



Snowmobile Recreational Council

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, August 26th, 2025

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, Joel Enking, Abby Haas, Gary Hilgendorf, Tara Krall, Mike Holden, Sam Landes, Dale Mayo, Don Mrotek, Sue Smedegard, Holly Tomlanovich, Erica Volker

DNR/Tourism staff attendance: Jacob Holsclaw, Jillian Steffes, Drew Nussbaum (Tourism), Pat Anderson, Kurt Byfield, Chris Halbur, Jeremy Holtz, Annie Loechler, Jeff Pennucci

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

1. Call to order at 9:00 AM

2. Agenda Repair - None

3. Acceptance of minutes of previous meeting

Motion to approve pervious minutes by __, 2nd by __ MOTION PASSED

4. Chair and Vice Chair Comments

- **Bob Lang** – Expenses for everything have gone up exponentially, which is a cause for concern. Good discussion during yesterday's committee meetings. Several Council members participated in an audit of non-supplemental counties which was very helpful in discussing common problem areas and points of confusion.
- **Sue Smedegard** – Appreciation to the Council members who participated in the ad hoc and committee meetings to date. Tough decisions to be made today, we'll be looking to make decisions that benefit the entire Wisconsin snowmobile trail system.

5. Public Participation

- **Lori Heideman (AWSC)**
 - International Snowmobile Congress was held in Prince Edward Island, Canada in June.
 - Summer directors meeting in Shawano Co in July
 - Sam Landes was inducted into the Hall of Fame as a volunteer
 - Fall Workshop coming soon.

6. DNR Report

- **Jillian Steffes – DNR Grants Report**
 - Handouts
 - Snowmobile Funding Report & Available Funds
 - Snowmobile Trail Passes Sold
 - Snowmobile Active Registrations
 - Attended International Snowmobile Congress (ISC) and International Association of Snowmobile Administrators (IASA) in June in Prince Edward Island, Canada. Hot topics included "What3Words" navigation/emergency response resource, ATVs in Snowmobile Trails (for which Wisconsin is a leader), and safety outreach campaigns. Trespassing concerns, financial impacts of low snow years, etc were also topics of discussion.
 - Registration and trail pass sales "low" given the snow conditions last winter, but better than 2023-24.

- State biennial budget included language that lapsed a portion of the snowmobile funding authority. This does not have a tangible impact on the grant funding. This was essentially a multi-year build up of our ‘credit limit’, but since we award grants based on actual revenue, we weren’t utilizing our full ‘credit limit’, and the building limit was re-set back to base levels.
- Wisconsin has almost 1700 bridges in our snowmobile system. We have sufficient revenue to cover maintenance of trails at this time, but are falling short on what we need to maintain the bridges. There are 750 bridges at least 20 years old, and 250 that are at least 30 years old.
- County admins encouraged to review bridge inventory in SNARS, and update as available.
- **Jacob Holsclaw – DNR Law Enforcement Report**
 - Two “Sled Safe weekends:
 - January 31 – Feb 2nd and Feb 7-9th.
 - 935 miles of trails and 56 lakes patrolled
 - 441 snowmobilers contacted
 - 150 warnings (trail pass & registration were top issues)
 - Five OWI arrests
 - 98 citations – no registration and fail to comply with regulatory signs were top violations. 7 citations for loud/modified exhaust.
 - Partnered again with MADD to message riding sober on a snowmobile. This was a group effort with several surrounding states including Minnesota, South Dakota, Iowa, and Illinois. Second season.
 - Department made a big effort for ice safety and attempted to include snowmobile and ATV safety on ice whenever possible. Even with the colder temps, there have been several fatalities from breaking through ice or driving into open water.
 - We had planned on sound level training to new wardens as well as rec patrols this summer or early fall. Delayed until budget issues are resolved.
 - Fatalities:
 - January and February 9 fatal crashes.
 - 78 % (7 out of 9) had not completed a snowmobile safety course.
 - This year 40-year-olds need the safety course.
 - Average age 49.

2025 Snowmobile Fatal Crash Summary As of March 3rd, 2025								
#	Date	County/C-V-T	Location	Age / Gender / Residency	Accident Type	WI Safety Certified?	Helmet Used?	Alcohol Involved/BAC
#1	1/18/2025	Ashland / Ashland	Frozen Waterbody	20 / M / WI	Drove into Open Water	No	Yes	Pending
<i>Synopsis</i> Operator/victim was traveling on Lake Superior and entered open water approximately 100 yards off the break wall.								
#2	1/22/2025	Iron / Mercer	Public Road	83 / M / AZ	Collision with a Fixed Object	No	Yes	Pending
<i>Synopsis</i> Operator/victim was traveling on a roadway adjacent to the snowmobile trail at a high rate of speed and struck a snow berm at the end of the road.								
#3	1/25/2025	Vilas / Plum Lake	Frozen Waterbody (marked corridor)	58 / F / WI	Collision with a Fixed Object	No	Yes	Yes / .02
<i>Synopsis</i> Operator/victim was in a group of four snowmobiles traveling across Star Lake at a high rate of speed. The operator passed several other sleds in the group to take the lead. Operator/victim was then observed to miss the boat landing exit and crashed into a tree on shore.								
#4	2/1/2025	Forest / Nashville	Frozen Waterbody	25 / M / WI	Collision with a Fixed Object	Yes	Yes	Yes / Pending
<i>Synopsis</i> Operator/victim was traveling on Crane Lake and struck small trees and the shoreline embankment.								
#5	2/11/2025	Oneida / Hazelhurst	Frozen Waterbody	22 / M / WI	Collision with a Fixed Object	Yes	Yes	Pending
<i>Synopsis</i> Operator/victim failed to negotiate the entrance to the snowmobile trail off of McCormick Lake and struck trees on the shoreline.								
#6	2/13/2025	Bayfield / Grand View	Public Trail	64 / M / WI	Collision with a Fixed Object	No	Yes	Pending
<i>Synopsis</i> Operator/victim was traveling on a designated trail and failed to negotiate a curve. Victim passed away on 2/17/2025 due to injuries sustained in the crash.								
#7	2/14/2025	Oconto / Doty	National Forest Trail	55 / M / WI	Collision with a Fixed Object	No	Yes	Pending
<i>Synopsis</i> Preliminary investigation suggests a subject was operating a snowmobile on a USFS ungrooved two rut trail, lost control and went off the left side of the trail. The snowmobile and operator then struck several trees.								
#8	2/21/2025	Douglas / Brule	Public Trail	51 / F / WI	Collision with a Fixed Object	No	Yes	Pending
<i>Synopsis</i> Operator/victim failed to negotiate a corner, struck a tree, and was ejected.								
#9	2/22/2025	Vilas / St. Germain	Public Trail	59 / M / IL	Collision with a Fixed Object	No	Yes	Pending
<i>Synopsis</i> Operator/victim failed to negotiate a right turn and struck a tree.								

- **Enforcement and Safety data (2024):**
 - Top citations:

- 71 - Operate snowmobile without valid safety certificate
- 66 - Owner operating/giving permission to operate on public trail without proof of temporary trail use receipt
- 46 - Give permission to operate snowmobile without valid registration
- 5,888 students certified in snowmobile safety
- 235 in-person classes
- 499 active volunteer instructors
- 2827 hours of enforcement with 24 different sheriff's depts. and DNR

For 2024 to 2025 season pending audit – ongoing

7. Reports of Standing Committees

- **Finance Committee – Abby Haas**
 - See action items under #8
 - AWSC is proposing legislation to increase registration and trail pass fees, which should bring an estimated \$2.5 to \$4 million into the trail aids program annually.
- **Infrastructure Committee – Gary Hilgendorf**
 - Currently 716 GPS trackers in use in grooming units.
 - Discussion on storm damage, uncertainty on how to structure/address for the future.
- **Law Enforcement & Safety Committee – Sam Landes**
 - Aids to local law enforcement was increased but not fully utilized.
 - Research ongoing on trespassing and how to address those problems. Fine increase would be preferred. Use of video cameras encouraged.
 - Majority of accidents were with a fixed object, with no safety class. Less experienced riders trying to keep up with the leader is an issue.
- **Tourism – Abby Haas**
 - Encouragement to engage with the Snow Report (Tourism) and local social media.
 - Travel Wisconsin Snow Reports will go live in November, coordinates with the ski hills. There will be a new snow reporter, rebuilt much of the website. Will be cleaner updates will be seamless. Will function better. Drew will reach out to the 120 contacts in October, will be starting over. Reporters by club/county/municipality/zone will be clarified. Want a full line of communication. Many have imbedded the widget, not sure how it will function, may need to reinstall that on your website. The emails will come from Christopher Jennings, but Drew will still be running the Snow Reports.
 - Great collaboration with WATVA and AWSC on Let's Ride Expo. Will look different this year, have a marketing firm working with them.

8. ACTION ITEM: Action on recommendations arising from committee reports.

FINANCE COMMITTEE MOTION

Recommend to the Council to allocate all of the \$2,577,590 to application requests in front of the Council today.

Motion Passed Unanimously.

INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE MOTIONS

Recommend to the Council to adopt the newly proposed maintenance/equipment rates for the 25-26 season.

Motion Passed.

LAW ENFORCEMENT & SAFETY COMMITTEE MOTIONS - None

TOURISM MOTIONS - None

9. 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.

Motion to recommend funding the selected bridge rehab and mandatory relocation projects and save the remaining \$69,033 for future requests by Sue, 2nd by Gary. MOTION PASSED

10. 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 Mike, 2nd by Abby. MOTION PASSED

11. Committee member items

- Ann - none
- Abby - long day, did what we had to do, can't fund everything, hopefully the increased trail pass cost will take care of that.
- Gary - did the best we could. Should look at policy for storm damage, how will we handle it going forward
- Mike - trail inspections - create a generic form for bridge inspections "could have used more maintenance, etc". And/or is there any indication of damage caused by overloading weight limits.
- Andy - we need to stress that we know everyone is volunteers, but we need more observation about necessary repairs to extend the life of the bridges.
- Tara - lot of comments on inspection reports that brushing and cleaning was needed - that should be done every year. Worked in the county forest for 20 years, wants to share the perspective.
- Drew - thanks to everyone in this room, explains to the world what happens behind the scenes. To translate this into a message to take out there, it's not random, takes people in this rooms many hours to make these decisions.

- Don - nothing more
- Holly - same as others have said. bridge inspections, trail inspections, etc
- Lynsey - nothing more
- Sam - hope this meeting sends a message that we need additional funding, bill will be critical. As well as storm damage, update bridge ranking, perhaps a subcommittee on that is needed.
- Sue - thanks to everyone in the room for all they do, hate not being there.
- Jillian - realizing what a massive part of our program bridges are, getting a better inventory will be so helpful.
- Sam notes the funding bill was just drafted and language worked out - Representative Green drafted it, we will be going out to the senate and you all will be notified. We will get the information to all of you soon. He also went out and got prices on equipment from 2013 and today - same with bridge costs.
- Bob - continuing with bridge discussion, would like to explore the idea of our funds having a separate category to fund bridge inspections - may require legislation. Would at least like to discuss the possibility. Rotation of inspections, etc. Funded separately like SNARS, wouldn't come out of the \$300/mile for clubs. WE are a group of people from different backgrounds, that's what creates the discussions here, helps bring things to light that others may not have thought of. The different perspectives make the discussions so much better.

12. Items for next meeting

- Next meeting tentatively Feb 5th in conjunction with the Groomer Show in St Germain.
- Willy from KBIS will give a presentation on bridge inspections.

13. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned.