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

FEBRUARY 22, 2016

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
Elizabeth Krug, PA State Snowmobile Association, SAAC Vice Chair (via conference call)
Eric Bruggeman, PA Off-Highway Vehicle Association, SAAC Secretary
Jeff Grove, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Jonathan Lutz, for State Representative John Maher
Richard Martin, Keystone Trails Association
Jeff Schmidt, Sierra Club
Brian Smith, Pennsylvania County Commissioners (via conference call)
Robert Snyder, Pennsylvania County Commissioners

Also Attending:
Cindy Adams Dunn, DCNR Secretary
Jennie Shade, DCNR Legislative Liaison, SAAC Liaison
Sarah Nicholas, DCNR Policy Director
Jason Hall, DCNR Bureau of Forestry
Todd Miller, DCNR Bureau of Forestry
John Buerkle, Pashek Associates (via conference call)

Meeting Guests:
Fred Brown
Elliot Crosby
Paula Devore
Ronald Grutza
Mark Hansford
Annie Macky
Don McClure
Joe Murzyn
Nolan Ritchie
Rick Sales
Harry Wolf

Meeting called to order at 10:08AM.

Introductions:
Jack Clark initiated the Snowmobile/ATV Advisory Committee (SAAC) Meeting. Committee members, attendees and guests of the meeting provided introductions. Elizabeth Krug, Commissioner Brian Smith and John Buerkle participated via conference call.

Meeting Summary:
DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn provided a brief introduction to her past interactions with the Snowmobile/ATV Advisory Committee, indicated she was part of the team that envisioned the Keystone site approach to developing Rock Run and the Anthracite Outdoor Adventure Area (AOAA) and indicated the Department is looking to update their communication efforts. Secretary Dunn indicated Pashek Associates would be presenting an update on the ATV Trail/Area Inventory and Analysis and believes there is a gap in the south/southwest portion of Pennsylvania that should be investigated for another Keystone site.

Meeting minutes were reviewed from November 17, 2014. Commissioner Brian Smith requested the SAAC meeting be held more regularly so the group can accomplish something. Mr. Clark indicated the travel ban prevented more frequent meetings, but the comment was noted. The meeting minutes were approved without revisions.

ATV Trail/Area Inventory and Analysis:
John Buerkle from Pashek Associates has been contracted by DCNR to prepare the ATV Trail/Area Inventory and Analysis. Hardwood Resource Economics out of State College, along with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy will be conducting the ATV user survey. Mr. Buerkle outlined the scope of work as follows:

- Inventory mapping of existing public and private ATV trails;
- Map municipal roads that have been legally opened;
- Identify future satellite ATV riding opportunities; and
- Upload the findings onto BuildPAtrails website

Mr. Buerkle indicated the team is in the process of developing surveys and will be surveying planning partners. The planning partners were identified as DCNR bureaus, 67 Pennsylvania counties, 17 metropolitan planning organizations, eight rural planning organizations, existing ATV collective organizations, State Association of Township Supervisors, State Association of Boroughs, and advisory councils within DCNR. The surveys will be used in combination with GIS analysis, research of abandoned mine mapping and demand analysis to find any possible opportunities for future riding parks. Mr. Buerkle clarified the scope of the study is statewide.

Update on Motorized Recreation and Improvements:
Todd Miller indicated the Whiskey Springs ATV Trail is scheduled to open the Friday before Memorial Day, 2016. The abandoned mine project is complete, therefore allowing the trails to re-open. Second, Jacks Mountain which is located in the Bald Eagle State Forest had 6.2 miles of trail added in 2015. The total length of the trail is 21.6 miles. A new parking lot was developed along SR 233 on the same side of the road as the trail system to prevent riders from crossing the road. Additional improvements at this trail included trail rehabilitation, installation of culverts and drainage improvements. In 2016, four miles of trail in the Bald Eagle State Forest Trail that is being rehabilitated will be temporarily closed, leaving 17.6 miles open for riding. Eric Bruggeman questioned if there would be any other trails temporarily closed in 2016 and Mr. Miller confirmed he was not aware of any. Jason Hall added the Buchanan State Forest recently
submitted a PA Recreation Trails grant application to replace bridges which could require minor, temporary closure.

Mr. Clark questioned when the state will be able to assess the benefits of the abandoned mine reclamation project. Mr. Hall indicated that was a good question and that the District was optimistic the improvements completed would help the watershed. The District was looking at additional sites for more abandoned mine reclamation.

Mr. Miller indicated DCNR submitted background checks to all ATV/snowmobile instructors in November 2015.

**Snowmobile/ATV Accident and Youth Training Statistics:**
Mr. Miller indicated there were 14 snowmobile accidents in 2015 through mid-February 2016. There were a total of three fatalities and seven separate injuries out of the total of 14 accidents/incidents. ATV accidents in 2015 totaled 274 accidents, with 218 injuries, including 34 fatalities. In 2016, known ATV accidents by mid-February totaled two, which included one injury and one fatality. Richard Martin requested the reports include helmet use, driver or passenger injuries, type of accident, circumstances, along with known alcohol or drug use. It was requested the reports be compared to the PA State Police reports for ATV/Snowmobile injuries. Mr. Miller was not aware of any specific injuries at Rock Run or AOAA, specifically referencing no fatalities. Mr. Hall was not able to compare at that time how Pennsylvania rates against the other 49 states.

Mr. Hall added there are 83 active youth snowmobile instructors and 66 active youth ATV instructors. There were no new instructors trained in 2015 due to only a limited number of requests. In 2015, there were 24 snowmobile safety classes and a total of 286 students between 10 to 15 years of age attended. ATV safety classes in 2015 included 85 classes with 294 students, 65 students were eight and nine year olds and 229 students were ages 10 to 15.

Commissioner Robert Snyder requested the snowmobile safety training courses be updated as related to the newer snowmobiles. Mr. Miller confirmed the Department has received some requests, but only updates to brochures were prepared. The Department is looking into the need of updated training. Mr. Miller indicated individuals 16 years of age and older can take the online safety course through Kalkomey. A certification is offered for a fee of 29 dollars. Mr. Clark questioned if the ATV fund could provide support for additional training. Mr. Miller indicated that was not considered.

**Legislative Report:**
Jennie Shade summarized two House Bills, 544, 741 and Senate Bill 72. The goal for these bills is to provide landowners with an incentive to allow their land be used for recreational purposes. The bills include language to include all recreational activities and to allow for various property improvements.

Ms. Shade discussed House Bill 663 as listed under Title 75, along with Senate Bill 1088 which establish the titling and registration of off-highway motorcycles. Property owners who allow snowmobile, ATV or off-highway motorcycle riding would be protected from liability.

House Bill 676, under Title 75 proposes to authorize DCNR enforcement officials to make arrests outside the state park or forest.
House Bill 742 proposes to amend Title 75 to permit the operation of modified golf carts on certain trails.

House Bill 970 and Senate Bill 648 propose to establish two separate funds, the ATV management restricted account and the snowmobile management restricted account. This bill also proposes to replace two of the seventeen SAAC members with a representative from DCED and a representative from the PA Economic Development Association.

House Bill 1703 requests youth follow the Federal Consumer Safety Rules by the placard or decal shown on the ATV fenders.

Mr. Schmidt expressed concern with House Bill 970 and Senate Bill 648 limiting participation by the KTA and the Sierra Club.

**DCNR ATV Policy:**
Sara Nicholas discussed the current ATV policy and summarized the policy into two key points: 1) The Department continues to support ATV use and will continue to look for additional opportunities; 2) The Department has codified their policy to not expand trails within the state forest system unless it is used for connectors that make economical and recreational sense, and would link existing trails in a way that was beneficial to all who would consider and continue to use those opportunities. The Department is currently looking at a 2.5 mile connector.

Jonathan Lutz questioned if the Department has ever considered opening up state forest roads for ATV use. Ms. Nicholas indicated the Department does not plan to consider opening up state forest roads for ATV use. Mr. Clark added that the Allegheny National Forest has shared-use roads and that it was a positive experience. Mr. Hall clarified the proposed 2.5 mile connector is an existing logging road, not open to the public for travel by vehicles and it is not a state forest road.

Ms. Shade shared the Snowmobile/ATV Fund Audit Report. There were no questions by the SAAC.

Mr. Martin questioned if any snowmobile clubs were able to sign maintenance agreements in the Allegheny National Forest. Elizabeth Krug indicated the Marienville Club, Forest County, received a mini-grant for maintenance. Commissioner Snyder clarified the Marienville Trail Riders Club received a $5,000 mini-grant for fuel, repair of the groomer and use of the groomer for grooming the trail. It was suggested the Forest Service should utilize local clubs for more grooming.

Ms. Krug suggested a webinar format for future meetings.

**Next Meeting:**
It was agreed the next SAAC meeting would be scheduled in about six months.

Meeting adjourned at 11:25AM.