

Governor's Snowmobile Council
April 5, 2023

Present:

Pat Poulin, Chairman
Star Poulin, Governor Appointee
Jacob Metayer, VT State Police
Jenna Reed, Fish & Wildlife
Gary Nolan, VAST LE Committee Chair
Jeff Halpin, Governor Appointee
Michael Smith, Vermont DMV Coordinator
Claire Polfus, Fish & Wildlife
Stan Choiniere, Governor Appointee
Paul Doucette, Chief's Assoc & Southern Vermont
Matt Walker, Vermont State Representative (New Member)

VAST Staff Present:

Cindy Locke, Executive Director
Ken Brown, Trails Manager/LVRT
Mandy Dwinell, Office & Programs Manager
Matt Tetreault, VAST Trails Administrator

Guests Present:

Mike Mutascio, Lunenburg Polar Bears
Dave Rouleau, Barre Town Thunder Chickens

The meeting was convened at 3:09PM via Zoom by Pat Poulin.

Approval of Minutes

Star Poulin moved to approve the February minutes as presented; Stan Choiniere seconded. MOTION CARRIED.

Star Poulin moved to approve the March minutes as presented; Stan Choiniere seconded. MOTION CARRIED.

SSTP Financial Report, Matt Tetreault

January and February SSTP Financial Reports were included in the email to the Governor's Council.

Approval of SSTP Report

Paul Doucette moved to approve the FY23 January SSTP Report as presented; Gary Nolan seconded. MOTION CARRIED

Paul Doucette moved to approve the FY23 February SSTP Report as presented; Gary Nolan seconded. MOTION CARRIED

Agency Reports

Vermont State Police, Jacob Metayer

Snowmobile Safety Courses Total:

1,060 online students and 86 in-person classroom for March 2023. 1,146 total year to date. Possibly one tentative in-person class held in either May or April.

Fish & Wildlife, Jenna Reed

No recent patrols due to warm weather. Washington County is reporting snow in some areas.

Reporting 1,000 inspections and approximately 2,500 contacts and 3 crashes.

Discussion on developing a standardized process for reporting crashes.

Sheriff's Association, Mark Anderson – President of VT Sheriff Association & Windham County Sheriff

Not Present.

Police Chiefs & Southern VT Wilderness Search & Rescue, Paul Doucette

Paul expressed interest in connecting with Law Enforcement for 2024 season planning.

Meeting on 3/29 with Agency heads and would like to connect with Law Enforcement to share ideas.

Patrols: Bennington & Windham Counties had steady mid-week traffic.

Discussion on snowmobile operation and riding for Law Enforcement.

Dr. Simon Drew conducting Wilderness First Aid training in Bennington, more details to come.

Discuss the concern on unreported crashes and whether a standardized reporting process can be created.

No current patrols due to warm weather.

Department of Motor Vehicles, Mike Smith

DMV report:

2023: 20,077 (384 reported for March 2023)

2022: 21,534

2021: 21,329

2020: 20,415

Discussion on Safety Checks. Safety Check stickers issued by Law Enforcement coincide with TMA color.

Reminder from VAST to Law Enforcement and Game Wardens that Safety Stickers and books can be picked up at the VAST office or mailed.

Forest, Parks & Recreation, Claire Polfus

Some bills are going through the Legislator, but none that currently impact safety.

Discussion on "Designated Play Areas" on the Forest, Parks & Rec map on the Agency of Natural Resources website. Clarification by Cindy to bodies of water because those are considered state owned.

VAST

State Funded Equipment Grant Program, Cindy Locke

Met with Agency of Transportation (AOT) regarding Equipment Grant Funding, currently awaiting stipulation update. Cindy has been reaching out to AOT and will reconnect with the Governor's Council when updates are available.

VAST TMA Sales, Cindy Locke

TMA numbers are down this year due to weather.

Down 2,000 than last year and 1,800 from the last year.

Current TMA count is 20,253 with 17 over the last 2 weeks.

Increase of 3-day TMAs this season.

Revenue \$400k from VAST General,

Grooming was budgeted at \$1.5M, projecting a season end expense of \$1.3M due to the warm temperatures.

DMV Registration Stickers, Cindy Locke

Watched the Legislator last week regarding car registration validation stickers with a plan to possibly be omitted.

Discussion on if this registration validation update would also affect snowmobiles and ATVs. Mike Smith shared the plan moving forward is to completely omit yearly registration validation stickers. State statute doesn't include language requiring a registration validation sticker for a snowmobile registration to be valid. More details to come.

Discussion on possible registration validation sticker change and law enforcement.

LE Growth Planning, Cindy Locke

Looking to expand Law Enforcement program. Starting July 1 to take money out of carry over for Law Enforcement.

Discussion on a Law Enforcement planning meeting held at the VAST office.

Law Enforcement Committee, Gary Nolan

1. Snowmobile Wavier: Fees Petition Judicial Bureau

Discussion on standard reporting process for crashes and Law Enforcement planning meeting.

Would like to see an increase with Law Enforcement presence and the issuing of tickets vs warnings.

Appreciation extended to Jenna Reed for communication and assistance between Game Wardens and Law Enforcement throughout the season.

VAST Safety Committee, Stan

No meeting last month. Next meeting Monday 4/10.

Recent article in the VAST magazine asking for ideas & suggestions for the Safety Committee with one response, and 4-5 ideas from Jenna Reed.

Would like to address possible adjustment of fines during Law Enforcement meeting at VAST.

SSTP Trail Report, Matt Tetreault

Northeast Kingdom, Groton, Woodford & Deerfield still have limited areas for riding.

As the season is concluding, clubs are beginning to demo equipment in preparation for equipment grants.

Legislative Report

House Report

Introduction to Matt Walker.

Represents Swanton and Sheldon.

House Transportation testifying 4/6.

Welcomed feedback on DMV registration validation stickers.

Welcomed hearing people would like an increase of Law Enforcement, as he'd been hearing the opposite in Legislation.

Senate Report, Jane

Not Present.

Appointee Reports

Northwest, Star

Season is coming to an end. Clubs are starting to pickup signs.

Chittenden County Landowner Dinner coming up soon.

Northeast, Mike

Interior of Essex County will hopefully hold up to the end of the season. Grooming has stopped in the area.

Central, Jeff

Few spots in Fayston has riding. Ridge Runners are ending their season by this weekend. Clubs are starting to inventory signs and potential damage.

South, Stan

Been an on & off season. Woodford area had an extended season. Some spots with 40" of snow from the recent storm. Been trying to share with riders in the southern area that trail assessment and grooming takes time.

Chester Club closing their trails by this weekend.

Paul expressed a reminder that interactions with Law Enforcement are prominently for safety. The interactions are done in order to help hold individuals accountable for their behavior. An increase in fine amounts may possibly help to change these behaviors. Shared that Law Enforcement needs support for statewide coverage.

Discussion on if current trail closures areas have seen a reduction of off trail riding, with the advisement to connect directly with the club.

Next meeting is Wednesday, May 3, 2023 at 3pm via Zoom.

Motion to Adjourn:

Stan Choiniere moved to close the meeting at 4:15pm; Star Poulin seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Mandy Dwinell
VAST Office & Programs Manager