

SnowTRAC Meeting

December 10, 2010

ATTENDEES

Bill Luth – SnowTRAC Advisory Board
Cynthia Hite – SnowTRAC Advisory Board
Dan Mayfield – Big Lake Trails
Eric Morris – SnowTRAC Advisory Board
Greg Shaffer – SnowTRAC Advisory Board
Joe Gauna – SnowTRAC Co-Chair
Kevin Hite – President, AK State Snowmobile Assn.
Kyle Kidder – South Central Region, Easements
Mark Wilke – SnowTRAC Co-Chair
Stephen Enochs – SnowTRAC Advisory Board
Gary Anderson – Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers
Glenn Swann – Curry Ridge Riders
Pat Daniels – Big Lake Resident
Kit Jones - Mid- Valley Trail Club
Deborah McGahn – NAOI

DNR STAFF

James King – Parks Director
Andre Kaeppele – Trails Program
Amanda Stevens – Admin. Asst II

Meeting Called to Order at 8:35 a.m. and introductions made by all

Kaeppele: As you may be aware James King's last day will be on December 15th. We need to rethink strategy on the registration fee increase campaign.

Wilke: We need to add to the meeting: Discuss Board Members that should be nominated and Board Members not attending.

Wilke: I have a question. James, what do you think on fee increase with current Governor?

King: The Governor is most likely not interested in fee increase unless the public or other individuals are supportive.

Wilke: Have you have a discussion with the Governor?

King: Key outdoor councils have his ear. Ron Arno, Bill Stoltz should be asked what they think. There is strong resistance from the Bush. They don't want to register machines, but interested in having the trails signed.

Wilke: Do you have any criticism with the Board Members, Staff? Is there anything we could do better?

King: We have had great discussions, redoing operation procedures, making grooming standards fair, distributing money equitably throughout grooming pool. You are making progress. I encourage the progress with grooming and signing standards. People may complain about paying groomers the same. We may get complaints while working through standards. Everyone is doing a great job on moving forward.

Shaffer: I have a question of fees. Do we have a tracking method on new sales and resales? Is there a quality control? Question on raising fees both renewals and new ones.

Kaeppele: DOT would have the information. Point of sale is higher than renewals. People don't bother renewing as there is no enforcement and people don't know where the fees go.

Gauna: Fees should be simple.

Shaffer: Online system doesn't work.

Kaeppele: Need to call DMV. They will email information.

Shaffer: Fees important. If no enforcement it messes up system. Renewal should be better.

Wilke: We will discuss fees later.

C. Hite: James we enjoyed working with you. Great job!

Wilke: I second that.

King: I appreciate the opportunity. Good luck.

Kaeppele: Now it is time for Public Comment. Are there any Public Comments?

Mayfield: I am disappointed with the Trails Adjudication on Houston Loop as it has not been quite resolved. The positive side is that Big Lake Trails have purchased new equipment and will hit Trails this evening with a large volunteer force. We are in the process of finalizing the force and have a Tucker, Bombardier, and Ski Doo. Funds have been donated and a public member gave good financing. We got 20 new members and were able to purchase equipment.

Kaeppele: Thanks for sharing. Adjudication will be included with nomination and we will discuss the process. Kit have you got new grooming snowmachine?

Johns: Not yet, we will have soon. We have a machine that is in the process of getting a new heater.

Luth: In regards to Grooming and Nominations, it has been hard to get Trails Survey and get everyone to agree and adjudicated.

Kaeppele: When dealing with multiple resources this affects different areas. The process of going through this is difficult with agencies (Fish & Game, etc.)

Gauna: That I why local trails groups need to develop trail plans.

Kaeppele: We have been discussing with Lake Louise Trail Plans and adopting plan for Trails.

Wilke: Appreciates all the work that has been done.

Gauna: Believes the high priority is Design Agreement, rates with adjustment made for variable trails. How much money can we spend?

Kaeppele: This is on the calendar and we will stay in touch. Are there any other Public Comments? None okay we will move on.

Wilke: Gauna needs to know the Grooming & Nominations have been pushed up.

Kaeppele: We will be discussing safety later. We pushed up the Grooming due to the fact Deborah had a radio show to discuss the new snowmobile safety curriculum, she will be in afterward.

Gauna: Trails Discussion and Nominations will begin. Glenn Swann will be in later for meeting if we need trails to groom and people need to be nominated.

Wilke: We have had many discussions on the nominations. We don't have a nomination process. How does someone get to be nominated to do a trail? You get nominated to a Trail Plan through governor via a Letter of Intent.

Gauna: If user wants to be doing it, is there a process?

Wilke: All requirements need to be met. I believe a process is there.

Anderson: I believe there might be a misunderstanding.

Gauna: Let the folks follow the process.

Kaeppele: Kyle is here.

Gauna: Trails need to be identified which should be groomed.

Kaeppele: I learned easement adjudication is a difficult process in trying to get all involved parties communicating. It requires extensive researching of records and agency contacts to determine public access status. Kyle has done an excellent job of summarizing the access status of our trails with list.

We need to develop a method to prioritize trails, this way Kyle can focus on the most important trails. Some trails require extra effort due to their complexity. Bottom line there are inconsistencies, legal action issues, access issues, trail development problems, and it is an extensive process to secure access.

Gauna: We have heard all of this before. We need to start moving on it. The groomers need to identify trails.

Wilke: We need to check with groomers to pick one major trail.

Kaeppele: We have been discussing with the Public the easement application process and there are several resources available. Often time the projects get held up by Public because they have missed a step.

Gauna: The Public has to be responsive. We need to set deadlines for Trails.

Kaeppele: We are working with the Public and Kyle is working on it too.

Luth: Willow Area's list doesn't include what needs to be done. Willow Swamp Loop says no survey – but I went out personally with the surveyor while he surveyed the land.

Kidder: I will need to speak with the surveyor to find the plat.

Luth: No easement? I have question...why is it so hard to read list?

Kaeppele: How do we prioritize or nominate the Trail. Joe says we need to let groomers do but we need to figure out a method.

Mayfield: We have been having a problem with Mental Health in the direction of Houston Loop Trail. The contract isn't going anywhere and we have been having a problem getting it signed. Why can't the state agencies deal with it?

Gauna: Can Kaeppele speak with the committee?

Kaeppele: Do we want to deal with Mental Health?

Luth: We probably have to deal with this in Willow too. Most of their land isn't buildable as most of it is swamp.

Mayfield: Trails has been passed but Mental Health has the Trails locked up.

Kidder: Mental Health is for profit. Their major sources of dollars is Land Sales and Development. Can you say Trails will be an improvement to Development?

Gauna: Hopefully Kaeppele can talk to higher ups regarding Mental Health.

Kaeppele: I will look into it and maybe educate them.

Mayfield: Is there a group we can talk to regarding Mental Health?

Kaeppele: State Management doesn't really control Mental Health.

Mayfield: Somehow we would like to get the signature on the contract.

Kaeppele: Does anyone know what Trails need to be groomed?

Gauna: They should be able to identify them.

C. Hite: I think going to the groomers should be ok, but we should look at main trails and go from there.

Gauna: I agree. Su Valley Trail's main trail and work from there. Some trails are not heavily used and we have had no public comments.

Wilke: We do represent Public. As Gauna is chair he should take Top Trails and give to Kyle the top five trails. Keep it simple.

Gauna: I accept.

Luth: I will go to Bruce to get finalize on easement from State.

Gauna: I want to know about conference room for groomers. Can we arrange for one.

Kaeppele: If you want Gauna to take care. We need to focus on all areas. Bill and I have been discussing Financial of growing groomers. Maybe if Fee increased we can grow. Do we want to grow Grooming Pool?

Luth: I believe we should always take applications.

Gauna: I agree. When they apply we should take their applications and encourage applications.

Wilke: We need backups for the Trails.

Gauna: I agree.

Luth: If Fee increases it should be based upon the first to apply and they are able to groom.

Kaeppele: We should be cautious of putting resources to take care of trails and then if it is abandoned. We should focus on trails we will use long term as it wouldn't be good to put our resources in and then five years later abandon the trail.

C. Hite: We should be proactive of getting Statewide Trails.

Gauna: I agree.

C. Hite: The goal is statewide. We should not chase trails. I have a question on applications. How many agencies are involved?

Luth: It depends on how many trails and public meeting.

Gauna: Yes/No. Nobody knows how many agencies. South Denali crosses borough. Mental Health can be done. We need to let Public know where to go to provide information.

Kidder: When talking about Agency Trails crossing Borough or State. If they don't want the trail to cross their land then it stops the trail.

Luth: Can the trail be moved?

Kidder: Yes, we can work with re-routes.

C. Hite: We should work in our own areas and adopt trails.

Kaeppele: Deborah has arrived to discuss the NAOI snowmobile safety summit.

Gauna: Cindy would you let us know what happened at the summit safety.

C. Hite: Yes. Deborah and I attended the 2 day summit. There weren't a lot of people at the summit but it was interesting.

McGahn: The goal at the summit was to do in training on safety and get it out to the community. It gave a platform of knowledge identifying key elements: Develop online programs, rider responsibilities, packing the right gear, mechanical inspection, writing a trip plan, considering being a trail instructor.

C. Hite: Attached from Kaeppele. This is a great took program in the making.

McGahn: It was great for snowmobiling training, networking all around, schedule posting online, data collection. The efforts are in the works. I will give a full report of where we are at by the end of the year.

C. Hite: Everyone is interested in safety. With local safety and a lot is going on. There is not much between local clubs and NAOI. What role are we going to play in the safety area? Does the state need to develop a program? As a board we need to figure it out.

Mayfield: Last meeting we discussed the Safety Program. There is no safety in Big Lake area. We have heard of safety programs though.

McGahn: We have connected with other entities to do safety programs. People don't know and we are trying to network with others regarding safety. The two most important ways are getting public informed. Communication is key, also, a safety video. We need to develop games for kids with safety information in a fun and interactive way.

Gauna: We would like give to NAOI to everyone. Cabin hoppers didn't get information on summit. Why didn't this go to AMDS?

McGahn: We sent it to you.

C. Hite: We got it.

Kaeppele: I would like to comment on SnowTRACs role in safety. Boating is heavily funded by Coast Guard. We don't have the funding or the staff to get the information out. That's why NAOI is important as they are dedicated to the mission of safety.

C. Hite: Boating isn't relying on grants – they are heavily funded. What is the outlook on funding for safety?

McGahn: Sustainability is an issue. We have looked at individuals, manufacturers, state. We have looked at video or movies, different sources for a steady stream of revenue.

Kaeppele: We will discuss with Jeff to channel funds.

Wilke: Boating Safety program was put together 10 years ago as it was required by law. It is funded \$1m/year. We don't have the money unless we raise revenue.

Luth: I agree with that unless the registration fee is good.

Wilke: How about getting people using trail to pay fees?

Luck: How about trying to get dog sleds registered with DMV?

Wilke: How about getting other people who use trails to pay fees?

Anderson: To dog mushers?

Kaeppele: Funding is limited and should be dedicated for safety and continue to work with NAOI.

Wilke: We have thrown money at safety and we are not certain we got results. We are not going to get results due to \$15,000 budget. We need avalanche training. We should abandon safety program until we get more funds.

Swann: NAOI safety should be handled at club level and not SnowTRAC.

C. Hite: We are not seeing benefit. We have been funding and don't believe we should have to pay for final project. What is the role going to be?

McGahn: The materials we have produced in the last three years you don't have to pay for it. We have been trying to work with the clubs. Some money has been allocated for helmets which have been distributed. We have spent \$200k. If you want it at the club level they will do it for trainings, Arctic Man, Eureka, and Iron Dog.

C. Hite: Do we want instructors? Books? What do you see SnowTRAC doing?

McGahn: We have pamphlets. You need an instructor. But there has to be a way to pay for the instructor. You should give money to the clubs to hire instructor.

C. Hite: SnowTRAC should be used to pay instructor and pay clubs.

Gauna: If you were to apply for a grant?

McGahn: It would pay for instructor to teach and clubs to distribute.

Gauna: What do you determine to send out to people to teach?

McGahn: From people contacting them directly. We make the decision on the greatest need. We are sending out instructors to Koyuk.

Joe: Is Koyuk providing funding?

Luth: Would bringing 1 or 2 people in to train work better and then send them out?

McGahn: No. They wanted two people to go train. They are funding. We got contacted by Big Lake to do a community program. Communication is key. We need information to provide to contact.

Kaepple: Eric as a Villager if a snowmachine class was provided do you think a group of Anchorage instructors or a local resident would be better?

Morris: A local resident would be more effective.

C. Hite: I agree. But how would you get a local trained?

Mayfield: Big Lake could use a Safety Expert on a day to day basis.

Anderson: We have our own. We are working with all entities.

McGahn: Eric, how do you educate locals?

Morris: Our people don't have teaching capabilities. They would have to be taught.

McGahn: Let's train – Statewide. We hire top instructors with certification.

Kaepple: How about annual training? We could find funds to fly people in outlying communities to Anchorage, to attend a trainers training.

C. Hite: There should be two roles for SnowTRAC: Monetary to fund instructors and fund the whole thing or booklets.

Luth: Obviously we should fund a piece. How much do we need to request? Do we educate the Public or provide the information to clubs?

Daniels: The program is valuable. But, no one is paid for the safety program. Leadership of community should meet with if club was involved. Member could get training. Should isolate area to safety side for one year. I took input of community meeting: sums 2008 – 2010 (\$45k grant). Application was turned in grant required helmet safety training for children. I believe people shouldn't have to pay for classes and helmets. You need to isolate the funds to one direction.

McGahn: Classes are free.

Daniels: Class is free, but helmet is \$25. You should work out deal with manufacturers to get deal on helmets. Some manufacturers may even give helmets for free with mention. Training may have different standards for snow machine riding.

Wilke: To the Board Members – any statewide will \$15k make a noticeable difference? Should we make the clubs have the trainers? A brochure won't be able to do larger scale.

Shaffer: We should have a basic program set up for each region. Each region has different conditions. Should we have a quality control to funnel through Advisory Board?

C. Hite: How do you believe it should be done?

Shaffer: Basic fundamentals for region, plus more complex trails. Local clubs do standard training. We should have a say on basic trails and advanced trails – providing advanced instruction.

Luth: Any way to do that must have a grant.

Shaffer: We need to have a basic program.

Kaeppele: That's why the summit occurred. We should go into contract with NAOI. Do a contract from 1-3 years. What type of product do we get?

Daniels: A portion of grant money should cover safety for community.

Kaeppele: We should be careful of losing help from Deborah. They may turn to a more secure funding source. It is a lot of work to organize safety courses and curriculums, especially if there is no guarantee of funding.

Anderson: It should be handled at the club level.

Luth: Deborah should write a grant for funding like everyone else.

Kaeppele: We should have one lead organization (NAOI) providing snowmobile safety. Club should contact them for information.

Daniels: If NAOI writes grant for safety, they should decide most important class and have clubs get the training.

Wilke: Board Members what do you think should be done?

C. Hite: Are we going to fund product, instructors, or clubs? I don't believe SnowTRAC can do it. Or should we fund a piece instead?

McGahn: Bill and Mark make a good point. Local clubs should put in requests and every year NAOI will prioritize. Funding a piece isn't a good idea.

K. Hite: What clubs have asked for safety items?

Daniels: Has SnowTRAC ever given requirements?

K. Hite: I believe we are trying to put requirements in place that we can't do.

Mayfield: This summer we talked about a statewide safety program. We need to leverage NAOI to provide level of funding and the best source for safety.

C. Hite: We need to develop a program and need to figure out what to do. NAOI provides safety information that is beneficial. Should the clubs reach out to them?

Luth: No, definite answer. The grant request for clubs is not a good idea. NAOI should provide information, but I don't see a way to. NAOI needs to contact clubs.

Shaffer: I believe we are behind a statewide program for basic training.

Luth: We need to have one problem solved per year by going to all the clubs and asking them.

Kaeppele: I believe we have steps to work toward to continue. We talk more about it next meeting. Now it is time for Registration and Fee increases. I believe the Governor's office is behind if the Public is okay. I believe it's time and the Public is aware and okay with it.

Gauna: Glenn has talked to the Governor's office regarding the increase. Let's let him tell you.

Swann: I have talked with the Governor and he is adamantly against raising taxes on it as he wants the voters to vote for him.

Kaeppele: If we can show him the Public is supportive would it help?

Enochs: The Interior is not supportive for Fee increases on the trails. A moderate increase \$5 to \$10 is okay but \$5 to \$25/year won't be acceptable. If you raise fees, snowmachiners shouldn't be the only ones responsible.

Wilke: I specifically asked James King regarding the fee increase to speak with the governor. The fee will be increased if it legislative approved.

K. Hite: Fee increase administrative is action. We lost strong advocates when Mike Kelly wasn't elected. We are sending out SnowRider about SnowTRAC in February. The perception is changing regarding SnowTRAC. We will be supporting the fee increase from \$5 to \$20. The increase is eye catching to snowmobilers.

Shaffer: The registration fee is sent to DMV regarding registration renewal. I am looking at website right now. From 2005-2009 there have been 54,328 registrations. With it being \$20/year that would generate over \$1M. I don't believe there should be a raising on fee until State can enforce renewals.

Luth: Amounts aren't correct. Money is being spent for program with no money being left over.

K. Hite: Since 1994 SnowTRAC has been around. No state enforcement required for renewal.

Shaffer: I have been to one event the Arctic Man where the State Troopers were enforcing registration and snowmachines need to be registered.

K. Hite: They possibly had been required to be registered as it is on State land. Private land doesn't need to be registered. Public land and public events need to be registered.

Kaeppele: If dealer selling new and resale at point of sale – these need to be registered but a private sale you can't enforce.

K. Hite: The information regarding registrations can be found on DMV.

Wilke: What you do you think SnowTRAC can do to help with increase?

K. Hite: We need to approach legislation, speaking with outdoor lobbyists to get updates on who to approach.

Morris: Zero support the fee increase in Rural Alaska.

Anderson: Kenai Wild Refuge are checking and enforcing registration. Dollars have gone up.

Daniels: Can patrol be sent out to enforce? Alaska Park Rangers are strapped for time. It could be given to Troopers but dollars and acknowledgement would have to be given to them. What are fines for not having registration?

Gauna: \$80 - \$300 plus a one day suspension from riding.

Enochs: What is the purpose for raising fees?

Wilke: Grooming, Safety, Development and Marketing. This should be \$1M/year.

Enochs: What is message? Do we have a presentation?

K. Hite: We will be laying out bullets in February from ASSA and we will address in issue.

Enochs: What is SnowTRAC position?

C. Hite: There are three points: Sell it/Sales (Safety program), letters from clubs, go to legislature.

Gauna: I think we are on the right track. I have talked to clubs and they are for it.

Enochs: We need to work on positions.

Wilke: Why don't you put into a motion?

Enochs: SnowTRAC should put out a motion we support \$_____ for increase for Registration Fee.
1. The increase should be used to develop a Statewide Trail – village to city.
2. To continue to develop a Statewide Trail System – increase grooming
3. Signage program

Wilke: I second that.

C. Hite: We need to put on SnowTRAC website. Can we support the Fee Increase on the website?

Kaeppele: I believe we should be careful about putting on website. We can do it though. It could be stated that SnowTRAC board support.

C. Hite: Will it provide a powerpoint with slides regarding fees? It would state our names and a letter of intent.

Luth: We could provide an 8½ x 11 laminate on trails. Give the basics to post what fees will be used for.

C. Hite: Steve, would you put the motion through email and send to Andre for stamp of approval?

Gauna: Steve, do you have objection to withdraw motion?

Enochs: No, I don't have a problem.

C. Hite: We need to put out to many sources.

Kaeppele: One more topic to address. Sounds like Public Education fees in Political area?

Gauna: When we pass resolution every legislature needs to get information.

C. Hite: Public support needs to be included.

Gauna: Agree. I represent the Public.

C. Hite: I believe letters should be included. One letter from me doesn't mean as much as 100 letters from the Public.

Enochs: Yes, letters should be included.

Gauna: I will meet with club and have them write letters.

C. Hite: I don't like how things were left with Deborah and NAOI. I call for a motion to safety. Andre can we contract with organizations?

Kaeppele: Training instruction for safety based on curriculum. It should be stated funds should be dedicated to club. We would need to talk to contracting to figure out the words.

C. Hite: I motion to fund \$15k next year to NAOI as a board we should fund or not.

Enochs: I second that. I believe we should fund now.

Wilke: I don't support. NAOI needs to go through grant process.

Luth: I agree.

Kaeppele: I'm concerned about not giving them the funds. For the last couple of years we have been working with NAOI. I'm afraid we may lose their partnership.

Wilke: There is no direction in the program.

Gauna: We have been through this. My vote is no.

C. Hite: I will work with Deborah regarding Funding.

Kaeppele: Okay we will do a count on the forum:

1. Gauna – No
2. Luth – No, would need to see where the dollars are going
3. Wilke – No
4. Enochs – Yes
5. Morris – No
6. Shaffer – No
7. Cindy – No

Kaeppele: Now we will discuss the delinquency of Board Members. There are 10 members in the regions of the state. There are few not active at the annual and other meetings. Janet Athanas represents Western Alaska. She hasn't been attending due to work conflicts and I believe there is a lack of participation. Ozie West represents Disability. I haven't received scores from the annual meeting and he hasn't been active at the quarterly meetings.

Wilke: What options are available?

Kaeppele: Removal of attendants. I recommend removal by majority vote. Section 9 deals with attendance.

Gauna: I recommend removal of Janet Athanas based on non-attendance and Ozie West.

Wilke: This is open for discussion.

Luth: I believe it is okay to remove Janet Athanas but Ozie West needs to be different.

Kaeppele: I brought up Ozie West due to not receiving scores.

Luth: There is a definite reason to deal with Janet Athanas.

Wilke: I believe we need to deal with the Janet Athanas issue, but Ozie West should be handled differently. I will personally call him and speak with him. I propose to remove Janet Athanas.

Kaeppele: Okay we will do a count on the forum:

1. Luth – Yes
2. Gauna – Yes
3. Hite – Yes
4. Shaffer – Yes
5. Enochs – Yes
6. Morris – Yes

7. Wilke – Yes

Wilke: Andre why don't you give me Ozie West's number.

Enochs: Several Board Members are soon to expire. How can we handle re-nomination?

Kaeppele: No term expirations on seat. Any application should be considered. Board Members need to apply.

Gauna: What would qualify to be on the board?

Kaeppele: A letter of intent, resume, summary of experience.

Wilke: Do we need to qualify? Can we have a letter of intent?

Gauna: Yes, I believe it's okay.

Wilke: Can you give me dates of renewal?

Kaeppele: Bill Luth – March 1st, Eric Morris, C. Hite, Joe Gauna – are all coming up in March. We might possibly switch seats around. Three key members are coming up. We will recruit in 1-2 months. Board Members would need to submit a Letter of Intent.

Wilke: I would like people to reconsider their times on the board.

Kaeppele: Actually there are 5 seats available, as Janet's is coming available.

Gauna: I intend to return on the board. Bill are you signing on?

Luth: Yes.

Gauna: I believe area should be in regards to location.

C. Hite: Where would you apply – the website?

Luth: Western Alaska will be hard.

C. Hite: So do I send people to Andre or the website?

Luth: Andre would be the one to send them to.

Kaeppele: I have all the information and can give it to them.

Gauna: I believe the meeting is over.

Wilke: I motion for the meeting to be adjourned.

Luck: I second it.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:40pm