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

October 31, 2018  

MEETING MINUTES  

Location: Rachel Carson State Office Building, Room 105, 400 Market St, Harrisburg, PA 17101  

Meeting Start Time: 10:00am  

Committee Meeting Attendees:  
Jack Clark, PA Off-Highway Vehicle Association, SAAC Chair  
Liz Krug, PA State Snowmobile Association, SAAC Vice Chair (via conference call)  
Al Sain, Alternate Representative- PA Off-Highway Vehicle Association  
Charles Walter, Alternate Representative- PA State Snowmobile Association  
Robert Monroe, Alternate Representative- USDA Forest Service, Allegheny National Forest  
Nick Troutman, Alternate Representative – Majority Chair of Senate Env. Resources and Energy Committee  
Richard Fox, Alternate Representative – Minority Chair of House Env. Resources and Energy Committee  
Leda Lacomba, Alternate Representative – Majority Chair of House Env. Resources and Energy Committee  
Ron Grutza, PA Boroughs  

Also Attending:  
Cindy Adams Dunn, Secretary of DCNR  
John Norbeck, DCNR Deputy Secretary of Parks and Forestry  
Mike Walsh, DCNR Deputy Secretary of Administration  
Jacob Newton, DCNR Executive Assistant of Parks and Forestry  
Karl Maul, DCNR Bureau of Forestry  
Todd Miller, DCNR Bureau of Forestry  
Joe Petroski, DCNR Bureau of Forestry  
Stephen Ekema-Agbaw, DCNR Office of Chief Counsel  
Jennie Shade, DCNR Legislative Liaison  
Alex MacDonald, DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation  
Leslie Sarvis, DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation  
Ngani Ndimbie, PennDOT  

Guests:  
Don McClure, McClure Association Consultants  
Fred Brown
HANDOUTS:

- Regional ATV Trail Report
- Accidents and Safety Trainings Report
- Legislative Report (House Bill 544 and House Bill 1936)
- Larson Design Study Update
- ATV Connector Presentation

INTRODUCTIONS:

Jack Clark initiated the Snowmobile/ATV Advisory Committee (SAAC) Meeting. Committee members, attendees and guests of the meeting provided introductions. SAAC member Liz Krug participated via conference call.

UPDATE FROM THE SECRETARY

DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn welcomed attendees to the meeting and thanked the committee members for their service to DCNR and the commonwealth. Secretary Dunn mentioned DCNR’s years of work on the ATV connector trail and the current policy issues and concerns involving both the agency’s roads and PennDOT’s. While DCNR is looking for safer opportunities for trails, Secretary noted that engagement of communities and private landowners would be required for the advancement of motorized recreation opportunities.

SNOWMOBILE AND ATV REGISTRATION TRANSITION

DCNR Deputy Secretary Mike Walsh presented on the transition of DCNR’s snowmobile and ATV registration services to PennDOT. About nine DCNR employees have been relocated to PennDOT’s office. These employees physically worked out of the basement of DCNR’s Middletown office that is occupied by the Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey. The transition officially took place on October 1, 2018. Users can now register both their trailers and machines at PennDOT.

SNOWMOBILE AND ATV GRANT REGULATIONS

Stephen Ekema-Agbaw gave updates to the proposed Snowmobile and ATV grant regulations. Preparing to provide final form to Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC), but needs to go through Office of General Counsel, Governor’s Budget Office and Governor’s Policy Office before being delivered to the legislative standing committees. The Regulatory Review Act requires the delivery of the rulemaking to IRRC on the same day as the legislative standing committees. Will be ready to deliver as early as the fourth Monday of January 2019 or when the new legislative committees are designated after the election.
STATE FOREST GENERAL UPDATES

Todd Miller explained that over the last winter, DCNR started allowing adults to take the ATV certification with the youth. The adults are not able to receive the same certificate as the youth, but they can obtain a different certificate that states that the course was completed. This document may be used in situations, such as when fighting wildfires or for insurance purposes. This past summer, DCNR also internally worked on implementing a UTV course. The plan is to roll out the course to ATV instructors that teach youth trainings next summer, so they can roll out to public sector.

Mr. Miller also noted that in District 7, the Jacks Mountain Trailhead is being moved across SR-235 to be on side of the actual trail itself.

Deputy Secretary Norbeck added that the Bureau of State Parks is making modifications to the Lyman Run State Park campground, which is within close distance to the Susquehannock Forest trail system. This will allow ATV riders to ride from the state park campground, onto township roads, and up to the state forest.

SAFETY AND TRAINING STATISTICS

Todd Miller summarized snowmobile accidents in 2017 to include five accidents, with one known injury and one fatality. In 2018, to date, there were three accidents with two known injuries and no fatalities. ATV accidents in 2017 totaled 191 reported accidents with 165 known injuries, which included 21 fatalities. In 2018, ATV accidents reported were a total of 102, with 71 injuries reported and 26 fatalities.

Dr. Clark mentioned the sources of the ATV accident statistics and asked whether some can be attributed to illegal riding in larger cities. Mr. Miller confirmed that approximately 10 to 15 of the incidents included in the report took place in an urban setting.

ATV safety trainers total 66 active youth snowmobile trainers and 53 active youth ATV safety instructors. Mr. Miller confirmed that training took place in Erie at the end of July and another was held at the Bald Eagle State Forest District Office in September. These trainings resulted in a total of 10 new instructors from Erie and 7 from Bald Eagle being certified. Mr. Miller noted that there is a drop in the number of ATV instructors due to criminal and child safety background check requirements.

Snowmobile safety training in 2017 and 2018 consisted of 13 snowmobile safety classes with 85 students attending, from ages 10-15. 128 ATV safety trainings in 2018 were presented to 416 students, with 89 students in the 8-9 age group and 330 students were ages 10-15.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Jennie Shade summarized two bills that were signed into law by the governor on October 24, 2018.

House Bill 544 PN 4273 was signed into law as Act 98 of 2018. Prime sponsor of this bill was House Representative Moul. The intent of this bill was to incentivize landowners to open up their lands and waters to the public for recreational uses such as motorcycle, snowmobile, and ATV riding and protect the landowners against lawsuits. Prior law limited ability for these types of activities.
Al Sain raised a concern over private landowners and clubs that charge a fee not being covered under this legislation. Dr. Clark clarified that some people running a for-profit organization for operations would be excluded but those charging a usage fee just to cover taxes, liability insurance, or payments to conserve or maintain the land for the landowner with correct documentation would not be excluded from coverage.

House Bill 1936 PN 4275 was signed into law as Act 115 of 2018. Prime sponsor of this bill was House Representative Wentling. This bill clarifies federal guidelines for youth ATV riders. Language was added regarding federal requirements for the size and speed of the ATVs for riders 16 and under. The bill allows for Pennsylvania to comply with these changes to the federal guidelines and any future revisions.

STATEWIDE PLANNING STUDY STATUS

Alex MacDonald summarized that the purpose of the Pashek Associates study was to identify both riding areas that are currently operating as well as potential new riding areas. A suitability analysis was done through GIS to find different land types and scenarios across the state while avoiding environmentally sensitive areas.

Pashek then reached out to counties and local planning partners to see if there were areas of interest to create facilities such as an Anthracite Outdoors Adventure Area (AOAA) or a Rock Run. Mr. MacDonald noted that what DCNR wanted out of this study from the grant side was to find new initiatives, but these initiatives require local champions. The study will be made available in 2019.

ATV CONNECTOR TRAIL UPDATE

Karl Maul summarized the Larson Design Group ATV connector trail feasibility study. Given the constraints set by DCNR, Larson Design Group was able to successfully identify a route through state forest land, but unable to identify a route that would go through private land, cross the west branch of the Susquehanna River, and take into consideration PennDOT roads. The report is currently in draft form and undergoing edits and review. The final report is expected to be released by the year’s end.

Mr. Maul also reviewed the language and dates of the fiscal code mandate that were introduced in June 2018 involving the completion of a connector trail between the Bloody Skillet and Whiskey Springs trail systems by April 1, 2020 and additional trails and connectors by April 1, 2024. This fiscal code preempted the completion of the Larson Design Group ATV connector trail feasibility study.

Joe Petroski presented on DCNR’s proposed route for completing a long-term connector trail between Bloody Skillet and Whiskey Springs. This route incorporates recommendations and public feedback from the Larson Design Group study and utilizes existing trails and old roads while also requiring the construction of new trails. Deputy Secretary Norbeck and Mr. Maul included comments on concerns and issues the agency faces in completing this connector trail.
USER GROUP CONCERNS

Charles Walter representing the PA State Snowmobile Association expressed the need for a registration fee increase, which the association continues to lobby for. To successfully improve trail systems on private land, more monies need to be allocated toward registration fees.

Mr. Walter and Liz Krug noted several concerns over grant funding, especially the $400,000 federal grant towards trails. Alex MacDonald mentioned that clubs are eligible to apply for recreational trails federal funding. Mr. MacDonald offered to provide regional assistance through the Bureau of Recreation and Conservation on grant applications. It was noted that this federal money requires 20% match, cannot be used to purchase equipment, and is hard for BRC to give away for motorized projects. Mr. MacDonald and Ms. Krug agreed to connect after the meeting to further discuss grant concerns.

Al Sain, representing the Pennsylvania Off-Highway Vehicle Association brought up the need for more riding opportunities in the southwest region of the state. Mr. Sain used several maps to depict legal riding areas and the regions where motorized users are registered. It was noted that less than 15,000 riders are registered in the 9 counties where efforts are being focused.

Both Deputy Secretary Norbeck and Alex MacDonald commented that the Pashek statewide study was meant to identify potential new riding areas across the state but lacked support from local communities and organizations.

Next Meeting:
Jacob Newton coordinating with SAAC members to schedule a spring committee meeting at the end of snowmobile season.