments
    - Sam Landes – Governor Evers is looking at the possibility of a high speed rail between Dane County and Milwaukee, with possible expansion to Minneapolis and Superior. Snowmobilers lost a crossing in Sparta because of the ability of the train to go 69+ mph. Sam has been in contact with Drew Nussbaum (Travel Wisconsin) and Cassie Mordini (Office of Outdoor Rec) as well as legislators. The DNR, Commissioner of Railroads need to work together and pay attention to snowmobile crossings.

5. DNR Reports and Updates – Jacob Holsclaw, LE OHV Administrator
    - Jake Holsclaw was not in attendance
    - Sam Landes noted that there were 11 fatalities last year, 13 if you include December. 6 hit a fixed object, 3 were ejections, and 1 rollover. Most were old enough to not be required to take the safety course.

6. Trespassing Update
    - Fines are too low to be a deterrent. Can one bill be introduced to increase them?

7. Strengthening and updating snowmobile infraction related fines – can they be done at once?
    - See above

8. Updating Trail Signing Handbook
    - Everyone is encouraged to make notes as they are utilizing the signing handbook, and let Sam know what recommendations you have.

9. Public comments
    - None

10. Member reports/comments
    - None

11. Items for next meeting
    - Holly Tomlanovich – Local sheriff's department has taken on many of the safety classes in school.
    - Mike Holden – Question for Jake, are we still recognizing instructors for their service?

12. Adjourn
    - Motion to adjourn by Holly, seconded by Mike. Motion carried.

V. Tourism Committee Meeting

1. Call to order - Chair, Lynsey Burzinski

- Members - Lynsey Burzinski (Chair), Tara Krall, Holly Tomlanovich, Erica Voelker, Bob Lang, Sue Smedegard

2. Agenda repair
    - None

3. Public Comments
    - None

4. Committee Chair Report
    - Lyndsey Burzinski (Chair) – Attended the International Snowmobile Congress in Omaha, insightful discussion in the ACSA meeting regarding tourism and destination marketing. Drew Nussbaum provided a lot of insight about our state snow report and partnership opportunities.
    - Travel Wisconsin has done an impact study that shows $27 billion in economic impact from tourism. County by county breakdown is available on their website.

5. Committee Member Issues
    - None

6. Tourism Update – Drew Nussbaum (Dept of Tourism)
    - Drew Nussbaum is not in attendance

7. Snow Reports
    - Starting in October, he will begin reaching out to snow reporters to verify their status and take questions with the plan to go live in December. Be sure your area has snow reporter coverage!

8. Updates to Official Talking Points
    - Please share any updates with Drew, he will go through the talking points at the fall workshop in October.

9. What Tools are Working
    - Work with your destination marketing organization. Create an events calendar and utilize it. Have partnership/relationships with DMO no matter what part of the state you live in.
    - Artificial Intelligence has really taken off, but it's not always currect/accurate. Be sure to check your facts and proof-read.
    - Canva has some great tools to use for creating posters.
    - Use photos of your own area, don't use random shots from other groups.

10. Agenda Items for Next Meeting
    - TBD

11. Adjourn
    - Motion to adjourn by Tara, seconded by Holly. Motion carried.

Day 2 Agenda (Tuesday Aug 25th)

1. **Call to order at 9:00 AM**
2. **Chair and Vice-Chair comments**
    - Bob Lang, Chair – The program isn't financially healthy at the moment, but we'll do the best with what we have.
    - Sue Smedegard, Vice Chair – We've had conversations with ORV to try and stretch dollars as best we can, Jim Wisnekski from ORV Council is in attendance today.
3. **Public participation**
    - Lori Heideman, President, AWSC - We are working on an economic impact statement, surveys have been sent out, working on getting a QR code to send out on Facebook. Hope to have it done by the end of the year. The proposed legislation to increase registration and trail pass fees didn't pass, but we're working on perhaps getting it into the DNR budget. If we don't get it into the biennium budget, will pursue legislatively. AWSC Workshop coming up in October. Learned in July that we lost our magazine. We will do newsletters for now to keep people up to date.
4. **DNR Report – Jillian Steffes**
    - Handouts
        - Snowmobile Funding Report & Available Funds
        - Snowmobile Trail Passes Sold
        - Snowmobile Active Registrations
    - We have $2,907,049 that we can allocate today to grant requests, but we received $6,380,060 in requests.
    - Starting in the 27-28 season, grant funds will be based on the GIS miles from Groomer Tracking System. Some counties will see a slight increase, and some a slight decrease, but statewide total miles remain the same. DNR will begin to reach out to counties in the coming months to discuss, so it won't be a surprise come next season.
5. **Reports of Committees** (2-5 above)
    a. **Finance Committee –** We have slightly more funding than last year so that's some good news!
    b. **Infrastructure Committee –** Dept of Transportation was invited to attend but did not, we would like them to attend in future so we can discuss thermoplastic coatings. They don't seem to hold up well. We also discussed culverts and at-grade road crossings. Counties and clubs are encouraged to get info into SNARS promptly.
    c. **Law Enforcement Committee –** Trespassing fines are too low and all of the fines are outdated. A single bill to update them all would be ideal. A high speed rail is being considered between Dane and Milwaukee, with possible expansion to Minneapolis and Superior. This could impact snowmobile trails in Wisconsin.
    d. **Tourism Committee –** We discussed Snow Reports (to open in Dec), and the use of AI (proofread AI results).

6. **ACTION ITEM: Action on recommendations arising from committee reports**

FINANCE COMMITTEE:

Recommend to the Council to allocate $2,907,049 to fund supplemental in full, and grant applications.

Motion Passed Unanimously.

INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE:

Recommend to the Council to keep the maintenance/equipment rates the same for the 2026-27 season.

Motion Passed Unanimously.

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

- Each bridge rehab and mandatory relocation project was reviewed. Council members informally indicated which they felt most needed funding. For those that were not selected, a reason is recorded in the attachments. Projects that seemed to be the most urgent need were prioritized over those where the trail would remain open and usable. Projects with other funding sources involved were also prioritized.
- Individual motions on projects were recorded in the meeting attachments.

8. **Council Elections**

Sue Smedegard nominate Bob Lang as Chair.

Motion to close the nominations for chair and pass a unanimous ballet for Bob Lang by Abby, 2nd by Gary. **MOTION PASSED**

Bob Lang nominate Sue Smedegard as Vice Chair.

Motion to close the nominations for chair and pass a unanimous ballet for Sue Smedegard by Abby, 2nd by Ann. **MOTION PASSED**

9. **Council member items**

- Lyndsey - Talked about reaching out to different user groups/organizations for additional funding.
- Ann - Thanks to the committee chairs for the efforts
- Abby - Appreciated the discussion today, everyone thinks differently, appreciate the input of all as we make considerations.
- Tanner - First official meeting, learned a lot, thanks for the discussion, looks forward to the future.
- Gary - Thanks for the tough work, hope all understand the needed increases.
- Tara - Appreciate the discussions
- Sue - Thanks to all that are in attendance, especially those in the audience, need the input from all.
- Mike - Good day, we work hard
- Holly - Hard decisions, we work hard
- Don - Difficult day, did the best we can

- Sam - There are discussion about why atv/utv/snowmobile are footing the bill, hope the department is putting the funding increase in their budget. Thankful for the knowledge and expertise within this group
- Bob - Lot of difficult decisions here today, everyone thinking from different angles.

10. Next meeting

- February 4th in Siren, WI

11. Adjourn

- Meeting adjourn by Gary, second by Abby. Motion carried