

## **Approved - SnowTRAC Meeting Minutes 8/28-29/2012**

### **SnowTRAC Members Present:**

Andy Morrison – ORTAB/SnowTRAC Liaison  
Bill Luth – Mat-Su /Copper River Basin Rep.  
Steve Enochs – Fairbanks Rep.  
John Scudder – Anchorage Rep.  
Jim Stanford – Southeast Rep.  
Mark Leary – Western Alaska Rep.  
Cynthia Hite – Mat-Su /Copper River Basin Rep.

### **DNR Staff Present:**

Ben Ellis – Director of Alaska State Parks  
Darcy Harris – Alaska State Trails Program Coordinator  
Steve Neel – Alaska State Parks Grants Administrator  
Justin Wholey – Resource Specialist - Alaska State Trails Program  
Wayne Biessel – Mat-Su/Copper Region Parks Superintendent  
Kyle Kidder - Div. Mining, Land, and Water

### **Public:**

Steve Parizek - Snomads President  
Jay Northy  
Deborah McGhan – North America Outdoor Institute (NAOI)  
Dan Mayfield - Big Lake Trails President  
Jenny Daniels - Alpine General Services  
Randy Crosby  
Beth Taber – Lower Susitna Drainage Association (LSDA)  
Rick Northy – Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers President

### **Others Present:**

Bob Pawlowski - Chief of Staff for Representative Kevin Meyer

## **Tuesday, August 28, 2012**

Meeting called to order at 9:40am.

### **Introductions**

Round table introduction with new board members: Mark Leary and Jim Stanford.

## **Discussion with State Parks Director**

Ben Ellis, Director of Alaska State Parks, had a discussion with the SnowTRAC board, and answered questions for them and the public. He explained how SnowTRAC operated for the new members. He touched on the purpose of the program, funding, trail grooming, standards & accountability, and challenges in the future.

## **Board Elections**

### **Motion**

Steve Enochs moves that Cindy (Hite) should be the Chair and John (Scudder) should be the Co-Chair. Bill Luth seconds.

### **Vote**

(5 yea, 0 nay) - Motion Passes (John Scudder & Cindy Hite did not vote for themselves)

## **Public Comment**

Deborah McGhan told the board about the International Snow Science Workshop that NAOI is participating in this year, and thanked the board for consideration of her grant.

Dan Mayfield expressed concern with lack of communication by State Parks. He also mentioned that grooming standards are necessary, but that groomers need more funding before this should happen.

Rick Northy likes that the SnowTRAC board has an emphasis on safety, and grooming should be considered safety. The better the trail-grooming and marking is, the safer the riding experience is. He supported more money for a full time winter trail coordinator.

Steve Parizek mirrored Rick Northy's thoughts on safety. Grooming is what his snowmobile club wants. He feels that SnowTRAC should groom; his club has its own safety program not funded by SnowTRAC. He also referenced an access issue (Price v. Eastham), and why there is a court case looking for snowmobile trail grooming standards from DNR.

## **Funding Discussion**

State Parks grants administrator Steve Neel discussed funding of SnowTRAC, including current and past challenges, as well as which types of projects qualify. The board also talked about how funding is obtained through snowmobile registration dollars from the DMV, and how to get more funding for the program. Steve Neel announced that Federal Highways has approved funding SnowTRAC (from RecTrails money) for \$100,000.

## **Grant Scoring**

The board discussed the snowmobile grants and their scoring. The board is generally supportive of the Caribou Lake/Lacey Lane Trail project. Snowmachiners have fallen through ice on Caribou Lake in the past; this project would reroute the trail around the lake. The board is also supportive of trail marking near Huslia; they agree trail marking is essential for navigation in this region, and they appreciated getting a grant from rural Alaska. The board had mixed feelings on the Iron Dog Expo. Their primary concern is that it is only a one day event, which limits the public benefit. The board supported Lake Louise trail signs. A concern that the board had with NAOI's grant is that they didn't visit rural Alaska, although Deborah McGhan of NAOI mentioned correspondence with the Army National Guard, who may be able to transport instructors to rural Alaska in the future.

### **Motion**

Bill Luth moves to fund the three snowmobile grants above 85 points (as earned by SnowTRAC members' scoring). No second. Motion dies.

### **Motion**

Steve Enochs moves to fund all snowmobile grants and vote yes/no. Mark Leary seconds.

### **Vote**

In favor of funding all five snowmobile grants as is (4 yea, 3 nay) - Motion Passes

## **Grooming Pool**

Both Lower Susitna Drainage Association and Cozy Bear (Gary Leeds) applied to groom the Lower Susitna/Yentna Rivers area. These bids may go to procurement and follow the State of Alaska's RFP process, or the grooming may be divided. Both bids are included in the grooming pool table on page 8.

### **-Grooming Pool Related Public Comment-**

Beth Taber explains why she turned in a grooming application late. In the past, only an email was needed to apply for funding. This procedure changed, and she was unaware of it. She apologized for the lateness of the application.

### **Motion**

Bill Luth moves to accept all three late applications and to have it ironed out in procurement.

John Scudder seconds.

### **Vote**

(6 yea, 1 nay) – Motion Passes

**Motion**

Jim Stanford moves: if grooming applications are late two years in a row then they lose funding.  
Bill Luth seconds.

**Discussion**

There was a concern that some applicants repeatedly turn in grooming applications late, and that they should be penalized. One idea was a 10% reduction funds dispersed to that organization. Others thought that reprimanding an administrative error by a groomer would ultimately punish snowmobilers, and that everyone should work together to make the trails better.

**Vote**

(1 yea, 5 nay, 1 abstain) - Motion Fails

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**Motion**

John Scudder moves to reduce everyone equally across the board 10% (10% reduction in request of the applicants' grand totals.) Jim Stanford seconds.

**Discussion**

The main discussion was that there wasn't enough money for all applicants to be fully funded (at the funding request in their applications). One concern the board had was that groomers may increase their bid if they think funding will be less than what their request will be; this could be to a fairness issue.

**Vote**

(5 yea, 1 nay, 1 abstain) - Motion Passes

**Board Recommendation**

Cindy Hite states that the board's recommendation is to fund all returning groomers at 90% (of their grant request).

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**Motion**

Jim Stanford moves to draft a letter to Ben Ellis, requesting a full-time coordinator position for SnowTRAC. Steve Enochs seconds.

**Discussion**

The board discusses how difficult it is to add a new DNR position. There was some concern whether or not there was actually a need, and whether there would be an economic benefit to the community.

**Vote**

(5 yea, 2 nay) – Motion Passes

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**Motion**

Jim Stanford moves to draft a letter from the board to request involvement in trail funding & maintenance by Alaska DOT. John Scudder seconds.

**Discussion**

Some members thought involvement of DOT was a good idea, especially on groomed platted roads and for snowmobile transportation routes in rural Alaska. Some members didn't think it was necessary.

**Vote**

(6 yea, 1 nay) – Motion Passes

### **Motion**

Cindy Hite moves to write a letter of recommendation to the Governor and all legislators for an increase in funding. Motion rescinded.

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### **Motion**

Jim Stanford moves to adjourn. John Scudder seconds.

### **Vote**

(7 yea, 0 nay) – Motion Passes

Meeting adjourned at 4:58pm

## **Wednesday, August 29, 2012**

Meeting called to order at 8:35am.

### **Grooming Standards**

#### **-Public Comment Related to Grooming Standards-**

Dan Mayfield is concerned that there isn't enough funding to require groomers to follow grooming standards. Another concern he has regards weekend grooming; Big Lake's groomers all have full time jobs as well as groom, and need to be flexible.

Steve Parizek thinks five foot wide trails are unsafe and lead to head-on collisions. He also said that Snomads groomers are 12'7" wide, and the trails need to be at least that wide. The \$28/mile amount is also too low to groom trails in his area. He said that trail markers every 250' is excessive; every 150 to 250 yards is more realistic.

Rick Northy has an issue with not grooming after 4pm, because groomers have jobs and need some flexibility.

#### **-Modifying the Grooming Standards as drafted by State Parks-**

A timeline for completion of grooming standards was debated, and it was concluded that they should be finished before the application period opens for grooming in the 2013/2014 season. The board wanted to make sure there was enough time to make a quality document. The board then collectively read through the draft standards and added/removed items to make it suitable to Alaskan conditions and the grooming pool. Some of the topics were generalized so the standards can fit varying topography and snowpack of different locations throughout Alaska. Trail sign standardization was also discussed. The revisions made by the board were later approved in a motion (see the second motion on page 7) Wayne

Biessel offered to have a meeting with groomers to find out what realistic costs are for grooming are; information gathered can be used in the grooming standards document.

**Motion**

Jim Stanford moves that this (grooming standards) document should be revisited (and revised if necessary) every three years - at the get-together meeting. Bill Luth seconds.

**Vote**

(7 yea, 0 nay) – Motion Passes

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**Motion**

Jim Stanford moves to add 1 asterisk after the title (of Standard C), and at the bottom (of the table); we have a statement saying what we want to do with standard C (This is a recommendation of using Standard C from the grooming standards document for trail grooming). Mark Leary seconds.

**Vote**

(4 yea, 1 nay, 2 abstain) – Motion Passes

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**Motion**

Andy Morrison moves to adjust all the Trail Marker Standards to read: Trail markers will be placed in a single line of stakes or poles with periodic; meaning 250 ft in open areas (for Standard A), 500 ft in open areas (for Standard B & C), 1000 ft in open areas (for Standard D), with periodic (distance as determined by groomer) pairs of stakes or poles to reinforce which side of the stake or pole-line is intended for the flow of traffic. Bill Luth seconds.

**Vote**

(4 yea, 1 nay, 2 abstain) – Motion Passes

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**-More Public Comment Related to Grooming Standards-**

Dan Mayfield was concerned with the section of the standards which mentions: “any additional changes to frequency of grooming must be approved by DPOR,” because if a grant is not fully funded (i.e. only 90% of a request) then the originally listed grooming frequency on the grant application cannot be performed. He also wants to make sure groomers will have the resources available to get trail marking signs. He suggested the language be changed from *set dates* to “the grooming season” so he isn’t responsible for having signs up when it was impossible or unsafe to groom. He also received clarification of when to report an issue or hazard to DPOR.

Rick Northy has concerns about communication with groomers because of cellular dead zones; he asked about applying for a grant for radios. He likes the idea of getting signs in bulk by a sign coordinator and dispersing them to the groomers so they are uniform for SnowTRAC trails.

**Motion**

Bill Luth moves that we (the SnowTRAC Board) ask the State to write a grant for a certain dollar amount (“I’m not going to nail that down”) every year to go towards these contracts or the contracted people for signage. John Scudder seconds.

**Vote**

(0 yay, 6 nay, 1 abstain) – Motion Fails

**Motion**

Jim Stanford moves for the board to accept draft revisions (of the snowmobile grooming standards). Steve Enochs seconds.

**Vote**

(7 yea, 0 nay) – Motion Passes

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**Motion**

Jim Stanford moves to adjourn. Bill Luth seconds.

**Vote**

(7 yea, 0 nay) – Motion Passes

Meeting adjourned at 4:58p

**Snowmobile Grant funding as Recommended by the SnowTRAC Board to Alaska State Parks**

**Director Ben Ellis**

Ref. #	Project Name	Submitted by	Funding Request	SnowTRAC Approval	Application Type	Avg. Score
1	Caribou Lake Trail /Lacey Lane Trail	Snowmads Inc.	\$ 4,400.00	Approved	Development Maintenance Aquisition Assessment	89.5
2	Huslia Winter Trail Safety Project	Huslia Tribal Council	\$15,000.00	Approved	Safety, Signing, Education	92.2
3	Iron Dog Snowmobile Safety Education	Iron Dog Inc.	\$11,600.00	Approved	Safety, Signing, Education	61.7
4	Lake Louise Trail Signs	Lake Louise Snowmachine	\$ 5,300.00	Approved	Safety, Signing, Education	86.1
5	Alaska Safe Rider	North America Outdoor Institute	\$15,000.00	Approved	Safety, Signing, Education	65.9
		<b>Total =</b>	<b>\$51,300.00</b>			

Recommendation Totals	2012/2013
Snowmobile Grants	\$ 51,300.00
Grooming Pool	Approx. \$282,000.00

**Grooming Pool Funding Recommendation of 90%  
by the SnowTRAC Board to  
Alaska State Parks Director Ben Ellis**

Groomer	Requested Funds	Funding at 90%	
AK SnowCat	\$67,100.00	\$60,390.00	
Chena River State Recreation Area	\$13,206.00	\$11,885.40	
Lower Susitna Drainage Association	\$9,630.00	Est. Approx. \$10,000.00	Two bids for same area.
Cosy Bear - Gary Leeds	\$13,500.00		
Trail Mix	\$10,000.00	\$9,000.00	
Alpine Gmeneral Services	\$7,500.00	\$6,750.00	
Big Lake Trails	\$23,878.00	\$21,490.20	
Denali Highway Trail Club	\$18,000.00	\$16,200.00	
Mid Valley Trail Club	\$18,300.00	\$16,470.00	
Willow Trail Committee	\$23,600.00	\$21,240.00	
Lake Louise Snowmachine Club	\$27,072.00	\$24,364.80	
Montana Creek Motor Musers	\$5,000.00	\$4,500.00	
Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers	\$35,700.00	\$32,130.00	
Snomads	\$37,725.00	\$33,952.50	
Yukon Quest	\$15,000.00	\$13,500.00	
Totals	\$325,211.00	Approx. \$282,000.00	