

## **Governor's Snowmobile Council**

### **October 4, 2023**

#### **Present:**

Pat Poulin, Chairman  
Gary Nolan, VAST LE Committee Chair  
Jeff Halpin, Governor Appointee  
Michael Smith, Vermont DMV  
Claire Polfus, Forest Parks & Recreation  
Jenna Reed, Fish & Wildlife  
Paul Doucette, Chief's Association & Southern VT Wilderness Search & Rescue  
Stan Choiniere, Governor Appointee  
Mike Mustachio, Governor Appointee  
Jacob Metayer, VT State Police  
Jane Kitchel, Vermont State Senator  
Matthew Murano, Wilmington Chief of Police

#### **VAST Staff Present:**

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

The meeting was convened at 3:05PM via Zoom by Pat Poulin.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

**Gary Nolan moved to approve the June minutes as presented; Paul Doucette seconded.**

***MOTION CARRIED.***

**Two changes noted by Jane Kitchel under the VAST discussion topics: typo of trial to trail and correction on the name of the Committee to be Emergency Board Chaired by Governor Scott.**

#### **Approval of SSTP Financial Report August 2023**

**Paul Doucette moved to approve the SSTP Financial Report for August 2023 as presented; Gary Nolan seconded. *MOTION CARRIED***

#### **Agency Reports**

Vermont State Police, Jacob Metayer

Not much to report.

Currently no one has inquired on a Safety Course yet.

Jeff Halpin shared Washington County is working on planning a Safety Course.

Stan Choiniere shared Windsor County is working on a Safety Course for adults – TBD.

Fish & Wildlife, Jenna Reed

Fish & Wildlife is hiring. Have 3 trainees currently, if training is completed would be released this summer in Newport & 2 additional areas.

1 agency has reached out RE: Powerpoint training.

Fish & Wildlife has 3 sleds that will need lights & and winches prior to the start of the season.  
Sheriff's Association, Marc Poulin –VT Sheriff Association & Washington County Sheriff  
Not Present.

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

Things are tracking well with Southern VT.

Received grants for 2 new sleds in Bennington.

Meeting with Dept. heads regarding planning for the winter.

Working on scheduling wilderness training.

3 people will be attending the NY training. After the training, Paul will share information and resources.

Department of Motor Vehicles, Shannon Fassett

2021, registrations up year after COVID. Currently, registrations are tracking normal progress.  
2023: 8594 registrations

Previously some registration forms included language on validation messages. The most recent batch of registration does have the correct verbiage.

Out-of-state residents can register online through DMV

- Letter sent to the snowmobile & ATV owners to have signed off that the vehicle is approved to register for a new registration.
- More information on Out of State new registration vehicles from DMV.
- New non-resident registration cannot be completed online.

Forest, Parks & Recreation, Claire Polfus

New Outdoor Rec Grant Manager, Lauren Pyle has recently started and is working across all grant programs.

Hoping for additional staff to come onboard this winter.

Launching VOREC program next week including flood recovery to reimburse for expenses from July 11<sup>th</sup> for trails organizations across VT. Maintain landowner permissions for a 10-year record.

**VAST**

State Funded Equipment Grant Program, Cindy

Thank you to Jane Kitchel and the Emergency Board. The money has been moved over for Flood Relief Damage.

Preliminary Grant Aid Application assessment after 9/1 has been reviewed.

60 priority flood-related projects

Received \$2.1M in requests, \$850k funded.

Clubs are actively working on trails now. Optimistic the majority of trails are to be accessible this season.

Applying for SBA loans in order to apply for FEMA grants for some of the bigger projects.

## TMA Sales

All TMAs began available on VAST website as of October 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Paid TMAs

- 2022: 141
- 2023: 100
- 2024: 200

Clubs should be receiving volunteer list and club TMA reports soon.

## VAST Clubs Not in Good Standing – Update

One Club: Green Mtn Trail Blazers (GMTB) have been notified of the update. A few people in the area expressed interest in creating a new club. Cindy will request all VAST signs from the GMTB trails be returned. Once a new club forms, VAST will notify landowners and the new club will reach out to the landowners regarding trails on the VAST trail system.

This Fall, 4 clubs were selected at random for an annual review. Letters notifying the club was sent in October.

Discussion on Class 4 FEMA support funding, a recommendation to connect with Roger Gosselin.

## VAST Annual Meeting Results

FY24 Budget passed.

Two contested officers this year: Re-elections for Jeff Fay, President; Mark Reaves, Vice President; Patty Companik, Treasurer

New BOD Secretary, Ruth Halpin

Ken Brown has transitioned to new employment with the SOV.

Mandy's position has transitioned to half trail and half office management working with Matt.

New Office Administrative Assistant, Lindsey starts Tues 10/10 for front-end support.

## Law Enforcement (LE) Committee, Gary Nolan

Prior to this meeting today, LE Committee had a meeting at the VAST office.

Discussed the LE Survey regarding the rate of pay to help with consistency among agencies and what's included.

Discussed Agency expenses with VAST partnership.

Training opportunities TBD.

Few new Agencies to help for increased patrols.

There is a 70/30 Equipment Grant VAST split for snowmobiles and trailers. Possibly evaluating expanding the grant to include gear, lights and vests.

Saturday 11/4 9am-1pm VSAP Orientation to include a CPR refresher, held at the VAST office.

## VAST Safety Committee, Stan

Next meeting 10/9

### **SSTP Trail Report, Matt Tetreault**

Clubs trying to access and work on flood damage, signing and preparing for the upcoming season.

### **Legislative Report**

House Report, Matt Walker

Not Present.

Senate Report, Jane Kitchel

Money was transferred from the \$750k AOT funds. As a reminder, the \$750k funds were available from a one-time COVID funds.

Jane shared a reminder to check in with questions prior to the start of the legislative session in January.

Jane asked to be notified if damage is found on SOV land.

Jane suggested there may be changes in the upcoming fiscal year. Lots of unknowns for the SOV funding coming in the next fiscal year.

### **Appointee Reports**

Northwest, Pat

Clubs working on getting trails ready.

Chittenden County as a club.

Ruff Riders is an honorary club and is not a VAST selling club. Working with landowners to possibly regain trails.

Northeast, Mike

Clubs working on annual trail assessment.

Recent NEK Heritage meeting went well.

Central, Jeff

County reviewing from the Annual Meeting.

Half of the clubs within Washington County experienced lots of damage. Clubs are working on assessments, grant applications and trail work.

Hoping for the majority of trails to reopen for the season.

South, Stan

Clubs are busy, trails got hit hard.

Reached out to Bennington & Windham County for more update on trails.

Windsor County meeting tonight.

Bennington, Corridor 7 bridge condemned by Forest Services. Working on more information. Matt is working with Forest Services Engineer.

Paul Doucette suggested connecting with GMP for poles that were damaged & could be repurposed.

Woodford Sno-Busters partnered with Bennington PD and completed the 30-hour First Responder Program.

Memorial Services for Betty Roark held at the Woodford Clubhouse noon on Saturday 10/14

Next meeting is Wednesday, November 1, 2023 at 3pm via Zoom.

**Motion to Adjourn:**

**Paul Doucette moved to close the meeting at 4:05pm; Michael Smith seconded. Motion carried.**

Addendum: Maine passed legislative penalties for off-trail riding.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mandy Dwinell  
VAST Office & Programs Manager