SnowTRAC Meeting Minutes 8/28/2014 - APPROVED

SnowTRAC Members Present:
1. Dan Mayfield – Chair – Mat-Su/Copper River Basin Rep.
2. Erin McLarnon – Co-Chair – Mat-Su/Copper River Basin Rep.
3. Andy Morrison – Chair – ORTAB/SnowTRAC Liaison

SnowTRAC Members Not Present:

*Note – Adam Baxter (Fairbanks Rep.) recently resigned and is no longer a SnowTRAC member.

DNR Staff Present:
11. Jamie Walker – Administrative Operations Manager
12. Darcy Harris – Alaska State Trails Program Coordinator
13. Steve Neel – Alaska State Parks Grants Administrator

Others:
15. Debra McGhan – North America Outdoor Institute (AAIC Representative)
16. Rick Northey – Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers President
17. Jay Northey – Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers Administrator
19. Harry Holt – Lake Louise Snowmachine Club President
20. Alan Echols – Denali Highway Trail Club
21. Mark Nordman – Iditarod Trails Committee
22. Rex Shattuck – Chief of Staff to State Representative Mark Neuman
Thursday, August 28, 2014

Board Elections

Motion
Gary Anderson nominated Dan Mayfield for the Chair position. Stephen Enochs nominated Erin McLarnon for Co-Chair. Cindy Hite seconded both nominations.

Vote
(8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed
Dan Mayfield is the new Chair and Erin McLarnon is the new Co-Chair.

Public Comment
Rick Northey stated his concern about declining revenue for current SnowTRAC funding, and how side by side ORVs are degrading groomed trails in the Caribou Hills.

Harry Holt was concerned about funding, as well; he supports educating the public about snowmobile registration, and talking to legislators about increased SnowTRAC funding. He said that it had been difficult getting easements for trails on state land, and that he had spent $65,000 on easements so far.

John Scudder (speaking for Randy Crosby) brought up the issue that miners are going to access the Petersville area in winter by truck, and had done so last year as well. The concern he has is that the trucks degrade groomed trails and collapse snow bridges. Others in the room that dealt with similar situations offered advice.

Iditarod Trail Presentation & Discussion
A SnowTRAC grant was submitted by the Huslia Tribal Council in 2012, and was approved. The applicant was not able to use the money in the upcoming year, and the money was set aside specifically for a safety project in rural Alaska for the 2014/2015 SnowTRAC grant cycle. There were no applicants for this money. Mark Nordman, from Iditarod Trails Committee, gave a project proposal to SnowTRAC to appeal for the $15,000. The project consists of clearing an extremely rough section of the Iditarod Trail where there was an extensive forest fire; roots have become elevated and need to be mulched to make the trail safer. Mr. Nordman stated that in its current state the local villages cannot use it without damage to equipment and personal safety concerns.

SnowTRAC raised concern that this project may not fit the safety description, but more a trail development project. There was also question by the board whether it was more benefit to the Iditarod and Iron Dog races than the rural communities nearby.
Motion
To accept Mark Nordman’s proposal as stated, with the caveat that he will submit a grant in 30 days. Then it will be up to the Director to make the final decision. Gary Anderson seconded.

Discussion
There were concerns that this method of allocating funds was unfair if the application period were not reopened for everyone to apply.

Vote
(0 yea, 8 nay) Motion Failed

Motion
Erin McLarnon moved that the board advises the director to extend the application due date to October 15th, and to put out a press release to re-advertise the $15,000. Jim Stanford seconded.

Discussion
There was some discussion by the board members to wait until next year’s grant cycle to offer the safety funds again, instead of extending the application period. Darcy Harris explained that October 15th would be too soon of a date to process everything required.

Vote
(2 yea, 6 nay) Motion Failed

Motion
Jim Stanford moved to leave the money (the money set aside for a rural Alaska safety project) exactly where it is right now, where the director allocated it, and await further instructions from him as what he wants to do with these funds. Erin McLarnon seconded the motion.

Vote
(8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

These safety funds are considered not available for this year.

Funding Discussion
The board discussed different challenges faced by the grant program; most being related to a lack of sufficient funds to support the program fully. When asked about point of sale snowmobile registrations, Rex Shattuck explained that his office had gotten complaints and members of the public had expressed that they did not want them; the legislature is sensitive to these comments. When asked, Shattuck said resolutions from SnowTRAC, ORTAB, and snowmobile clubs could possibly help their cause in the Legislature.

Grant Scoring Discussion
The board recounted that no grants were funded last year. This year there were two grant applications submitted. One project was “Nationally Certified Snowmobile Safety Training” from AAIC; Debra McGhan was present to give a brief talk about it, and answer questions from the board. The other
project was the “Iron Dog Snowmobile Safety Expo.” Kevin Kastner was available to explain the safety expo and answer questions.

Motion
Erin McLarnon moved to fund both of these Safety & Education grants as written. Steve Enochs seconded.

Discussion
SnowTRAC briefly discussed funding the grants at a reduced rate (at the same percentage that the grooming applications would be funded).

Vote
(6 yea, 2 nay) Motion Passed

Grooming Pool Discussion
The dollar amounts requested for grants and grooming are significantly more than funds available, so SnowTRAC brainstormed ways to distribute the money.

Motion
Erin McLarnon moved to allocate each grantee (returning groomers) 50.56% of their requested amount. Stephen Enochs seconded.

Vote
(8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

General Discussion
The board discussed ways to receive more funding for the program. Erin McLarnon explained her idea to create a non-profit multi-use trail user group to help bring in money for multi-use trails, winter and summer, motorized and non-motorized. She explained that a broad user base can bring in significant funds. She explained that non-profits (as opposed to the State of Alaska) have more opportunities for fund-raising. Some board members weren’t in favor of a multi-use trails non-profit. There was also discussion of raising money with optional SnowTRAC license plates for highway vehicles.

The board generally agreed that staying with the State’s management of SnowTRAC is the best route, but investigating the possibilities of a non-profit is important, too. SnowTRAC then discussed how legislative action is probably the most likely way to receive more funds for the program.

Motion
Jim Stanford moved that within the next 30 days every board member will forward to Dan Mayfield one or two ideas on ways to expand revenues for the SnowTRAC board. Erin McLarnon seconded.

Vote
(4 yea, 4 nay) Motion Failed
Motion
Dan Mayfield moved to have the board establish a Legislative Action Committee. Erin McLarnon seconded.

Vote
(8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed
The committee will include Dan Mayfield, Andy Morrison, Jim Stanford, and Stephen Enochs.

Rex Shattuck said he would draft a letter to the DMV to ask how the registration reminders are sent (letters that are sent in the mail to remind folks to update their snowmobile registration). He said he would CC Dan Mayfield for distribution to the rest of the SnowTRAC board.

The SnowTRAC discussed implementation of a statewide trail system; they noted that there are few fueling stations in remote areas. Rex Shattuck suggested that economic benefits may encourage legislative support, and the legislature could potentially grant money for an economic study.

The next topic was about the mission and goals of SnowTRAC. The board generally agreed that the mission of SnowTRAC was to promote a statewide trail system, and that safety was to be supported by pursuing a standard signing of trails. Adequate funding of at least $500,000 annually was also a goal.

The board also talked about grooming standards; they requested that there be a place to add a required funding formula on the returning groomers’ applications.

SnowTRAC Members Discussion
Darcy Harris explained that Adam Baxter had resigned from SnowTRAC, and that Mark Leary and Doug Boulden had not submitted scores or participated in the last year for unknown reasons. The board suggested that Dan Mayfield (Chair) speak to Mark Leary and Doug Boulden, and make a recommendation to the board of what to do about their lack of involvement. The board expressed to State Parks that they wanted more involvement in the committee member selection process.

Motion
Dan Mayfield moved that the SnowTRAC board recommends that Gary Anderson be extended another two years to his full three year term on the SnowTRAC board. Stephen Enochs seconded.

Vote
(8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

-Meeting adjourned 4:53pm-