

Snowmobile Trails Advisory Council (SnowTRAC) Meeting Minutes 09/06/2017

8:33 am

1. **SnowTRAC Members present:**
2. Dan Mayfield-Chair-Big Lake Trails
3. John Scudder-Co-Chair- Anchorage
4. Terry Helleck- Anchorage
5. Gary Anderson-Kenai Peninsula-Valdez-Prince William Sound
6. Shane Serrano-Rural Communities
7. **SnowTRAC members not present: telephonic**
8. Justin Derr- Southeast Alaska
9. Adam Shilman-Mat-Su/Copper River Basin
10. **Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Staff Present:**
11. Darcy Harris- Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) Alaska State Trails Program Manager
12. Steve Neel-DPOR, Grants Administrator
13. Diane Houston-DPOR, Accounting Tech II
14. Matt Wedeking-DPOR, Operations Manager/ Deputy Director
- 15.
16. **Others Present:**
17. Shelley Ramsey, Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers Club
18. Harry Holt, Lake Louise Snow Machine Club
19. Mike Anderson, Lake Louise Snow Machine Club
20. Heath Hilyard, for Representative Cathy Tilton
21. Marti Steury, Yukon Quest-telephonic
22. **Advisory Board Elections**
23. Dan Mayfield- Chair: term as Chair is over, SnowTRAC will need a new Chairperson
24. Dan Mayfield asks for nominations
25. Gary Anderson nominates John Scudder
26. John Scudder-Co-Chair: nominates Gary Anderson
27. Dan Mayfield seconds the nomination for John Scudder

28. John Scudder accepts nomination
29. Dan Mayfield: "are there any other nominations?" hearing none
30. Darcy Harris asks if there are any nominations from board members on the phone?
31. Justin Derr and Adam Shilman answered "No"
32. Dan Mayfield: Are there any objections for the nomination of John Scudder as Chair of the SnowTRAC?
33. No objections-Motion carries and John Scudder is the new Chairperson.
34. Dan Mayfield: nomination for Co-chair
35. Terry Helleck nominates Shane Serrano
36. Dan Mayfield: Are there any other nominations?
37. Dan Mayfield: any objections?
38. No objections
39. Shane Serrano: "I won't object but could you please explain what those duties are?"
40. Dan Mayfield: "it's a learn-as-you-go."
41. Dan Mayfield: no objections
42. Dan Mayfield: welcome Shane Serrano Co- Chair, and John Scudder-Chair

Public Comment

43. Harry Holt: Lake Louise Trail Club: Lake Louise Trail Club has spent lots of money on trail surveys. In the past, there has been resistance from the board to adding new legal trails to the Lake Louise trail system and asking more Grooming Pool money. The club would like SnowTRAC to consider adding these trails to the Grooming Pool in the future.
44. Shelly Ramsey: Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers, agrees clubs should be able to add legal trails to their systems.
45. Terry Helleck: Asked how and when trails can be added to the Grooming Pool.
46. Dan Mayfield: the trail must have a legal easement
47. John Scudder: discussion about registration-fee increases, and letting the clubs know the importance. "Talk to your legislators."
48. Gary Anderson agreed
49. Dan Mayfield added Rep. Tilton supported House Bill 319 last legislative session to increase registration fees, but it did not pass.
50. A question was asked about requesting additional funds from clubs not needing all of their allocation.
51. John Scudder: answered yes, put in a request by email to Diane Houston or Steve Neel.

52. Harry Holt has had problems with big trucks destroying groomed trails in Lake Louise.
53. Shane Serrano: maybe a possible user fee/ access fee or user pass fund? The public is not aware of what or how these fees are used.
54. Matt Wedeking-Deputy Director of State Parks arrives and addresses the board
55. John Scudder: asked Matt Wedeking about the possibility of a K'esugi Ken to Byers Lake trail, and K'esugi Ken to South Denali trails for snow machining. Wayne Biessel in the Mat-Su DPOR office may be submitting a Recreational Trails Program grant application for a trail to connect K'esugi Ken to Byers Lake trail.
56. **DPOR Financial Discussion**
57. Steve Neel: The DMV collected SFY17 receipts of \$196,964. There is a left-over balance from SFY16 of \$19,647. The \$196,964 that was collected less the 12% administrative allowance leaves a balance of \$173,328. Add the balance from SFY16 \$19,647, and that leaves \$192,975.34 to spend in SFY18.
58. Steve Neel added that the DMV website statistics show registrations for trucks, snowmachines, etc. in the last 10 years are down by 17%. This is the first year the registration collected were under \$200,000.00.
59. Discussion of how money is collected by and from DMV.
60. John Scudder and Terry Helleck: trail users need education about registration fees.
61. Steve Neel: discussed the Buy America Act and how it effects the RTP program and equipment or snowmachines purchases. Any single purchase of equipment containing steel over \$2,500.00 is impacted.
62. 9:30am Break
63. Re-convene at 9:45 am
64. **Next agenda item: The Yukon Quest issue**
65. Marti Steury, Yukon Quest's Executive Director is on the phone
66. John Scudder: SnowTRAC teleconference in May, 2017. John Scudder, Justin Derr, Shane Serrano, Terry Helleck, Dan Mayfield, Darcy Harris and Steve Neel met telephonically about the potential funding for SFY18, and allowing the Yukon Quest to continue receiving funding from the Grooming Pool. The Board passed the motion (4 yes & 1 no) to exclude the Yukon Quest from the Grooming Pool, but allow them to seek funding through a standalone SnowTRAC Safety grant.
67. Dan Mayfield : during the teleconference in May, a motion was passed to exclude them from the Grooming Pool but allow them to seek funding through a Safety grant. We didn't receive any Safety grant applications for the is 17/18 season. "I would make a motion to delete them from excel sheet in front of us and not consider their financial request."
68. Dan Mayfield asks for second on the motion to delete Yukon Quest from the FY17/18 funding
69. Gary Anderson seconds the motion

70. Darcy Harris: Marti Steury is on the phone she missed the opportunity for public comment and would like to comment
71. Marti Steury: Communities having access to these trails in central eastern Alaska is critical for hunting, trapping, transportation, and recreation.
72. Terry Helleck: how many times, and what time of year, was the 464-mile trail groomed last year?
73. Marti Steury: Not until January for lack of snow; trail markers removed in March.
74. Terry Helleck: has the Yukon Quest received these grants in the past?
75. Marti Steury: for at least 10 years.
76. Terry Helleck: how many times was it groomed in previous years?
77. Marti Steury: same issue-no snow until later in the year.
78. Terry Helleck: was it groomed once?
79. Marti Steury: 4 -5 times. Problems with blizzards covering trail markers.
80. Dan Mayfield asks Steve Neel to summarize the Yukon Quest activity and billing requests from last year.
81. Steve Neel: The previous Director allowed the Yukon Quest, to charge for fuel, parts for their sleds, food and lodging, because of the distance and their time of their grooming. This year their reimbursement requests and expenditures were audited. The majority of the grooming was done between February 4th through February 17. A small amount in December and right before the race occurred in late January. There were other unusual expenses including a \$544 charge for a rental vehicle during the race, \$936 satellite phone charge that was actually half the cost of the phone someone else paid it, several thousand dollars for Spenard Builders Supply-stakes, stretch wrap and staples etc. So it became obvious that all the work was essentially done for the dog sled race.
82. Darcy Harris :DPOR encourages people to use recreational trails for many kinds of activities, however the money supporting this program is specifically for snowmachine related activities.
83. Dan Mayfield to Marti Steury: “were you aware after the May teleconference that we passed a motion that you may seek funding through a SnowTRAC Safety grant?”
84. Marti Steury: “Darcy made it clear that we were not qualified for a SnowTRAC grooming grant and there were other grants that we could apply for, but did not realize that your committee had removed us from that process.”
85. Dan Mayfield: SnowTRAC passed the motion to remove the Yukon Quest from the Grooming Pool but still apply for a Safety grant, the board has already made a decision on this.
86. Terry Helleck: “Did any of 4-5 times in 2015/2016 the trail was groomed, occur in December, January, and March?”
87. Marti Steury doesn’t remember-

88. Terry Helleck: trails should be maintained throughout the snowmachine season if supported by this money.
89. Marti Steury: as soon as there is enough snow on the trail the trail group can start grooming. "so many people use these trails that the sooner we can get them packed the better we are"
90. Terry Helleck: Are the folks that work on those trails paid by the Yukon Quest nonprofit?
91. Marti Steury: "yes, there are organized snow machine groups here in Fairbanks that have offered to put in the trails, but we haven't had any organized groups that have been able to help us because the grooming trips are usually 4-5 days long and are pretty remote, and hundreds of snowmachiners that use our trails
92. Shane Serrano: Rural AK Representative: "I don't think you guys should be removed from the (Grooming) Pool. How many sled dog teams do you have out there and how many snowmobiles are out there supporting the race?"
93. Marti Steury: "...on average about 20-25 dog teams that are on the trail for 4 or five days, and we've got hundreds of snowmachiners that use that trail, from hunting season-moose hunting season started last week so a lot of my snowmachine people are hunting. Over seventy snow machines rely on our trail from Eagle, and Eagle Village area equal amount between Circle and Central. " "We apply for and get grants about 20 right-of-way permits from property owners. Dog sled numbers are minimal compared to the snowmachines that use the trail, either to follow along with the race, or put the race in or for their own personal use, hunting or recreational use."
94. Shane Serrano: By supporting these events, we encourage rural Alaskans to register their machines.
95. Marti Steury-: Costs are three times what is submitted for reimbursement. The Yukon Quest staff wants to improve their process of requesting reimbursements and communicating.
96. Dan Mayfield: important to review our mission and agrees with Darcy's earlier comment of "The SnowTRAC is here to support the Snowmobile Trails Program " When we groom trails for snowmachining we're inviting many other users to utilize our trails to include snowmachines, dog sleds, fat-tire bikers, hikers etc. We open those trails to other users, but, our mission is to support snowmachine trails. When we're looking at a trail for inclusion into the Grooming Pool, we want to be inclusive, this committee is supposed to be inclusive to all the needs around snowmachine use, but there are some organizations, Yukon Quest being one of them, that is built around the purpose of the dog sled race, "who do not pay anything into our funds whatsoever".
97. Shane Serrano: the dog sled race is only for a week, but this trail opens access for snowmobilers for many weeks.
98. Dan Mayfield: This issue was visited in the May meeting. The original motion was to exclude Yukon Quest from the Grooming Pool forever. But that motion was modified to exclude them from the Grooming Pool but allow them to submit an application under the Safety grant process.

99. Shane Serrano: I'm new to this process, I want to make sure I heard correctly-they have been excluded and they are not even eligible for a Safety grant? Can at least the safety component of their application still be included?
100. Dan Mayfield: reads the motion from the May meeting. That was before the Grooming Pool and Safety grant applications were due.
101. Darcy Harris: tells the group that the process for a SnowTRAC Safety grant is more in depth and uses a different application.
102. Dan Mayfield: What SnowTRAC received was a Grooming Pool application from Yukon Quest, and the application doesn't meet the documentation requirement for a Safety grant.
103. Marti Steury: "I was aware that anyone could apply for a Grooming Pool grant and we couldn't be excluded from that, but it was recommended that we apply for a different type of grant, but that didn't have the same deadline as the SnowTRAC grant. I was not aware that we were not considered at all and that we needed to apply for a different program. Is there a different deadline for the different kind of grant?"
104. Darcy Harris: explains to Marti about the details of the Safety grant and that it has the same July 1st deadline and a different and more in depth application, and more documentation requirements. Darcy sent Marti an email on May 19 explaining the situation and the alternatives.
105. Marti Steury: does remember Darcy telling her about the RTP grant.
106. Darcy Harris: discusses the dollar amounts for both situations -funding the Yukon Quest's application or not.
107. Dan Mayfield: "What it really comes down to is that the board made a decision in May, are we are going to choose whether we are going to uphold our decision or not."
108. Gary Anderson: They were given an option to fill out a Safety grant application and did not.
109. Dan Mayfield: Yes
110. Shane Serrano: "Are we allowed to accept post-dated modifications to plans?"
111. Dan Mayfield: No
112. Shane Serrano: question: "So once it's (the application is) submitted that's it-we're done?"
113. Shane Serrano: Choice is now to fund them-is to reverse the May decision and fund as they have applied or just exclude them and delete them entirely.
114. Dan Mayfield: I don't think that's the way I see it-we can uphold our May decision and give them the opportunity to apply for a Safety grant next year, or we can approve them for funding through the Grooming Pool this year.
115. Dan Mayfield: "I would like to put in a new motion to uphold the May decision to exclude the Yukon Quest from the Grooming Pool and allow them to seek funding for a standalone Safety grant next year."
116. Gary Anderson Seconds the motion.

117. Shane Serrano: doesn't agree that they should be removed from the Grooming Pool entirely.
118. Dan Mayfield: explains the details of the Grooming pool grants and the Safety grants
119. Terry Helleck: Understands and agrees that for the 2018/2019 season-if Yukon Quest came back with a commitment to maintain the trail for the entire snow season, that would meet the spirit of this program. She would not like them to be excluded forever.
120. Dan Mayfield: "We hold them to the Safety grant next year and if they perform, well then at that time we decide whether we want to allow them to be in the Grooming Pool." Dan makes a motion, calls for the question to uphold the May decision.
121. Gary Anderson: all those in favor say I-2 waiting for phone Adam "NO" Justin "NO" Three on the floor are "NO"-2 "Yes" Nos have it (5 No -2 Yes)
122. Terry Helleck: motions to exclude Yukon Quest from this year's Grooming Pool and allow them to reapply next year and encourage them to provide details about supporting the entire snowmachine season-(same motion but modification only for this year).
123. There is no second to Terry Helleck's motion
124. Shane Serrano: Motions to fully fund them this year based on the application they have actually submitted.
125. Adam Shilman: seconds Shane Serrano's motion – John Scudder-the motion passes
126. Dan Mayfield: There is a "fundamental problem with the motion", because its states " that we will fully fund them base on their application this year, they have requested \$15,000.00 and nobody is going to get fully funded, however, they simply don't qualify this year based upon the audit results from last year." SnowTRAC did decide to exclude them this year. I think the requirements were communicated clearly back in May.
127. Terry Helleck agrees with that decision
128. Shane withdraw his motion
129. Dan Mayfield: Motions to remove them from the Grooming Pool process for the 2017/2018 season.
130. Terry Helleck: seconds the motion
131. John Scudder: discussion?
132. Adam Shilman: Clarification: we will reject their application this year but allow them to apply next year-correct?
133. John Scudder: Yes-they may apply for a Safety grant next year
134. Adam Shilman: The Yukon Quest can apply for either a Safety grant or a Grooming Pool grant?
135. Floor says "Yes"
136. Dan Mayfield: Suggests that they apply for a Safety grant so there is more detail of their planned activity, that wasn't included in the motion.
137. Adam Shilman: It sounds like they need to "tighten up their paper trail somewhat".

138. Dan Mayfield: "exactly"
139. Adam Shilman: agrees
140. John Scudder: any other discussion? -None
141. John Scudder: "Dan could you repeat your motion?"
142. Dan Mayfield: Motions to exclude the Yukon Quest from this year Grooming Pool eligibility
143. Justin Derr: Yes
144. Adam Shilman: Yes
145. Vote: -unanimous-7 Yes 0 No
146. John Scudder: Motion passes
147. Darcy Harris: reminds group the meeting will end in 15 minutes
148. Dan Mayfield: Motions that SnowTRAC utilize the 2016/2017 funding requests rather than the 2017/2018 requests.
149. Terry Helleck: "Why?"
150. Dan Mayfield: "There are some increasing costs that are associated with grooming, however, many of these groups have been involved in this process enough to know over the past years that if they increase their funding request then they will get more money because we, the groomers, are (allocated) a percentage (of available funds). It is easy to game-the-system. When you look at the spreadsheet we have 5 clubs that have increased their requests and 3 clubs that have gone down and another who has remained the same as prior years."
151. Terry Helleck: Denali Hwy stands out
152. Darcy Harris: The same section of Denali Highway trail is being groomed by a new groomer with much more expensive and nicer equipment. This grooming will cost more to accomplish the same distance.
153. Dan Mayfield: The purpose of the motion is to recognize that "we all have limited funding, much more limited funding than we've had in the past" and to "force clubs to make decisions about frequency of grooming and plan their strategy for the year and utilize their money to the best of ability." "I really don't think that we want to continue to play this game of allowing folks to request more money each year so that they can get more dollars."
154. Darcy Harris: States that the available amount is roughly the same every year, there has been little change in many years. Montana Creek asked for \$2500 less this year than last year. "Do you want to use 2016/2017 requests across the board?"
155. Dan Mayfield: "Yes go with last year's funding request"
156. John Scudder: Dan Mayfield's motion to use 2016-2017 funding requests (last year's funding request) is on the floor.
157. All those in favor say I -

158. Shane Serrano: will that leave us with the same remainder at the end of the year? where we don't spend what we have and then accuse of not using all the money?
159. Dan Mayfield and John Scudder reply that it's up to the groomers and the weather.
160. Darcy Harris: "I will do the math and send the spreadsheet out to the board".
161. Darcy Harris: last year requests were \$369,424.00 (including Yukon Quest). This year's requests \$422,860.00
162. John Scudder -Dan Mayfield's motion on the table to use 2016/2017 funding requests as the base for the 2017/2018 funding season
163. 6-Yes, 1 abstention- Motion carried
164. John Scudder-any other discussion?
165. Darcy Harris: Clarify the motion that was passed concerning Yukon Quest funding will hold, everybody else will be using the 16/17 funding requests. That will be your recommendation to the Director?
166. Terry Helleck: asks about not using all the available money
167. Darcy Harris: The money allocated to areas that have less snow can be allocated to another club in another area with more.
168. Dan Mayfield: grooming commitment form – clarification-that you can fill it out with less frequency do the fact that were not being fully funded.
169. Darcy Harris: encourages people to fill it out once they know how much funding their club will be allocated
170. John Scudder: motions to end the meeting
171. Gary Anderson: seconds-Meeting adjourned 11:00am