



Snowmobile Advisory Council Law Enforcement & Safety Committee Meeting Minutes

Friday, March 25th, 2022

Wingate by Wyndham, 2065 Airport Drive, Green Bay WI and via Zoom

Committee Members Present: Sam Landes - Chair, Joel Enking, Mike Holden, Bob Lang, Dale Mayo, Andy Malecki, Don Mrotek, Erica Voelker

Other Council Members Present: Lynsey Burzinski, Abby Haas, Gary Hilgendorf, Sue Smedegard, Leon Wolfe

DNR staff attendance: Jillian Steffes, Marty Stone, Vanlanduyt, others

Public attendance: Dave Newman and other members of the public

1. Call to order 15 minutes after Finance Committee

2. Acceptance of minutes of previous meeting

Motion to approve August 2021 minutes by Dale, 2nd by Erica. MOTION PASSED

3. Agenda Repair - None

4. Committee Chair Comments – Sam Landes

- Items to be covered in the agenda.

5. DNR Reports and Updates – Marty Stone, LE OHV Administrator

- Wisconsin DPSRP partners with the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs by working together and collaborating on safety messaging, law & rule changes, emerging trends, snowmobile safety training, and expanding snowmobiling in Wisconsin.
- As of 2019 The DPSRP is fully marking all newly issued law enforcement patrol snowmobiles with “conservation warden” identification to aid in proactive and voluntary compliance of our snowmobile regulations.
- During the weekend of January 21, 2022, the DPSRP partnered with local county sheriff’s departments for the second annual *Think Smart Before You Start* snowmobile safety campaign. This combined effort takes place during International Snowmobile Safety Week in January. Wardens & local law enforcement officers patrolled approximately 2,072 miles of trails and patrolled 125 frozen lakes.
 - Over 1,600 snowmobilers were contacted by conservation wardens and local sheriff department patrols.
 - Approximately 15 snowmobilers needing assistance were aided by wardens & local sheriff department patrols.
 - 239 warnings were issued
 - Approximately 71 citations were issued
 - Wardens/officers distributed Kwik Trip free cookie/beverage coupons to reward safe behavior

Safety messaging put forth by Wisconsin DNR DPSRP include:

- **Zero alcohol.** No drinking before or during your ride keeps you safe on the trail.
- **Slow down.** Speed is a contributing factor in nearly all fatal snowmobiling accidents. Drive at a speed that is within your capabilities. Drivers should proceed at a pace that will allow ample reaction time for any situation. Be respectful of other users that maybe out enjoying the winter landscape along with you. Drive at moderate speeds, and drive defensively, especially after sunset.
- **Carry a first-aid kit and dress appropriately,** your first-aid kit should include a flashlight, knife, compass, map, and waterproof matches. Always wear a helmet with goggles or a face shield to prevent injuries from twigs and flying debris. Wear layers of water-repellent clothing and make sure you have no loose ends that might catch in the machine or tangle in equipment.
- **Avoid traveling across bodies of water** when uncertain of ice thickness or water currents. Rapidly changing weather and moving water in streams and lake inlets also affect the thickness and strength of ice on lakes and ponds. Snow cover can act as a blanket and prevents thick strong ice from forming.

- **Stay on marked trails** or, where allowed, on the right shoulder of the road. Be alert for fences, tree stumps and stretched wire that may be concealed by snow.
 - **Never travel alone.** Most snowmobile accidents result in personal injury. The most dangerous situations occur when a person is injured and alone. If you must travel alone, tell someone your destination, planned route, and when you will return.
- Currently there are 926 active volunteer DNR snowmobile safety instructors.
 - A total of 13,172 students obtained their snowmobile safety certification in 2021
 - An increase of 3,335 from 2020, where 9837 students were certified.
 - Total by year in-person class students certified shows a very promising trend.
 - 2021 – 4,744
 - 2020 – 3,358
 - 2019 – 4,208
 - 2018 – 3,652
 - 2017 – 3,819
 - Unfortunately, during 2021 there were 13 fatal snowmobile crashes in WI. Average age of victim was 40.
 - 8 occurred on public trails
 - 2 occurred on frozen waters
 - 3 occurred on roadways
 - Speed & alcohol continue to be contributing factors in crashes

6. Snowmobile LE Issues on the Legislative Front

(1) Act 103 Updated Sound Test and Elimination of the 40' Rule

This legislation has passed. This doesn't change the funding requirements, still have to have a 10' wide trail and be able to groom it. It just no longer has to be 40' away from the travel portion of the roadway.

(2) Trespassing Issues:

In order to treat as trespassing, LE has to confirm that this particular operator doesn't have this particular landowner's permission to operate off of the trail or when the trail is closed. This is difficult, unless the easement/land-use-agreement language is crafted to give the club/county the authority to give or not-give permission to ride off trail or when the trail is closed. Some clubs have found they can just take a photo of the machine and FWD on to Law Enforcement. Continued public outreach to remind riders the trail is a privilege not a right.

(3) Snowmobile Safety Course Discussion

(a) Virtual Uses (Zoom, Go To Meeting)

To be discussed at the AWSC meeting. Testing may be a challenge but doable.

(b) Instructors Updates, Online Experiences

Overall everything seems to be going well, although timing of some of the instructors licensing expiring shortly before class has been a challenge. Still feel that in person learning is best, and gets the best results with the students.

(4) Aid to Local Law Enforcement

Committee recommended in the past to go from \$396,000 to \$800,000. 43 local law enforcement officers out there, a desire to support them. AWSC will work on legislation to try and increase investment. ATV is also looking to increase aid to local law enforcement and DNR law enforcement.

(5) Updates on Sugar River Trail Extension (New Glarus Woods State Park Extension) and Blue Mound State Park

- Snowmobilers have used the ditch line next to the Sugar River Trail to access food, fuel and lodging. Snowmobile is a permissible use on that section of the trail.

- Iowa Co Court gave permission to dismiss the lawsuit, but that decision will likely be appealed again by the Friends group.
- Stower Seven Lakes State Trail – injunction to stop snowmobiles last winter was denied.

(6) Update on Safety Concerns around Signing Issues on DNR Properties

- Update from Missy Vanlanduyt (DNR Parks) – Statutes prohibit advertising and solicitation on state lands. Attempts to do so need to go through the procurement process. To be discussed more in the future, after Secretary Cole’s talk tomorrow at the AWSC meeting.
- Comment from Sam – The name of the business is a wayfinding point and becomes a safety issue when identifying the rider’s location. More than just an advertising issue.

7. Public comments

- Member of the public expressed disappointment in news coverage of fatal crashes involving alcohol. Not a good representation of the sport.
- Member of the public would be interested in seeing fatality report show how many of the sleds were rentals. Possibly some of these accidents are due to rider inexperience.

8. Committee member reports, comments and items

- Appreciation for the collaboration between the Department and the snowmobile community. Relationship seems to be better now than it may have been in the past.
- Speed, alcohol and safety course (lack thereof) play a real role in fatalities. May be painful to see that coverage in the news, but making sure riders are aware of the facts may help educate them and save lives.
- Encourage snowmobilers to be involved in other sports as well, such as silent sports. Being involved with other groups may help build better relationships.

9. Items for next meeting

None

10. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Joel, 2nd by Andy. MOTION PASSED