TRANSCRIPT OF SnowTRAC PROGRAM MEETING

ATWOOD BUILDING

ROOM 602

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

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INDEX

APPEARANCES:

DARCY HARRIS
CINDY HITE
STEVE NEEL
JUSTIN WHOLEY
SALLY DAVIES
JOHN SCUDDER
JOE GAUNA
ED FOGELS
ESTER TEMPLE
CLAIRE LECLAIR
RAY BAKER
MARK WILKE
PROCEDINGS

11:00 a.m.
(On record)

MS. HARRIS: If you could just state your name quickly before you have something to say, that would really help our person who’s taking minutes.

MS. HITE: Cindy Hite. Darcy, could you please let us know who’s in the room?

MS. HARRIS: Absolutely. That’s -- you got it, that’s our next step here. So we’re just going to do a quick introduction around the room so that the folks on the phone will also know and I’ll go ahead and start. Darcy Harris, Trails Program Coordinator.

MR. NEEL: Steve Neel, Grant Administrator.

MR. WHOLEY: Justin Wholey, Resource Specialist with the trails program.

MS. DAVIES: Sally Davies, Grants Accounting.

MR. SCUDDER: John Scudder, Snow TRAC.

MR. GAUNA: Joe Gauna, Snow TRAC.

MR. FOGELS: Ed Fogels, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources.

MS. TEMPLE: Ester Temple, Special Assistant to the Commissioner.

MS. LECLAIR: Claire LeClair, Deputy Director, Chief of Field Operations for State Parks.
MR. BAKER: Ray Baker, Accu-Type Depositions.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: I’m sorry, I didn’t hear the last one.

MR. BAKER: My name’s Ray Baker, I’m with Accu-type Depositions, I’ll be recording the meeting today.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Okay.

MS. HARRIS: Okay, great.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: (Indiscernible) again Darcy, is this a meeting -- is this with the public, is this considered an official Snow TRAC meeting?

MR. WILKE: I’d like to answer that, if I could, Darcy?

MS. HARRIS: Yes, is this Mark?

MR. WILKE: This is Mark. I don’t believe this would be an official Snow TRAC meeting because I believe an official Snow TRAC meeting would be called by the board.

MS. HARRIS: Okay.

MR. WILKE: I believe -- I would consider this an informational meeting, so no motions, no decisions.....

MS. HARRIS: Right.

MR. WILKE: ......no formal actions are (indiscernible - cough).

MS. HARRIS: Yeah, I think that’s a correct assessment, Mark. We’re not planning on making any formal decisions today. So did those folks online get an agenda for the meeting? I sent it out to everybody I could remember.
UNIDENTIFIED VOICES: I got it.

MS. HARRIS: Okay. If you have any questions, we can help you move along. So I’m going to pass it over for -- beginning with our Deputy Commissioner, Ed Fogels here.

MR. FOGELS: Thank you, everybody. Again, this is Ed Fogels, I’m Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources and I want to thank everyone for being here. I want to thank the members of the Snow TRAC board for serving and advising the department on these issues.

I guess, first off, I just got back into town from kind of a trip to Canada, so I’m only going to be able to be here for the first 30 minutes of the meeting, and so my goal is to sort of just kind of kick it off and give you my read on what I think is happening and what should happen and then with me is Ester Temple, Special Assistant to Commissioner Sullivan who will be here for the whole meeting, (indiscernible) just kind of listen and report back. Anyway, so I apologize in advance for having to only spend 30 minutes with you all.

So anyway, and also, one of the reasons I’m here is because Director Ben Ellis is out of state and was unable to even call into this, so he asked me to sit in for him. I want to just kind of start also by saying that I’ve sort of read some of the correspondence, some of the papers that -- information that Darcy sent around, so I kind of read all that, I have a feel for what’s going on, but I don’t know any
of the details, so I’m going to let Ben work with the board to try and move forward and then I will kind of pay attention, maybe come to some of the future meetings and see how things evolve.

But basically, as I understand it, Director Ellis and his staff have identified some adjustments that they would like to make to the Snow TRAC program. Darcy sent out some materials that sort of outline their view of the problems and some potential solutions. I’d like to stress that nothing has been decided by the Commissioner’s Office or by Director Ellis at this time. This was intended to be a starting point for discussion, okay, and there was a dartboard that was put up by Darcy to start throwing darts at. And so just remember that we want to have a discussion with the board, we want the board’s advice on if and what -- if we need to make changes, what those changes should be. So just because they’re kind of some specific proposals on here, again, nothing’s been decided and it’s a total open discussion as far as I’m concerned and as far as Director Ellis’s concern.

So I guess what -- when I look at some of this material, I kind of -- I’m trying to frame the problems, okay? What are the problems we’re trying to fix? Are they problems, do we actually need to fix anything, okay? Me, I’d want to be convinced that there are actually problems, so that should be the first discussion and I think I’d be asking Darcy and
Director Ellis to kind of explain to me very clearly so they can convince me there are actually problems that need to be fixed here. If they’re not, then why bother, okay?

I’m kind of looking at one problem that I see that probably is at the top that it’s kind of hard to argue with at this point and that’s less money, okay? So we’re losing some of the funding, there’s a bunch of potential solutions that could be out there. I mean, Darcy’s outlined some on this paper, but there are others and it would be good to have that discussion. I think that’s one problem that everyone can agree that we are facing.

There are other problems that I’ve heard about, you know, are the contracts being fulfilled or is the grooming being done. I need to be convinced that’s actually a problem. Then, you know, how do we make sure that contracts are being fulfilled. You know, there are -- I mean, it seems to me you can always improve the way that’s done, so there’s probably improved wording and stipulations and stuff that may be a no brainer, whether we actually need to send stuff out on site and spend more time. That’s a whole other issue, you know, I need the board’s advice on and the director would like the board’s advice on. That may or may not be one of the solutions when we come down to it because that costs money and that takes money from other activities, so.

So again, I would urge you -- what I would ask is that
you guys start with a discussion of the problems, what are the problems, and then you know, start attacking them one at a time and figuring out, you know, if you all agree that there is an issue, what do we need? I mean, it’s clear to me that we need to make sure that everybody in the State of Alaska has an opportunity to apply for this money and I know that the -- we’ve got shrinking money, so if we’re trying to broaden the number of people that apply for this stuff, presents it’s own problems, right?

So -- but bottom line is that there has to be a program for all of Alaskans whether they’re in Southeast, the Mat-Su or out in Bethel somewhere, right? So that’s real important to me and Commissioner Sullivan on -- we -- just as a bit of an aside that that’s related, we have been -- people have been talking to us about possibly looking at maybe another program that’s parallel to this for ATVs. And so we’ve been trying to figure out if that’s worth advancing. There’s a lot of pluses to getting money somewhere that we would have to build hard ATV trails around the state. I think I’ve mentioned this before, but myself and Commissioner Sullivan, we’d like to finish our terms here and be able to point to a mileage number somewhere. There are X more miles of groomed snowmobile trails and hard ATV trails in Alaska. We would really like to increase that number significantly if we can.

And so if we’re going to be proposing at some point a
program and if it’s to work, I mean, it has to be clear that, you know, all Alaskans will benefit from that whether they’re in the Mat-Su or in Fairbanks or villages, connector trails between villages, right? That has to be part of the deal, so those are all some of the bigger picture ideas that I have in my notes. And so I guess with that, I’d turn it back to Darcy to run this meeting and I know there’s some emotional feelings about some of this stuff. I’m -- I just -- I ask you to just -- just to roll up your sleeves, you know, be polite. Darcy was doing her best to try and frame some ideas for you to work with that are just ideas and let’s try and see if we can make the Snow TRAC program a better program. That’s really the bottom line I don’t think anyone can argue with.

So with that, I guess I turn it back to Darcy and let you guys continue and I’ll sit here for another 15 or so minutes, but then I’ll have to leave, I apologize for that.


So the main points that we really want to stress here are that we feel as are very important for administering the snowmobile trails grant program, we need to be accountable for state funds, we should have equitable distribution of the snowmobile registration fees and the fact that the federal
funding that has been used in the past to supplement the
program will be unavailable in the future. We’ve been
fortunate in the past to have some recreational trails program
grant money to be able to put into the grooming program or the
snowmachine -- the snowmobile trails grant program for
grooming or other projects.

And as an example, in the 2011/2012, we had a total of
$328,706 that was from the registration fees and from some
recreational trails grant program money that was used for the
Snow TRAC program. In the 2012/2013, we won’t have any of the
recreational trails program money, but we -- so we will just
have the registration money, which will be approximately
between $185,000 and $200,000, so it’s -- we’re going to --
one issue that I see that’s very important is that we have
less money to work with, so we need to adjust and think about
what that’s going to mean to the program and how we can
continue to have a, you know, important and meaningful
projects come out of the program, but with reduced funds.

So the solutions that I proposed after identifying what
I saw and that we, as the staff in the Parks Office saw as
problems that should be adjusted to make the program better, I
threw out some ideas that could potentially solve these
problems. They are one solution to solve some of the
problems. It is important to our director that we, in some
way, not have the state -- to have parks be the number one
supporter for the grooming program and for this program. And so that is something that we’re working on ideas and we’re working on tools to -- to make that possible, whether it’s a match program, that is one solution, or if there are other good solutions out there, that’s one of the reasons why we’re bringing it to the board because we really like people’s ideas, but it’s something that we, I think, as a division are trying to move away as the primary funder for a program, in particular, because at the moment, with the -- it’s growing. We have more demand for more trails to be groomed and I think that maybe things could be better and if we’re not doing an excellent grooming program with the amount of money that we have had in the past, what can we do to have an excellent program?

Maybe that means getting donations from other groups, maybe that means pulling in our -- ourselves a little bit and making the program a little bit smaller and diversifying funds to other projects. I’m not sure what exactly would be the best solution, but I’d like to have -- I’d like to see this program be an excellent program and however we get there, I’d like to see it be accountable, I’d like to see us really distribute the funds to a wide variety of needs and uses around the state. Safety and education or whatever is needed and as well as grooming. It’s a very small budget, so we have to kind of pick and choose what we’re going to spend it on. I
wish we had a bottomless budget or a budget like some of the
other states have, but we have this to work with, so let’s --
let’s try to make it a really good program and we can do that
together with your expertise, so I’m going to start that out.

   Ed, do you have any thoughts, I know you’re going to
have to leave. Are there anymore thoughts on that initial --
ookay.

   MR. FOGELS: No, I think that’s fine.
   MR. HARRIS: I don’t mean to put you on the spot,
   but.....

   MR. FOGELS: Yeah, I mean, how you structure the meeting
to get everyone’s input’s.....

   MS. HARRIS: Sure.
   MR. FOGELS: .....going to be, you know, how you guys
want to handle it.....

   MS. HARRIS: Uh-huh, okay.
   MR. FOGELS: .....but yeah. I mean, and.....

   MR. MORRISON: And this is Andy Morrison?
   MS. HARRIS: Yes, Andy.

   MR. MORRISON: One of the first questions I have is just
in the fact that we’re looking -- you said less funding from
rec trails in the future or no funding for rec trails in the
future. And correct me if I’m wrong, I thought it was a
shortfall, just a temporary shortfall because of the way the
feds had calculated the amount that the state gets. As far as
I know, there’s no like standing resolution to eliminate the funding from Ortab (ph) to Snow TRAC.

MR. NEEL: This is Steve speaking. You’re correct, Andy, in that there’s -- that hasn’t been severed. We’re looking at one -- and I don’t want to take up a lot of time with the history of the rec trails program, but there was no funding for FY12 for the Snow TRAC and they money from FY11, and right now, since there is no new highway bill in Congress, there is no guaranteed rec trail money for FY13 for anything at the moment. Now they may put another CR -- continuing resolution in that gives us money for FY13, but at -- when I talked to the federal highway’s director for Alaska, he had no idea if that was going to happen or not or whether they were going to come up with something, so at this moment, I -- you know, there is no rec trail money other than what Bill had set aside with FY11 dollars to put into Snow TRAC.

And there might be some left over from this year, I mean, it could be $10,000, $15,000, maybe at most, that leaks into -- that we don’t use, but we’re not going to have anywhere near what we’ve had for the last couple years to supplement the registration fees.

MR. MORRISON: And I’m trying to remember about how much that was. Was it 50 or 100, I was trying to remember.

MR. NEEL: Well, we had -- originally for FY11, we had $174,000 and then federal highways took $45,000 of that away
leaving us with about $125,000 or so and we’ve already used up about $110,000 or so of that for this year due to the increase in snowfall.

And the exact amounts are going to change or vary a little bit, but that’s pretty close.

MR. MORRISON: You mean Snow TRAC using Ortab (ph) money?

MR. NEEL: Using -- yeah, rec trail money that was dedicated motorized that Bill had put aside for Snow TRAC grooming.

MR. FOGELS: Darcy, can I just add real quick that.....

MS. HARRIS: Absolutely.

MR. FOGELS: This is Ed Fogels again, I just want to make one point here that we’re not just giving up on all this too. I mean, Director Ellis is back in D.C. meeting with people to express Alaska’s support for continuing this program and other programs, so you know, I mean, we are working on trying.....

MS. HARRIS: Absolutely.

MR. FOGELS: .....to get additional funding, so.

MS. HARRIS: Thank you. That’s a good point, absolutely. So and the registration -- this is Darcy Harris again. Snowmachine registration fees will vary every year a little bit, but typically are about -- after we take off some money for administration, which covers the Snow TRAC meetings
and some -- a few inspections and things like that, we have around $200,000, and so that’s been the average roughly.

And so in the past, we’ve enjoyed some extra funding from the recreational trails program, which will go to -- there’s usually a group of groomers that will put in applications and then a couple other applications will come in for safety and education, the Iron Dog and some avalanche safety training.

So one of my concerns is that with just the registration fees, that the program will not have enough money to sustain the grooming pool at its current rate of expenditure and that doesn’t allow for any additional projects to be included. Like we have less -- we’ll have less money this year than was spent just on grooming last year and that doesn’t include safety for the Iron Dog or any other safety and education projects or any shelter cabins or trail marking projects or anything else.

So that’s a concern because we won’t have enough -- I mean, we might have another heavy snow year, we don’t know, that’s never predictable, but so that’s one of my concerns.

And looking back at the last several years and Steve has done a lot of work as well looking at all the minutes and reading all the minutes from the last meetings over the last several years and looking at applications that came in. And we would get, on occasion, up to two dozen grant applications
for various projects throughout the state. Safety cabin in
Shaktoolik and trail marking in a whole bunch of different
places and education programs out in the west and up north and
those applications have really dwindled off as the grooming
pool has continued to get stronger. And I -- what I’d like to
see is that funding get more -- have a little more -- a few
more user groups in there because it’s -- there’s so much that
we could do with this program, so many needs to education and
safety and trail marking that would really benefit the
snowmachine community. And although the grooming definitely
benefits the snowmachine community, there are other things as
well.

So that’s one thing that I noticed that I would like to
have the money be more diversified. And if we did have more
money being spread out throughout the state, this would
encourage, theoretically, more people to register their
machines because then they would see that money coming back to
their communities.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Darcy, you’re breaking up.

MS. HARRIS: Oh, sorry.

MR. FOGELS: There’s someone else making noise on the
system that is interfering with the mic.

MS. HARRIS: Can you hear me now?

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Yes.

MS. HARRIS: Okay, great.
MR. FOGELS: Yeah, whoever’s typing online, could you please mute your phone? Thank you.

MS. HARRIS: So -- and I think we’ve all agreed, and I know there’s been discussion at previous meetings before my time that there needs to be some kind of an oversight trail inspection program and I know that Cindy and I have talked about having volunteer groups doing it, different snowmachine clubs getting together and doing that. That would -- I think it’s important if we did employ that to have some kind of an infrastructure that then these volunteers could work within. I do think this also poses some questions and some things we would really have to work out because of potential conflicts that would arise, so we need to have some strict infrastructure for those volunteers to work within, but that could be a great resource because obviously, those volunteers from the snowmachine clubs would be -- have a valid interest in the trails they were inspecting.

At the moment, there are not snowmachine trail standards as far as grooming goes and that would be something else that I know you guys have talked about in your meetings that would need to be set, so those volunteers would have a way to gauge what they saw out in the field.

And the thing that -- if we did have volunteers, that would be an excellent way to use people’s time and when it comes to funding from our office to go out and do trail
inspections, we have the one pot of money that comes -- that the Snow TRAC meetings come out of and our work on say these meetings and Sally’s work and Steve’s work on grants. All that comes out of that 12 percent, but also the trail inspections come out of that pot of money and I know that there has been limited -- definitely there is limited funds to do that and also limited personnel.

So one of the things that Ben and I were thinking that would be a way to solve that problem would be to make sure that there was inspection money taken out of the funds that we could then use for inspections of the grooming and have grooming and trail inspections come out of that and maybe have some more standardized grooming.

(Whispered conversation)

MS. HARRIS: Thank you, Ed.

MR. WILKE: Darcy, this is Mark.

MS. HARRIS: Yes, Mark.

MR. WILKE: I guess we’re starting off on the topic of trail inspections since we’ve been going that way for just a few minutes here. I think -- I have a little bit of a problem with volunteers doing the trail inspections, particularly if we’re finding the situation which somebody hasn’t been meeting the obligations of the contracts.

MS. HARRIS: Right.

MR. WILKE: I just wonder if what -- you know, what
authority of volunteers trail report would have in taking
action against somebody not meeting the terms of the contract.

    MS. HARRIS: No, I totally agree with you, Mark, that’s
-- that is definitely one of the issues that we would have to
think about and -- you know, if we have a contract with a
groomer, then we have -- and I’m not as familiar with maybe
people who have a little more familiar -- Claire, you probably
do, with if we have competing interests, we would go to a
request for proposal, we had that meeting, which would give us
some kind of authority to then -- if they weren’t meeting
contractual agreements, we could discuss that with them and
say you’re out of compliance.

    But without that, do we have authority to go -- if we
have a contract with them, and I know that Teri administers a
lot of contracts and works really hard with that every year.
And I do think we maybe should refine -- it’s getting a little
off topic, but we need to refine those contracts a little
better to be very specific.

    MS. LECLAIR: Well, the question is, do you have --
would the state have some way to clearly enforce standards in
a grant versus a contract and a grant agreement is not
enforceable in the field, whereas, a contract, you know, the
state could not pay a contractor if they don’t fulfill -- if
they don’t do the work that they signed up to do on the
contract.
But once a grant is -- and maybe Teri, correct me, or Karlyn, you’re on the line as well, but my understanding is once a grant is allocated to a group, that’s it and then they report at the end, but there’s no real teeth to it, there’s no way to enforce the -- them providing the work that they say they will.....

MS. HARRIS: Right.

MS. LECLAIR: .....into the grant.

MS. HERRERA: And this is Karlyn Herrera and (indiscernible) that’s a correct assessment.

MS. LECLAIR: Okay, thanks.

MR. MORRISON: Andy Morrison. I got a chance to check out a lot of the areas, Lake Louise, Eureka, I do some riding up in the Mat-Su a little bit too and I mostly see really dedicated volunteers that.....

MS. HARRIS: Oh sure.

MR. MORRISON: .....are really passionate about grooming trails. I don’t really see or meet too many people that are just trying to work the system and it almost seems like they’re putting in more effort than they’re probably getting paid for in most cases.

MS. HARRIS: Absolutely.

MR. MORRISON: And you could talk about this trail inspections, and you know -- but I don’t think you want to discourage that volunteerism and.....
MS. HARRIS: No, no.

MR. MORRISON: .....that (indiscernible - up here.

MS. HARRIS: I agree with you, Andy, and that’s what I’ve -- from talking with you in the past, I understand and I believe that the volunteers certainly volunteering their time is a really -- it’s important to them and it helps.....

MR. LUTH: This is Bill Luth.

MS. HARRIS: .....the community.

MR. LUTH: I just wanted to add in on that note a little bit.

MS. HARRIS: Yeah.

MR. LUTH: That I think if we use the clubs to do base inspection and if they find that there’s a problem and refer it to the state, that the state could take, at that point, and have an official inspection of a problem area. But you’re going to find that most of our people that are out there grooming, I have not really seen anything in the past year that has been a problem.

MS. HARRIS: Right.

MR. LUTH: They’re putting in way more hours than they’re billing out for and putting in a lot more time and effort than I have seen in the past and it’s just amazing the amount of grooming getting done with the little amount of funds that we are providing at this point.

MS. HARRIS: Uh-huh.
MR. LUTH: It’s -- you know, to have this done by an actual contractor on a regular basis would cost well over a million dollars in the effort that’s been put out in the last year.

MS. HARRIS: Right. And I.....

MR. LUTH: Yeah, Andy, I’d have to agree with that statement again too. A lot of times, it seems like the clubs and the groomers, they know if the trail is bumpy, they know if they need a few more signs. A lot of times, they just need signs sent to them, they need a little extra help with volunteers to get out and put them up and things like that. It’s not -- I don’t think it’s a huge problem, I think most of them know what their trails are like.

MS. HARRIS: Right.

MR. LUTH: And (indiscernible).

MS. HARRIS: This is Darcy again. I have gotten numerous calls this year from various places around the state about -- with people with concerns, people from equipment freighters -- or I mean, supply freighters out on the Yenta and different people who use the Denali Highway on -- the groom trails on the Denali Highway and various other places who are very concerned that the trails weren’t groomed to any kind of standard or at all and I realize we had very -- we had tough conditions this year. There was a lot of snow and wind and I know that the conditions were tough and hard to keep up.
with I’m sure.

But I -- it’s really hard for me to ignore people calling me and saying hey, this trail never got groomed this year and I go back and look at the contract, and sure enough, that contract’s fully paid. And we don’t have any people to go out and say hey, this was done or this wasn’t done and so it’s just -- it’s this problem that I’m trying to manage and I’m not exactly sure how we can solve that yet, but I know that there are parts of the snowmachining community that are really unhappy with the grooming program as it stands.

MR. CROSBY: Yeah, Darcy, this is Randy Crosby, I’d like to interject if I could?

MS. HARRIS: thank you.

MR. CROSBY: First of all, we would need access to -- what (indiscernible) said in these phone calls, I mean, we need some more documentation other than, you know, I received some phone calls, so that we can analyze what is being said and see if the complaints are legitimate or not.

MS. HARRIS: Uh-huh.

MR. CROSBY: And then as far as the trail inspections and making sure everybody is responsible and everything, this has been discussed at -- in depth in the past and the bottom line is, is that you can groom a professional trail today and do everything that was required and tomorrow, because of weather, because of heavy trail use, because of a lot of
freighters or a lot of -- some big tour group, the trail, you
know, completely changes and now needs grooming again, but we
don’t have the funds to go out there and groom
(indiscernible).

MS. HARRIS: Right.

MR. CROSBY: And then as far as the issue of not being
able to withhold payment if the job is not done, I’ve been
signing the contracts for years. I call them contracts,
they’re grant agreements, it’s the same thing in a business
sense and I provide the work first and then you get reimbursed
once the work is done. And so if a person isn’t doing the
work and is yet getting paid, then they are in violation of,
you know, state laws. It’s pretty well spelled out. I don’t
see where, you know, that issue really needs to be dwelled on,
but if you just want to change the document from grant
agreement to contract to tighten something up, well then that
should be done without it costing any money or taking a lot of
time.

MS. HARRIS: Sure.

MR. CROSBY: And we employed a gentleman for two years
in a trail coordinator position to come up with standards, to
come up with, you know, some sort of framework to guide us
through this and we got nothing. And we bought this
snowmachine for him and where is that snowmachine today? That
snowmachine money came out of the Snow TRAC program, so a lot
of time and money have been spent up to this point by the State of Alaska and now we’re hearing the State of Alaska come back and saying we need to do all this again and I just am at a complete loss of words over this whole subject.

MS. HARRIS: Thank you for your input.

MR. ANDERSON: I agree with Randy, and this is Tinker.

MS. HARRIS: I think -- and Teri, you’re on the line and you’re the one that deals most closely with those grooming contracts and I know that.....

MS. ZELL: Yeah, I just -- I would like to just have a little bit of input here. I know that we did have an issue with one groomer. We got a call evidently or Darcy got a call that this work wasn’t being done, but you know, when I get invoices from the club or whoever is doing the grooming, what I’m looking for is if they -- first of all, their pictures say a lot and I’m looking to make sure that they are billing for what they were originally granted to do and make sure they’re not on trails that -- and billing for trails that haven’t been authorized. I look for time that it takes, you know, like oh my goodness, last time this took 10 hours and now you’re saying it only took fives hours, what was the difference and maybe I’ll call somebody and ask them why was there such a big difference here.

But like the one that we had complaints about, well, this groomer could probably go through that trail system on a
daily basis, but it is such a high freight area that -- and
due to the snow and the wind conditions or whatever, there’s
so many factors dealing with it that this particular trail
could be done on a daily basis and still somebody could
complaint about it because it’s so heavily used.

MS. HARRIS:  Right.

MS. ZELL:  So I basically -- without any oversight in
the field, I have to take them at their word unless I see
something that’s just way out of whack and then I call them
and I ask them what are you doing here?

MS. HARRIS:  Teri, this is Darcy.  On those contracts, I
know that I’ve looked at the applications and they might say
we’ll groom this trail from here to here three times per month
and then they sign their name to their application.  Do we
have a mileage and/or frequency component of the contracts
that they sign?

MS. ZELL:  We have mileage and there should have been
frequency and I was just explaining to Wayne.  On your
programmatic, sorry, changes on number seven, the last
sentence, it says the contract agreements are insufficient and
do not hold groomers accountable for the miles or frequency
outlined in the application process.

MS. HARRIS:  Uh-huh.

MS. ZELL:  They are held accountable for the miles and I
check those miles to make sure that.....
MS. HARRIS: Okay.

MS. ZELL: .....

MS. HARRIS: Okay, good catch.

MS. ZELL: The frequency outline, my bad. When I set these up this year, I did a cut and paste from the original that was sent out and the frequencies did not get on there. My fault. But I’m also watching for that to see how often they do it.

We have another contractor that is supposed to be doing from mile one to mile 150 and he’s only sending in invoices for mile one through mile 75 and the other 75 aren’t never getting billed for. So I call him up and find out well, he can’t do it because the wind is so strong, there’s no reason to be doing it because he can turn around and have to do it all over again the next day. It just is impossible to get to.

MS. HARRIS: Right. Yeah, that makes sense.

MS. ZELL: A lot of give and take with these things and it’s all pretty much weather based.

MS. HARRIS: Thanks, Teri, yeah, that makes a lot of sense.

MR. LUTH: Yeah, I have to agree with Teri, being a groomer on the ground, I’ve had times where I’d love to go out and groom, but there’s so much overflow you can’t drag your groomer through it or the snow is so darn deep that you got to go out and pre pack it before you can take and go out and
groom it.

MS. HARRIS: Right.

MS. ZELL: And I’d also like to say one more thing that was mentioned earlier. I get a lot of these invoices coming through where the groomer has put down the trail that they’ve groomed, how many hours, how many machines they put on it and then in the far column, it says NC, no charge.

MR. LUTH: There’s a lot of that.

MS. ZELL: They are doing a lot of that and so they’re already putting in a lot of their time and especially towards the end of the season and people are running out of funds. I see that end fee a lot more. They’re doing it because they know it needs to be done even though there’s no money.

MS. HARRIS: Okay.

MR. LUTH: And with a broken shoulder.

MS. HARRIS: Right.

MR. NEEL: Is that Bill?

MS. HARRIS: Yes.

MR. ENOCHS: Steve Enochs in Fairbanks, I’d like to make a comment, please.

MR. NEEL: Okay.

MS. HARRIS: Go ahead, Steve.

MR. ENOCHS: My comment is I’m glad that I live in Fairbanks because we don’t have all your grooming problems that you have down in south central, but I do welcome the
comments about benefitting what limited resource we have for all of Alaskans in all part of Alaska. I think that that’s something that’s really lacking as I listen to all this poor little groomers out there that just don’t have enough money to do it. All the grooming that’s done up here is primarily done voluntarily and they seem to do it just fine and I don’t hear any whining about the lack of funds up here or oversight because we don’t have that problem, so that’s a good thing.

The other thing that I’d like to talk about is I also welcome the anticipation of a short fall of funds to the grooming or should I say the Snow TRAC funds because I think it’s about time that the Snow TRAC board and everybody realize, go back to the origination of this program that was poorly put together, I think, when Governor Knowles took over and made this point of registration BS because this is what we got now and instead of doing what we should be doing and looking at ways -- I mean, personally, I’d like to see money go towards improving trails and not necessarily grooming them, but fixing them, repairing them and making them good so that when wintertime comes around, we can actually go over them. That would be a better use of funds in my opinion and marking is certainly a good thing.

All this grooming stuff needs to go away. I think it -- I welcome the comments by Darcy on her letter, though I don’t know if I agree with all the options. I think there’s a
couple of other options that need to be discussed in some future, but really, this grooming stuff is nonsense. I mean, I understand without throwing names out there, when you’re talking about the Denali Highway, I know that people try to do their best. I’ve gone on the Denali Highway and I’ve seen where it was groomed and it might have been groomed two hours ago, but it’s tough to tell now because of weather.

MS. HARRIS: Right. The winds are high out there.

MR. ENOCHS: So we’re just throwing away money for a limited few people on an occasional day and I don’t know how it is in other areas. I just know the Denali Highway is very volatile weather wise. If trails are groomed in the Cantwell area or at Summit where I happen to go occasionally when I feel like going up in the mountains, which is rare, you know, groom that. Sure, I mean, it snows all the time and that would be a good waste of money.

People need to wake up. Let’s go back to the original thing of this program and start using the money for what it was intended to do, grooming was not it as far as I know and if I’m wrong, I’m sure there’ll be at least three or four people who will throw darts at me and say I was wrong, which is fine.

But I’d like to go forward and say look, we got a problem with the shortage of funds and lets look at the way this all -- and use the money appropriately instead of
throwing it away because I’d like to see some benefit north of Palmer or Petersville or wherever people snowmachine down in southcentral and see some of that money come up here and I don’t like seeing it go to the -- no the Iditarod, but the Quest, I think that’s foolish too. Let the dog mushers pay their way, we shouldn’t be using money for Snow TRAC or snowmachiners to groom the Quest. I think that’s silly.

I don’t think we should be using money for the Iron Dog, let the Iron Doggers pay for it, they’re the ones that get the money if they win, so why don’t they use some of that money to groom? Why come after a state portion of it? I know they put out some safety programs and I was pretty adamant about making sure that they got it only because I want to see some equitable distribution of money instead of it all going to grooming. Enough said.

MS. HARRIS: Thank you, Steve. That was -- that helps at least to begin the discussion on some of the points that I brought up because I would really like to see some more equal distribution of funds to different kinds of projects because we just don’t have very much money and if we can get various things going from different regions from the state. And these -- the things that I -- the percentages of breakdown that I threw out as options, these are not our only options. They were suggestions of ways that we could equitably break down the funding and it came from an idea of how the recreational
trails program is broken down into 30 percent diversified, 30
percent -- excuse me, 30 percent motorized, 30 percent non-
motorized and 40 percent diversified projects.

So it kind of spurred on an idea that, you know, you can
ensure that certain projects, certain types of projects have a
little money there to help them out, to get them started at
least and so that was where that breaking it down came from
and none of this is set in stone. It was an idea that I think
could solve some of those problems and I really appreciate
your input, Steve, thank you.

So that brings us to this idea of funding for grooming
program and the idea that I threw out for a match program and
the match program is just one idea. Obviously, somehow --
obviously, people are putting in a lot of time and volunteer
money that it’s just not being -- they’re already, I bet,
putting in a lot of what this match idea and it’s just not
being captured as that because this match doesn’t have to be
dollars, it can be volunteers, donated equipment, any kind of
that volunteer from the clubs, that can be counted as match,
so I think it’s already happening from what I’m hearing here
and people just aren’t counting it or calling it a match
program. But because we obviously don’t have a million-dollar
budget just to put into the grooming pool.

People are soliciting from their clubs and their
neighbors to get out and get the job done so everybody can
have great trails to ride on because that’s the goal. So that’s just one -- that’s one thing that will help us to bolster the fact that we will be having reduced funds in the future. And that’s something that our director felt pretty strongly about, that we could have a better program if people knew that there would need to be funds coming from the community. Yes, John.

MR. SCUDDER: Yes, this is John Scudder. You talk about match fundings. How about DOT start matching? A lot of the trails -- I want to change that, a lot of the trails that were recreational are not trails of commerce.

MS. HARRIS: Sure. The freights and stuff.

MR. SCUDDER: The Denali Highway, freighters are using them to get to these remote villages, remote lodges, they’re not breaking no more eggs, they’re getting their eggs in one piece. They’re getting customers out to their lodge now with groomed trails. Why can’t DOT now slide some money over because we are grooming Petersville Highway, Hatcher Pass Road, Denali Highway.

MS. HARRIS: Denali Highway, right.

MR. SCUDDER: That is a highway.

MS. HARRIS: Yeah.

MR. SCUDDER: DOT should be providing some funds for winter use of those roads and when I talked to the governor a couple years ago, we also have the right-of-ways.
MS. HARRIS: Uh-huh.

MR. SCUDDER: Signs that have to stop -- someone (indiscernible) across the highway, Snow TRAC is buying them, DOT can guy them.

MS. HARRIS: Uh-huh.

MR. SCUDDER: It’s in their right-of-way. They should provide some funding, especially when you get on the west part of Alaska, DOT does fund some of that out there.

MS. HARRIS: Yeah.

MR. SCUDDER: Because that’s their only roads they have in the wintertime.

MS. HARRIS: Uh-huh.

MR. SCUDDER: They should start looking at the central to north regions.

MS. HARRIS: So that would be outside of our jurisdiction and our office.

MS. LECLAIR: Well then -- no, that could be a discussion the DNR Commissioner could have with the DOT Commissioner.

MR. SCUDDER: Because even in Fairbanks, you know, they got remote villages that they’re getting trails to.

MS. HARRIS: Uh-huh.

MR. SCUDDER: They got lodges.

MS. HARRIS: Sure.

MR. SCUDDER: It’s not a recreational trail no more,
it’s a commercial trail.

MS. LECLAIR: Right.

MS. HARRIS: That’s a good point.

MS. LECLAIR: Yeah. Yeah, I didn’t realize DOT maintains those ice roads in the villages, is that what you’re saying?

MR. SCUDDER: Yeah, and any place. There could be just in urban areas. If it -- lodges on Skwentna River.

MS. HARRIS: Uh-huh.

MR. SCUDDER: Freights are using that. They’re complaining about the trails aren’t being groomed, about ran out of money, but the DOT provides extra funds. They don’t have to buy -- or provide a million dollars, but $100,000, $200,000, that’ll help the program out, it’ll help get these trails down so they can get their supplies out there without getting them all smashed up, beat up, broken, whatever the case may be. I think that’s a lot of your complaints is from the freighters.

MS. HARRIS: Yeah.

MR. SCUDDER: And they’re the ones beating up the trails too.

MS. HARRIS: Yeah, they’ve put a lot of miles on those trails.

MR. MORRISON: Darcy, it’s Andy Morrison and I was just sort of going through your comments about trying to find other
aspects of the program and I feel that there is quite a bit
that could be done on Ortab (ph). I know that they’re mighty
stressed over there as well, but when you’re talking about
some of the safety education programs and I’m not even sure
what other things you’re talking about is that, you know,
those grants are out there to apply for Ortab (ph) funding.
There’s no reason that Ortab (ph) money can’t be spent in the
winter and (indiscernible) projects as well as summer.

MS. HARRIS: Right. No, that’d be great.

MR. MORRISON: (Indiscernible) projects and other
projects as well.

MS. HARRIS: Good point, Andy, absolutely and I think
we’ve encouraged that in the past.

MR. MORRISON: Well, that’s one reason that I feel that
the grant applications for both Ortab (ph) and Snow TRAC
should be very close to each other so that someone doesn’t
have to go completely redo a grant to make it work for one
program or the other. You could -- you know, there’s quite a
bit of stuff, safety and education included, that could go
towards the Ortab (ph).

MS. HARRIS: I think that’s what Samantha Carol
originally had planned with that application being very close.
I talked to her about that and it’s just for that so people
could switch back and forth and try to get money from
somewhere as necessary.
MR. MORRISON: Well, a lot of the infrastructure, purchasing equipment, doing land surveys, all that stuff can be done on Ortab (ph) and especially if it’s a multi-use trail (indiscernible) put it all in the snowmobile category, keep it out there in the general recreation category.

MS. HARRIS: Well, to kind of circle back on the idea of spreading these funds, you know, on the website, it talks about this program, snowmobile trails grant program as being -- it says primarily for trail development and maintenance and safety and education programs and I think that is what was originally planned with this project -- or this program and I just -- I think that we should diversify the funds so it’s -- so we get more benefit for the small amount of money and I’ll reiterate, I think that we could have an excellent program if we scale it down and do a few projects really well versus trying to do too much with a limited budget and it’s just unfortunate. Yes, Joe.

MR. GAUNA: This is Joe Gauna. Maybe we should suspend grooming it for one year.

MR. LUTH: That’ll throw some stuff up in the wind.

MR. MAYFIELD: Oh, I don’t think so.

MR. NEEL: If you’re on the phone, can you please state your name?

MR. GAUNA: That was Bill and.....

MS. HARRIS: Dan Mayfield.
MR. NEEL: For recording. Yeah.

MR. GAUNA: .....Dan. Maybe we should suspend grooming for one season.

MR. MAYFIELD: This is Dan. You know, I just have a few comments I’d like to make. You know, I don’t know much about the history of Snow TRAC, but I do this program evolved through the years and the evolution was really based on public need for well groomed trails. I mean, that was the need. You know, well groomed trails provided an elevated level of enjoyment and safety for the -- you know, for the vast majority of our users out there. And in my opinion, that was the correct evolutionary path of this program. The evolution -- this evolution has brought us even closer to a statewide trail system than we’ve ever been before and the changes in (indiscernible) in this proposal, with all due respect, I think it’ll slap us back in the dark ages and make the dream of a statewide trail system impossible.

MR. GAUNA: Dan, this is Joe. I agree with you, but the only way we’re going to find out is to either do it or not do it. Maybe we should suspend grooming for one season and let the public speak to the governor, the legislature and DNR and then figure it out and go from there.

MR. MAYFIELD: You know, I do believe that there would be a gigantic public outcry, but I -- you know, I don’t know that we want to get that reactionary in that kind of move.
MR. GAUNA: I don’t either, Dan, but so far the last 10 years, not much has worked. I agree with you that the evolution to grooming came from the Snow TRAC board telling DNR what the public has said they wanted, I agree that it’s evolved and that is what the public wants. They don’t care that much about safety, they don’t care that much about other stuff. They want groomed trails, but until DNR sees it from the public, we’re going to continue going on, find -- spread less money over more things, so let’s just cut out the grooming for a season and let them spend the money where they want to.

MR. ENOCHS: This is Steve again in Fairbanks. I happen to agree with most of what you said with the exception I do not agree that we should suspend any grooming even though I’m pretty much opposed to grooming. I also don’t believe there will not be any gigantic or gigantic outcry except for those in a limited area, i.e. those that get the majority of the money for grooming. Everyone else will not cry because they’ve already been complaining that they don’t see any benefit to it, so you know, so what?

However, when I talk to people around the Fairbanks/Delta area and they all basically give me the same smirk. Grooming? What they have said is when I’ve brought up the bullets from about three years ago when I first came on the board about the possibility of increasing the fees, but
one of the bullets to justify increasing the fees was the
development of a statewide trail system. There was a lot of
interest in that, so you know, I go back to what I said
earlier and I’ll stay with it. I don’t really think that the
grooming is really absolute answer, though I also agreed with
you, a lot of people, they really don’t care about safety,
that’s true, you know, boring, but that doesn’t preclude the
requirement to be responsible to stick education out there to
try to prevent death and destruction because we know it
happens. Certainly out in the villages, people drive across
rivers and ground every year, there’s plenty of them that go
around, a little more education might prevent that.

We know that avalanches happen, we need to continue
putting education for that. Yeah, people don’t want to hear
it, but they need it. I really think so anyway, so I still
think that there’s a reason to keep the program going, but
there certainly has to be some kind of scaling back of money
going to grooming because it’s not the only thing that’s out
there that matters and the little area that we’re talking in
the state is not the entire state and we need to do a better
distribution of money even though it’s limited. Thank you.

MS. HARRIS: Thanks, Steve.

MS. ZELL: This is Teri.

MS. HARRIS: Teri Zell?

MS. ZELL: Yes.
MR. HARRIS: Yes.

MS. ZELL: I agree with all these comments that are going on. I’ve been with this grooming pool from the get go, from it’s start and it has evolved quite a bit and I think the public has driven that process into a grooming program. Now I know that there’s a huge need for safety and education and I have been a proponent and keep asking every year why don’t we have a snowmachine safety program like we have a boating safety program, a full blown one that we go out into the schools and do all of this stuff.

But I also have to just agree a little bit about the spreading of the monies. I think that if you try to diversity this money too far, you’re going to have little bits for lots of things and it should, in my opinion, it should all be set for whatever the public wants and like I said, the evolvement has been they want grooming. If people are not getting grooming funds in certain areas, it’s because they’re not applying for them.

MR. ENOCHS: I’m sorry, this is Steve again from Fairbanks. I hate that comment because.....

MS. ZELL: I’m sorry.

MR. ENOCHS: .....you’re penalizing a population that if a snowmachine club doesn’t ask for the funds, the population doesn’t get any benefit so they pay into it, that’s BS. I’m sorry, but you know, I get angry too. I wish the snowmachine
club up here in Fairbanks -- and I’ve heard this criticism for years now, but you know -- well, they ought to ask for the money. Well, you know what, it shouldn’t be dependent upon a snowmachine club asking for money. Everybody pays into that, at least most people pay for it, they register the snowmachine and they ought to get the benefit from it. And it shouldn’t be -- just be dependent upon a snowmachine club that makes it happen. There has to be a way to make it equitable for everybody that pays into it, at least somewhat.

I realize that there’s going to be some give and take here, but it shouldn’t -- to say that if we don’t get (indiscernible) we don’t ask for it, that’s just malarkey.

MS. ZELL: But -- okay, I -- and I agree with that, but we can’t just read your mind and say oh, they probably want some too and I -- and for me, I know that -- probably that statement is not well received and I’m sorry, but it should be up to that area, like Northern State Parks, to get out there and beat the bushes and say you guys -- we’ll help you apply for this stuff, but....

MR. ENOCHS: I agree with that, I definitely agree with you there, there’s no doubt.

MS. ZELL: But there needs to be an application process and there’s a lot of people onboard in certain areas that do it. A few years ago, we had nobody on the Kenai Peninsula and all of a sudden, they were saying well, what about us? Well,
apply for the money and they did and we started getting lots
of applications from there. So I know it may not be a well
received comment, but it’s still very applicable.

MS. HARRIS: Thanks, Teri.

MR. ENOCHS: Again, Steve from Fairbanks. I still don’t
have to take exception to it because I do know that the -- at
least from Fairbanks and I don’t recall the gentleman’s name
that’s from White Mountain that he shows up every year, but he
and I both laugh every time this stuff just comes up because
people in Nome area of White Mountain, if you will, they could
care less about grooming trails. And the same thing -- most
people here in Fairbanks, at least in this particular area
that I know of, most people don’t care about groomed trails.

They break a trail, it’s good and then you have a few
volunteers, so the whole subject is like they don’t care about
that. But I do think that there’s still a need to look at
education and safety, and yeah, you’re not going to -- I want
to get some money so I can go teach those people up in Hugla
(ph) not to cross the river until it’s safe. That isn’t going
to happen.

MS. HITE: This is Cindy Hite. (Indiscernible) we go to
two meetings a year, we have the same discussions at every
meeting. We did put some bullets together a few years ago,
Steve’s right, were never addressed. They actually addressed
the program, think it’s a great program, but we keep going
around in circles every year and I actually started to believe this was on purpose. I work full-time and I don’t want to sit here for two more hours doing this.

You say they’re dropping applications. Application process is a monster, so no one’s been dropping applications, that’s because it’s all going to grooming now. And Steve, I’m trying to understand, anybody can -- this is a free will, anybody can apply for this money, I don’t -- they can apply for it up north or anything they want, I (indiscernible) make any cuts or, you know, get signs, so I’m not understanding we as a Snow TRAC board, are arguing amongst ourselves.

We know how this program works and we can make it work, but we’re not full-time employees for DNR. Every year we get together and it seems like we’re supposed to advise them. We advise them and they go on and they do exactly what they’re going to do and we come back the next year and we do it again. I am sick of doing this. You know, Teri’s right, we talked about a safety program, part of our bullets. Statewide trail system, marking and safety. There. We don’t need distribution amounts, we need common sense and we need to get working on this, not have these (indiscernible) meetings every year. So there, there’s my advisement. Let’s get working and stop talking.

MR. MAYFIELD: And I’d like to chime in on this.

MS. HARRIS: Dan Mayfield.
MR. MAYFIELD: In a greater amount of safety and education that’s providing through grooming and our local grooming organizations and ever to be achieved by funding workshops or, you know, with limited audiences. That’s just a fact. You know, we get more bangs than the buck by grooming trails and keeping them safe for the public than we do through funding some workshop with a limited audience.

There’s trials and tribulations of the grant process and the compliance fees and a limited amount of funds that are available, just take an extremely (indiscernible) for volunteer organizations just to begin with. You know, those same barriers make it difficult to attract organizations to want to contribute, you know, to a better rider experience. You know, I really believe that it’s only through the strength of character and an overriding desire by, you know, a lot of the folks that are out there that, you know, the groomers that are out there that keep their wanting to put up with the barriers in this program as today.

You know, if you want more grant money to be spread out in a more diverse manner, the answer is to attract more money, you know, to a fund and make it where it needs to be attainable rather than restricted to divide the funds, and you know, like the proposal we have in front of us, so that’s my two cents.

MS. HARRIS: Steve Neel?
MR. CROSBY: This is Randy up in Trapper Creek.

MS. HARRIS: Oh, you got it.

MR. CROSBY: You know, Steve, up there in Fairbanks, I mean, I agree with the basis of what you’re saying but the program already provides those opportunities for the money to go into other areas and it always has. I sat on the Snow TRAC board in the very beginning, helped kind of come up with the idea of how this thing would all work and grooming was not a component in the beginning and it was divided into safety and education 20 percent, 30 percent for administration and then the rest went into trail development, trail this, trail that, whatever you wanted to do, there’s been cabins funded, all sorts of projects funded.

That process is still in place and the way I understand it, although it gets more confusing every year, is that grooming is the last thing to get funded. The applications are requested for your normal grant process and those come in for safety education, for any other ideas trail related, building, whatever. Once that process has been figured out, then the money that’s left over goes towards grooming and there certainly has been efforts to make as much money available for grooming as possible in the past few years.

But see, the process of getting money into other areas of the state for other things has always existed. Here in my community, Trapper Creek and Petersville, we’re a rural
community and we’ve been overrun by snowmachiners for the 30, 40 years that snowmobiles have been around in the area. And this grooming process is something that our club and myself and our community have struggled with and we developed a system that would be able to apply for money to go out there and groom because our community sees grooming as the number one benefit in our situation.

I would never say that that’s the best benefit for you or people out in Nome and I’ve never implied anything like that and I don’t think anybody has. But in our area, without the grooming, it’s chaos. We are overrun by thousands of snowmobilers every winter on every weekend coming down from Fairbanks, coming up from the Kenai, coming wherever because we always have the snow and it’s good terrain. And now we have great trail system that gets people around safety into the areas. Some people come to ride just because they are groomed, but people come up here and ride this trail system because they provide the safe, fast, easy way for them to get into the back country and enjoy things.

I think one of the biggest problems here is that we’re trying to combine too many things into one pool of money and I would love to see the grooming separate completely out and funded just like roads are funded to be plowed, to be graded, to have the ruts graded out, how the highways out here is funded to be plowed instead of trying to combine everything
into a bunch of other projects and then we always end up, you know, competing and fighting and dividing and accomplishing nothing.

So you know, I just want to stress that I agree, grooming may not be the thing for your area, but it is the number one thing for our area, and without it, you know, we’re going to have a lot of problems up here.

MS. HARRIS: Thanks, Randy.

MR. ENOCHS: I don’t disagree with you and I welcome -- this is Steve from Fairbanks and I think what you just said is very, very, very true. And I can’t disagree with what you say, but it isn’t important up here. I mean, dog mushing is the number one sport or snowmachines, pick one. Those are the number one sports, but across the board, I would -- I personally would love to see grooming as a separate item. The problem is, is we have more grooming money requested than we’ve money available, so what do you do when you have all those things. I really think that you can’t support everybody.

I mean, I look at last year or the last two years what Big Lake wanted and what they got. I mean, good grief, they got good people, they know how to write the request and they do a good job, and you know, what can I say? I mean, hey, if you don’t know how to do it, you ought to go to Big Lake and figure out -- and watch them because they know how to get
money and we’re -- you know, the Snow TRAC board or funds weren’t the only place that they got money to do their grooming, so that’s a good thing.

But we do have to look at the fact that you have limited resource, so a decision has to be made how do you use that limited resource. It can’t all go to Petersville, it can’t all go to Big Lake, it can’t all go to Hatcher Pass. I mean, that’s just a limited -- too limited an area of the state for that limited amount of money. I mean, between those three areas and maybe the Kenai, you’ve just gobbled up almost all the money.

MS. HARRIS: Thanks, Steve, we have.....

MR. MAYFIELD: This is Dan again. Steve.....

MS. HARRIS: Dan.....

MR. NEEL: No, that’s fine.

MR. MAYFIELD: .....the thing about what you said there, you know, Snow TRAC ought to be funded 59 percent of our effort this year. You know, we’re very, very grateful for that, but you know, it didn’t fund our complete effort and I’m not saying that they necessarily should, but I do believe that they should be the primary funder of the grooming efforts. I mean, we live in Alaska, snowmachines, the users and the trail systems, they’re just critical to our social and our economic welfare in this state.

And you know, I truly think that there will be a huge
outcry from users if these proposals are accepted and -- or if, you know, some critical cutbacks are made on the grooming effort. I just truly believe that and.....

MR. ENOCHS: I agree with you. Again, this is Steve from Fairbanks, I don’t disagree with you. (Indiscernible - simultaneous speech).....

MR. MAYFIELD: (Indiscernible - simultaneous speech).

MR. ENOCHS: .....or what I’m suggesting is, is that the people are going to be crying the loudest is those people in the limited areas that all receive the funds. The people in Fairbanks or in this area could care less about it, but we’re paying for your groomed trails and that’s the issue that I’ve got. There has to be more representation of the money that’s gotten.

It’s like the two or three years ago when there was an effort to try to increase the registration fees, there was a huge outcry up here, totally against it and I think that you’ll see the same thing happen and there’ll be a whole bunch of people lining up with their legislators and standing outside ready to put both feet on somebody’s desk if there’s an effort to put all the money in one little area.

MS. HARRIS: Okay, I think -- this is Darcy and I definitely -- I really appreciate the discussion, this is really good. We have very clear ideas, I think, about what -- how we feel about the registration fees in various regions. I
want to give a couple people in the room a chance to talk. I know Steve Neel and also Joe Gauna have a couple things they’d like to say. Steve?

MR. NEEL: This is just from historical perspective after having worked on the program for a couple years. I notice that when I talked to several grantees from the rec trails program out in the western part of the state and also in the northern part and I’ve asked them why they don’t apply for snowmobile trail assessment or equipment or shelter cabins or safety. They’ve indicated that they know it’s there, but they don’t use it because they assume that all of it’s going to go to grooming and I’m not saying that’s necessarily an accurate statement, but I picked it up from more than one area and more than one town.

So while, in essence, it’s true, that funding is out there and available for everybody to apply for. I think since the grooming pool has grown exponentially with the addition of RTP funds, the attitude out there has been less -- that they will be successful in applying because there’s more money going into grooming, and again, I’m not stressing that I -- that that’s totally accurate, but I think the perception is that there’s -- they shouldn’t -- they don’t need to apply because they don’t have a chance to fight against the grooming pool.

So I think there’s a difference between yes, they have
the access, yes they have the ability to apply just like
everybody else does, but at the same time, the perception in
some of those areas is that because grooming has become so
large, it will -- we will not fund the smaller safety and
education projects.

And you know, it’s -- basically it’s down to one or two
groups that continually now applies for safety and ed, Iron
Dog, sometimes Mat-Su Borough and of course, NAOI applies, but
after -- you know, other than that, not a whole lot of people
are applying for safety and ed, and you know, I’ve run into
just that current of well, we know it’s going to go to
grooming and breaking that perception I think is going to be
hard enough.

So I just wanted to throw that out there that after, you
know, being in and around it for a couple years with the
programs, I start to see where people are just, you know,
they’re backing off applying because of the assumption that
grooming will get, you know, the massive amount of dollars.
So I just put that out there as my observation.

MS. HARRIS: And Joe?

MR. GAUNA: Well, that kind of falls in with what I was
thinking here. What Steve is saying is, okay, the perception
of course is reality to whoever is perceiving it, so maybe we
should suspend grooming for a year and put all the money into
something else and notwithstanding what Dan and Steve are
saying, let’s see what the public says and find out what’s really important to them. This is one way to do, it’s drastic and it’s reactionary, but I’m with Cindy, I’m really tired of doing this thing every year, the same thing.

You know, one of the other things that needs to be done is, I believe, is separating the DMV registration fees from this Snow Trac.

MS. ZELL: Yes.

MR. GAUNA: This was a temporary thing 10, 12, 13 years ago that -- hell, longer than that. The DMV funds were a (indiscernible) agreement with the legislature to get around, we can’t have dedicated funds and at the time, the state parks leadership promised oh yeah, and after this thing gets going for a couple of years and it’s accepted and all that, then we’ll go ahead and start increasing the line item that goes in the budget every year and separate away from DMV.

We have been tied to the DMV for way too long. That money comes out of the general fund, it doesn’t come from DMV, it comes out of the general fund and there’s no reason that that can’t be increased. Unfortunately, state parks, DNR has never done that. Strato (ph) didn’t do it, James King didn’t do it and now Ben has said he’s not going to do it last summer -- or last winter.

But that’s what needs to be done. Look, if we don’t have enough money to do all the grooming that we want to do
this year, then DNR needs to figure out how much money you
want to spend on grooming and you guys designate which trails
are going to get groomed. This is nothing new, I’ve said this
before. You guys designate which trails you want groomed and
issue the contracts. That’s the way to take care of the
shortfall this year. If it’s one trail for 50 miles, you
announce it and say here it is instead of going through all
this garbage of us sitting here and scoring applications and
deciding where the funding line is and all that. Go ahead,
you decide the funding line, you decide which trails are going
to get done and what part of the state or none and let’s keep
moving on.

But we’ve got to get away from this artificial and
inappropriate connection with the DMV registration funds. You
guys don’t look -- when you go for a line item budget for
summer trails, you don’t say well, let’s see, so many people
bought shoes and so many people registered their cars or their
bicycles. You go, this is what we need to do summer trails
for tourists and for our local citizens and here’s how much we
need. And the legislature says go, here you go. Do the same
with snowmobiles, do the same with snowmobile trails.

MS. HARRIS: Okay.

MR. GAUNA: There shouldn’t be a connection.

MS. HARRIS: Can Claire.....

MS. HERRERA: I’m sorry to talk over you, but I would
like to -- I’m sorry. I’m the administrative officer for the division and a lot of the things that you’re saying are awesome. They were (indiscernible) what I was thinking. We, as a division of parks, would request a capital project for (indiscernible) specifically. Then the other funds in the Snow TRAC could be used elsewhere. We would have to ask the state for general fund dollars. Here’s where the problem comes in.

We as a division can speak about this forever until your tongues fall off unless the public, you, this board and snowmachine riders get in there and say we want this to happen, it won’t happen. They only see us as you guys just want more money, you guys just want more money no matter how much talking we do, we cannot get the (indiscernible) costs by ourselves. So your idea is wonderful.

MS. LECLAIR: Could I -- yeah.

MS. HERRERA: It’s our division -- sorry, go ahead.

MS. LECLAIR: Yeah, Karlyn, it’s Claire. Joe’s looking really quizzical.....

MS. HERRERA: Okay.

MS. LECLAIR: .....and I think -- and maybe you can help straighten out. The receipts that come from DMV are indeed program receipts, is that correct?

MS. HERRERA: They are, yes.

MR. GAUNA: No. No.
MS. LECLAIR: Yeah, Joe is.....

MS. HERRERA: They’re not to us.

MS. LECLAIR: Yeah, Joe’s shaking his head.

MS. HERRERA: Okay Joe, what they are, they’re actually called registration fees in our capital request for snowmobile money, we put in there as not general fund dollars, it is requested as registration fees.

MR. GAUNA: And we’ve been told for years.....

MS. HERRERA: That’s why they give it to us.

MS. LECLAIR: Okay.

MR. GAUNA: We’ve been told for years you can’t do that because the constitution doesn’t allow dedicated funding.

MS. LECLAIR: It doesn’t and this is the way around it. I’m sorry, this is Claire LeClair.

MS. HERRERA: There’s no way around it, exactly.

MS. LECLAIR: Yeah, and I shouldn’t call it the way around it, but.....

MR. GAUNA: Okay, well.....

MS. LECLAIR: .....we did something similar, the charge -- we charge fees for overnight camping, right? When the fee legislation was passed in 1987, the legislature well, we can’t just roll that money right into parks budget because.....

MR. GAUNA: Yeah.

MS. LECLAIR: .....you can’t have dedicated funding, but.....
MR. GAUNA: I remember.

MS. LECLAIR: .....we’ll make the commitment to do our bets to allocate the money that you receive back to your agency in order to fulfill your mission and that’s exactly -- it’s the same thing.....

MS. HARRIS: You’re right, Joe.

MS. LECLAIR: .....that’s happening here, so it’s not dedicated, but it is not general fund dollars, that -- the funds that come in for Snow TRAC are not general fund dollars. Karlyn, sorry.

MS. HERRERA: Correct.

MR. GAUNA: Well, that’s.....

MS. HERRERA: No, that’s fine. (Indiscernible).

MR. GAUNA: Well, that’s a complete surprise to me because that’s what we’ve been told for years and years and years that there was a tacit agreement between the legislature and DNR and the gov that when he signed off on the legislation, that they promised that they would allocate from general funds the same amount as DMV collected if DNR would ask for it. That’s how it was explained to us by Strato (ph) and a number of others. Regardless.....

MS. HERRERA: Well, so this -- to go deeply -- this is Karlyn again, to go deeply into the budget, there are lots of different fund titles that are classified as general fund under the state.
MR. GAUNA: Okay. So.....

MS. HERRERA: Okay? So basically, what they’re saying is the government is not funding us any of this money, no outside company is giving us any money. It’s either general fund or its other money, so in essence, these revenues created from the registration fees would go into the state’s general fund if we didn’t use it. So basically, they’re saying you’re not going to count it as revenue to the state, you’re going to use it to support the snowmobile program. It’s kind of a wash.

MR. GAUNA: Then change it. Change it. Get Ben down there or whoever does the budget.....

MS. HERRERA: Well, that’s my point.

MR. GAUNA: .....and change it.

MS. HERRERA: It was my point, yes.

MR. GAUNA: So.....

MS. HERRERA: To try to get different type of funding, I understand completely. The best thing that we can do at this point to get any additional money is to have the public, as you say, have an outcry.

MR. GAUNA: Okay. Then.....

MS. HERRERA: We need money for this.

MR. GAUNA: Okay, then let’s suspend grooming for one season, that’s all it’s going to take.

MS. HERRERA: I think that’s kind of drastic.
MR. GAUNA: I -- so do I.

MS. HERRERA: I’m sorry, I understand your point.

Excuse me?

MR. GAUNA: I do too. I think it’s very drastic and I really don’t want to see it happen, but I got to tell you, if we don’t have enough money to groom, then let’s suspend it because putting a few bucks out on a couple of trails is just not going to be adequate because the public is used to what they’ve been getting the last five, six years. Let -- suspend grooming for one season. I’m finished for now.

MR. WILKE: Joe, this is Mark. Well, what happens when season number two comes around and we still don’t have enough money?

MR. GAUNA: We suspend grooming. I mean, that’s the answer. That’s the answer I have, suspend grooming until DNR gets the budget money that we need, go ahead and shut down Snow TRAC. We don’t need Snow TRAC, DNR knows what to do and that’s the money that 12 percent we’ll get back and get away from the Snow TRAC DMV connection and let’s get to a point where DNR goes to the legislature and says this is money we need for our citizens to service our citizens in the wintertime. And the public, the citizens will let the legislators know that you got to do this. I mean, it sounds real simple, doesn’t it?

MS. HARRIS: Joe, what would your suggest -- this is
Darcy again. Joe, what would your suggestion be for then to do with that money, the registration money as it is -- comes through the legislator? Would -- if we do suspend, if you wanted to suspend grooming hypothetically, we could -- what would you see as your vision to do with that money instead?

MR. GAUNA: As Steve says, let everybody in the state know it’s all available for safety and education grants.

MS. HARRIS: But also for trail development and trail -- other trail.....

MR. GAUNA: Trail development.....

MS. HARRIS: .....maintenance, widening.....

MR. GAUNA: Trail -- yep, you bet. Surveying.

MS. HARRIS: .....straightening, flattening, whatever we need to do.

MR. GAUNA: Yeah, yeah. But no grooming and let the grooming -- or let the grant requests come flying in. What the snowstorm of grant requests that comes flying in here and then we’ll score them and the good ones we’ll pay for and the bad ones we won’t pay, just like we’ve done before. Just completely remove the grooming component for one season.

MS. HARRIS: Well, that is certainly.....

MR. GAUNA: I know, everybody’s sitting there going.....

MS. HARRIS: .....an option.

MR. GAUNA: .....this guy is nuts, this guy is nuts. I am tired of doing what Cindy described.
MS. HARRIS: You have some very good points and I think that that is certainly an option we have. You know, these are all things that are good suggestions. We have to start from somewhere discussing how to solve these problems, so I really appreciate the discussion here definitely.

MR. ANDERSON: Hey Joe?

MR. GAUNA: Yeah.

MS. HARRIS: Who’s this?

MR. ANDERSON: This is Tinker again.

MS. HARRIS: Tinker.

MR. ANDERSON: You know, I agree with you -- I mean, sort of, but anyway, just suspend the grooming, put the park’s phone number on every tree or post or whatever and that way, they can call in and complain, do whatever. But also in that same tone -- I’ve been on the board for two years now and I have set there in the meetings and listened to the Snow TRAC advisory board to come up with suggestions and take them to the state, give them to the state and they went in one ear and right on somebody’s desk like grooming standards and other things.

I mean, if we’re going to advise and stuff, it needs to go further than that. I think that might help a lot, you know, if it just doesn’t dead-end someplace real quick and that’s what I’ve seen happen and seen it happen it more than once and that’s where it’s been going, you know?
MS. HARRIS: I -- this.....

MR. ANDERSON: That’s all I got to say.

MS. HARRIS: Tinker, this is Darcy and I do think those -- and I can’t speak for anything that happened before I started last August, but I think these are really complex situations and questions and I think sometimes those questions, we -- personally, I can speak to that I -- working through these solutions and trying to provide some kind of equitable ends to these concerns, I come on walls that I don’t know how to pass through, I come on questions I don’t know how to answer and I can put questions out to the board, but these are really complex. They affect a large number of people and people have varying concerns and interests. There’s a lot of stakeholders in these projects here and I really think it’s important to consider all of the stakeholders.

So it’s pretty complex and I’m sorry if you feel like things have dead-ended on people’s desk. I would imagine if questions have not been addressed, it is has been because someone just didn’t know how to proceed. I can see that happening certainly.

When -- so that brings me to the fact that it’s 12:30, we need to wrap this up around 1:00 if we can have I’m thinking maybe we could have some -- a summary and also maybe some action items, where we should go from here, how we should proceed with out next stage of discussion or what would
people like to see. What would people like to see from this meeting today? Do we -- I don’t think any decisions need to be made today, but this has gotten the discussion going, people have started to have a dialogue from the different areas of the state and different interests, the groomers and other folks. What should -- where should we go from here?

MS. HITE: This is Cindy Hite, I’ll tell you what I’d like to see.

MS. HARRIS: Cindy, you’re good at this.

MS. HITE: I would like to see that no more money goes to state parks as far as any kind of grant requests because that’s the only applications we’ve been getting lately is state parks because I know how to write them and they’re inside, so I don’t think any money should go to state parks because state parks is running the program.

Number two, I think that you need to make that application process easier so that people actually will apply. And number three, I went through the same (indiscernible) safety grants are run as you’re looking at the groomers because I’ve never seen any reports come back, I’ve never seen a website up for a person that’s been asking for $25,000 the last five years for a website. I don’t give any accountability for those people.

So if you’re going to ask for accountability, ask for it from everything, not just one.
MS. HARRIS: Absolutely.

MS. HITE: So that’s my advisement.

MS. JONES: Darcy, this is Kit Jones. I just wanted to mention, I think we need to be careful from divorcing the issue of safety away from the assigned and groomed trails because I think, as Randy mentioned, it certainly provides a safe riding area.....

MS. HARRIS: I agree.

MS. JONES: .....and I know for more inexperienced people like me, they are very important.

MS. HARRIS: I agree with you, Kit. I think that the trail marking is a huge safety issue as well as even in various places where shelter cabins have been built. That is certainly a safety issue as well and trail marking and grooming. Good grooming helps people have a safer ride, so.....

MR. LUTH: This is Bill Luth, I’d like to interject one other thing.

MS. HITE: I want to make a remark to that because that’s actually where we were going two years ago with our bullets was to actually look at the Snow TRAC program as we’re on a statewide trail system, which is a safety issue and having marking, which is a safety issue. And in letting somebody else apply (indiscernible) safety education program because it’s obvious we do not have enough money for $150,000
safety education system and a trail system, so we decided that
the Snow TRAC -- that was going to be Snow TRAC’s goal was to
go for the statewide trail system, which is a safety issue
along with markings for this state, that’s a safety issue.
But no, now we’re wrapped up in this again.

MR. ANDERSON: Hey Darcy, Tinker again.

MS. HARRIS: Hi, Tinker.

MR. ANDERSON: Last year, the safety request got full
funding in the grooming pool, which was the last of the line,
took a hard hit.

MS. HARRIS: How many safety requests were there last
year, do you remember?

MR. ANDERSON: No, I don’t, not offhand.

MR. GAUNA: Three I think it was.

MS. HARRIS: Three?

MR. NEEL: Four.

MR. ENOCH: There was (indiscernible) NAOI.

MR. NEEL: NAOI, Iron Dog.

(multiple speech)

MR. NEEL: Mat-Su Borough had one.

MS. HARRIS: Three or four? Okay.

MR. GAUNA: Oh yeah, that’s right, four. There was the
Quest, the Mat-Su signage.....

MS. HARRIS: Okay.

MR. GAUNA: .....the dog and.....
MS. HARRIS: And these are folks that apply on a regular basis, is that correct?

MR. GAUNA: Yep.

MR. NEEL: A couple of them.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Every year.

MS. HARRIS: Okay.

MR. LUTH: Well, that’s not true because Mat-Su actually didn’t apply last year, it was the year before.

MS. HARRIS: Okay.

(multiple speech)

MR. ENOCH: Well, Big Lake last year, due to the thing that was going on with them and theirs is put off to the side, I think they got the whole funding also.

MS. HARRIS: Who’s this?

(multiple speech)

MR. MORRISON: I’m sorry, this is Andy, I accidentally disconnected and reconnected.


MR. GAUNA: It doesn’t really matter -- this is Joe. It doesn’t really matter that much how many safety grants there were last year. The fact is, the ones that came in were fully funded and then the grooming pool took a hit, that’s Tinker’s point, isn’t that right, Tinker?

MR. ANDERSON: Correct, sir.

MR. WILKE: This is Mark. Darcy, I think what you’re
trying to ask is, you know, if this is the road we’re going
down, if we’re going to, you know, not do the grooming pool
for a year, how -- what do we need to do to get to that point,
what are our next steps to make that happen. I think key to
that is making sure that we get that diversity around the
state, that the groups and organizations that should be
applying for these grants are actually applying for them and
I’ll second Cindy’s comment about the grant process. I
believe our old grant paperwork used to be four pages. What
it is now is just way too mind boggling for the small
organization or the small group trying to fill out that
paperwork.

We’ve got to get an easier application process and we’ve
got to get the word out to all the groups around the state,
all the cities and boroughs and all of the native
corporations, they need to know that this money’s available.

MS. HARRIS: We need to do some marketing then, huh?

MR. WILKE: Some marketing, that’s exactly right because
what -- if we’re not careful, we’re going to cancel the
grooming program and not get enough grants to spend all of our
money.

MS. HARRIS: Right. Well, I....

MR. LUTH: Hey, this is Bill Luth.....

MS. HARRIS: Yes.

MR. LUTH: .....I’d like to interject one thing here
too. One of our biggest problems, if you take a look at it and really look at how many machines out there are actually currently registered that are out and active on the trail, I’ve been watching very carefully the last two years and out in both Big Lake, Willow, Petersville, on average, I’m seeing no more than three out of 10 with current tags on them. We have no enforcement, no pressure for these people to pay it, so if for some reason we could get 80 percent of the machines registered currently, you would have twice the money you have now.

MS. HARRIS: Right. So.....

MR. ANDERSON: And if they are fined there, Bill -- this is Tinker. If they were fined, that money goes to a different pot, it doesn’t go back into anything like for grooming or anything like that.

MR. LUTH: Right. Well, fix it ticket’s the way to go.

MR. ENOCHS: This is Steve in Fairbanks. I’d have to say that this year was probably the most snowmachines that I’ve seen not registered on the local trails and it was interesting we brought the State Troopers in a local club meeting and they talked about, you know, ticketing snowmachiners without proper registration. It’s probably one of the last things that’s on their mind because they’re usually busy doing other things. I mean, if they’re -- it’s just not a priority according to at least the two troops that
came to our meeting. They just said look, if we got time and
the situation’s right, yeah, maybe we’ll ticket, but normally,
they just look the other way, they don’t have time. That’s
basically what they’re saying, but I do agree that this year,
the most snowmachines that I’ve seen that were not reg -- and
I’d say the number was a lot higher than what I just heard.

But I’d also like to comment a couple things, is that
time is limited, I know that we’ll have our annual meeting in
August and I don’t know if I’ve gotten a feel that we have
anything resolved or looking towards as a solution, but I do
think that, as a Snow TRAC board member, my obligation is
going to be -- or at least my commitment is going to be to try
to put out the information that I’ve heard as generically as
possible and see what the comments are and just say hey, look,
there’s going to be a shortage, we’re going to see less money
in the grooming pool even though the grooming isn’t popular up
here or necessarily done and just see what the comments are.

I think that a Snow TRAC board member, the one thing
that we should do is go back to the areas that we represent
and say what is your feelings and start getting some comments,
some solicitations as to what they would like to see. I don’t
want to see anything suspended because I think that that’s the
wrong signal. Granted, we’re going to have a shortfall of
money, at least that’s the way it looks, but I don’t think
that suspending anything is the right answer at this point. I
think that we still need to continue using what limited resource we have and let the rocks fall wherever at least at this point.

We only have a few months to go, I mean, we’re already dealing with next year’s limited money and we got to come to some conclusion.

MS. HARRIS: Thanks, Steve. I think Joe has a comment to that.

MR. GAUNA: Yeah, I agree with what Steve as far as going back to his constituents, that’s our job and I know I certainly do. Every time there’s a meeting or a teleconference or a bulletin, I go to the clubs and I go to my contacts, so yeah, that’s our job.

The other thing is the limited amount of money that’s going to be available for grooming, however you guys figure it out, if you want to have a grooming component, it’s going to be so limited that DNR is going to have to make the choice about what trails to groom. I don’t think it would be a good idea to come to the Snow TRAC and say here are 27 trails, you guys tell us.

MS. HARRIS: Right.

MR. GAUNA: You guys are going to finally have to start making the decision about what you want groomed for the state and Bill, you mentioned enforcement will bump up registrations. I think we better -- we’ve better off if we
got the folks at DNR to put an effort into breaking away from the DMV, the artificial DMV connection. Let’s get away from that and go to the general fund and say this is what we need to have a decent program.

A statewide trail system that’s ungroomed, I don’t think so. People are not going to want that, but hey, we should work on that as well, so there are some things that obviously we can all discuss I’m sure. Thank you.

MR. ANDERSON: And I got another comment here, Darcy. It’s Tinker. One thing -- and Randy kind of directed kind of at him. Also, the groomers are out there, they’re probably working on 30 to 40 percent of the money that they really should have and they’re just requesting the funds just enough to get through and get -- but you’ll see, like Teri said, you’ll see a lot of no charges and that’s the only way, so far, the program has been working or is working. You know, Randy’s got a lot of money tied up to it and cabin (indiscernible), Big Lake, everybody’s already tied up in this stuff and like I say, they’re only working under a percentage of what they actually should have. Right, Randy?

MR. CROSBY: Right. That’s right.

MS. HARRIS: So we really are already needing what the director would like to see as the state not the primary funder for these programs and it sounds like we’re already getting a lot of volunteer time and money and effort and equipment put
out there in the field on the ground and it sounds like there’s a -- I know from what you guys are saying and what I’ve heard before, there’s a whole lot of people doing a lot of work for essentially free or volunteer.

MS. HITE: Darcy, I have a questions, this is Cindy Hite. Two questions actually multi-pronged. First of all, why does Director Ellis not want to see grooming primarily funded through the Snow TRAC fund and what does he want to see funded to the Snow TRAC?

MS. HARRIS: It’s my understanding that one of the reasons is, is because we don’t have -- the program is growing, but the money isn’t growing and there -- we’re not able to satisfy what the grooming needs are with this program, so to kind of turn over some of that responsibility, which sounds like it’s already being done to the clubs and the user groups and the people that are most interested that that’s, I think, his interest is to make sure that it’s -- it is spread out among the user groups because we really don’t have enough money to fund everybody as fully as we’d love to if we had a million dollars. But we’re -- we can only be a small part of people’s funding for every year. John.

MR. SCUDDER: That was what Joe said and that’s what everybody else here has said, get a line item in there and increase it.

MS. LECLAIR: So can I address that? This is Claire and
on behalf of Ben, sort of a point of procedure. The
department can certainly make a case for priorities for the
budget, but we work for the governor, so we don’t ask the
legislature for money, that is not what somebody in the
administration would do. So that’s -- you know, you have to
understand that there are a lot of things that the state
budget needs to address and this is one of them certainly, but
it’s -- but we can’t turn on the spigot and flow some money
straight into the Snow TRAC program. I know you guys
understand that.

MR. SCUDDER: I have -- right, especially on that.
MR. WILKE: (Indiscernible) I’d like to take an issue
with that, actually capital budgets begin in the departmental
level.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Hang on a second, Mark.
MR. WILKE: The director or the commissioner would.....
UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Mark. Mark.
MR. WILKE: .....certainly be capable of including line
item requests in the capital budget.

MS. LECLAIR: And I -- Mark, this is Claire and I
understand what you’re saying. What I’m trying to convey is
that we cannot guarantee that, any request that we make would
be in the administration’s budget.

MR. WILKE: Yeah, it could be pulled by the legislature,
it could be line item out by the governor, absolutely, I
understand that, but if we have the support of the director
and of the commissioner to include items for grooming in the
capital budget, I believe that that’s a viable way of doing
it.

MS. LECLAIR: It’s one way.

MR. ENOCHS: If I could, this is Steve Enochs from
Fairbanks, and just to kind of follow along with that and
something that’s kind of the direction that I personally think
I’m going to take is that I was actively involved this past
summer with a group and we met with Director Ben Ellis twice
over the summer over the issue of the state parks up here in
Fairbanks, the (indiscernible) Pond are and the lower
Chatanika (ph) and we were able to successfully, through our
legislators and through Director Ben Ellis’s efforts, to come
up to Fairbanks and to talk to everybody, the individual
groups, the northern region parks folks and individual groups.
And we were able to get our legislators and everybody involved
and the end result was, is that we got a park ranger funded up
here, fully funded. We got our parks out of passive
management into active management and extra money so he even
makes some improvements to a park that was closed 10 years ago
and is in shambles.

So my point being is that -- and this is what I was more
or less leading to when I was talking earlier, is that I think
as a Snow TRAC board member, one of the means of communication
should be to our legislators and say look, you know, we don’t have enough money, this program as it is, in my opinion, is broke and the only way we’re going to effectively change it is to start going to these legislators and start getting some support for the legislator to take action. That doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t talk to Director Ben Ellis and say look, you know, you can do this on your -- we recommend that you go this route every -- I don’t know how to put it any other way, but certainly, we should go to our legislatures and say look, the Snow TRAC funding as it is is almost broke and it’s not working, we need help, let’s look for an avenue, a consensus avenue of approach and let’s start talking to our legislators and effect change there because that’s where it’s going to happen anyway.

MS. HARRIS: So Steve, this is Darcy, thank you. That’s -- and so maybe that’s one of our action items out of this meeting. We have about 10 more minutes in the room here and I would like to kind of summarize this and wrap it up. I know there’s a lot more discussion and a lot more questions. We’ve got -- because I don’t think we have a clear path forward, but we’ve started the discussion, so we have established that probably need to talk to some legislators, those people who are interested in adding the funding need to do that.

And.....

MR. GAUNA: Well now, when you say those people are
interested, you’re saying I? I mean, I’m going to, but.....

MS. HARRIS: Yes. I can’t.

MR. GAUNA: ......I’m saying -- you know, Ben keeps saying that too. I can’t talk to the legislature, I can’t talk to the legislature. Well, Strato (ph) could and James King did. They managed to get down there somehow and get those legislators where they needed something done. They managed to do that when they want to get something done. What I’m saying is Ben needs to, you guys need to, Claire or whoever it is and so get the legislators to call you and say hey, what’s going on here?

Now my legislator, Lesil McGuire said she did. Her staffer queried Ben or queried state parks is what she said and they really haven’t heard anything, so you know? I had a meeting with both Mia what’s her name and McGuire’s staffers and followed up with emails and said look.....

MR. SCUDDER: Mia Costello.

MR. GAUNA: Mia Costello, yes, thank you, John. And I said you guys need to get the boss to call Director Ellis and here’s his phone number and here’s his email and ask what’s going on with the Snow TRAC and I don’t know -- they told me okay, we’re doing that, but I don’t know if Ben’s heard from them or not. What I’m saying is that with state parks or DNR or Ed or Sullivan, whenever they want something really done, they figure out how to do it and I’m just saying that for 10
years, I’ve been saying you guys need to do this. Split from
DMV, get this stuff in the line item and our troubles will be
partly over.

But every single year, I hear we can’t do that, we’re
not allowed, we can educate, but we can’t cajole, we can’t --
I can’t meet with them. King said the same thing out in the
field when he said this is fabulous out here, I can’t believe
how wonderful this country is when he was watching the bear
across a gully eat up a spring kill. He was just amazed and
blown away and he loved it. He loved it. He said God, we’ve
got to get something better, but when it came right down to
it, it was like well, you know, I really can’t talk to them
and I believe that it’s because they just don’t realize how
important snowmobiling is to Alaskans.

MS. HARRIS: Well, I think.....

MR. GAUNA: We are the winter tourists here. We, the
local folks. I know state parks is established to promote
tourism, I know about all the enabling legislation, way way
back in the old days, I was here prior to it, way prior and
after. I know that. We are winter tourists and we are
getting screwed and I’m just really tired of it.

MS. HARRIS: Ester, did you have something to say?

MS. TEMPLE: Yeah, this is Ester.....

MR. GAUNA: Sorry.

MS. TEMPLE: No, that’s fine. I mean, I think -- so my
just for your guys’ knowledge, my position in the Commissioner’s Office is actually the legislative liaison, so I do work with the legislature. As far as budgets go, I mean, I think what you’re saying is that maybe DNR should look at perhaps adding a budget line item, but say if it goes through our process and it doesn’t make it into the governor’s budget, then at that point, DNR cannot go in and go to the legislature and partially, I think a separation of powers issue of we can’t force their hand to say.....

MR. GAUNA: Oh, sure.

MS. TEMPLE: Right. And so I think that’s the thing, is it could be a collaborative process in that if we were to say, okay, we’re going to try and look at how we can improve the funding or whatnot, but that we also need your assistance if it were to make it in the budget to say hey, we really want this in the budget, don’t take it out or don’t, you know, there’s -- and you can even ask potentially for them to increase the budget, you know? But it’s just at a certain point where if it doesn’t get in from our end, we can’t do anything and so.....

MR. GAUNA: And I go it.

MS. LECLAIR: And that’s all I was trying to say.

MS. TEMPLE: .....and that’s all.....

MR. GAUNA: I got it.

MS. TEMPLE: .....I think what we’re trying to say.
MR. GAUNA: I’ve got it.

MS. TEMPLE: And then the only other thing I think that we mention is that with trying to bypass the DMV even though it does sound like a great idea and it’s just a complicated thing I think with budgets and how they go, so unless I believe -- and correct me if I’m wrong, unless parks were to create a fee, then that -- for snowmachines like -- kind of like a parking fee that we do for state parks or whatnot.

MR. SCUDDER: Trail pass.

MS. TEMPLE: Right.

MR. SCUDDER: Just like a trail pass.

MS. TEMPLE: Right. Right, like a trail pass. Then that’s the only way we would get around I think sometimes doing the dedicated funds of how we’re going to do the DMV, but.....

MR. LUTH: You got to go back to enforcement.

MS. HARRIS: Uh-huh.

MR. GAUNA: Okay. So -- well, trail pass (indiscernible) because people ride (indiscernible) so that ain’t going to work.

MS. TEMPLE: Right.

MR. GAUNA: But you got to try.

MS. TEMPLE: Right. So I mean, I think.....

MR. GAUNA: Now if you guys.....

MS. TEMPLE: .....Darcy’s doing a great job and I think,
you know, you have Director Ellis and Claire as well is that we want to start this conversation and it seems like we’re all kind of maybe not coming in new, but we are, you know, a different group of people who are working, so maybe we’ll actually get something done, but we do need your help, so.

MR. GAUNA: Yep. You will get the help.

MS. TEMPLE: Yeah.

MR. GAUNA: Here’s the thing. There are 80 or 100,000 snowmobilers from all the old surveys and all that stuff and we can get to a lot of them. Not all of them, but we can get to a lot of them. The thing is, if you guys -- DNR starts the process to change the line item, get away from DMV and not even bother about a fee, just get the money in there. And if it doesn’t make it, then there’s no grooming and the public will scream, but we -- when you do that, when you show us that you’re putting it in there and you’re doing it, then you will get a lot of support from the snowmobiling community because every one of us on the Snow TRAC plus the state association will put the word out. Call or write your legislator and tell him we want this in.

But up until now, every director and every person has said it’s real complicated, it’s hard to do and we can’t do it and dah, dah, dah. I am really tired of hearing that. When you guys need $2.7 million to put in some program that you really want to put in, you figure out how to do it and this is
not that complicated to me based on some of the other things
that DNR and the state and the gov have all done. There’s
some pretty complicated stuff out there, I get that. I under
-- the thing is I don’t understand some of it. Mark does
because he’s pretty good at those numbers, but I got to tell
you, somebody’s just got to do it and it’s not us to start it.
You guys got to do this. I’m ranting, so I’m real sorry.

Sorry, folks.

MS. HARRIS: We appreciate your input, Joe, thank you
very much.

MS. HITE: This is Cindy Hite. I guess, you know,
you’ve got about my two hours here, so I know that Darcy wants
to wrap this up.

MR. GAUNA: Yep.

MS. HITE: Just a few points to make is I don’t think
the changes that have been recommended here today are
beneficial to have the snowmobilers of the board snowmobiling
(indiscernible) in Alaska. And I think before you make the
kind of change you’re talking about, maybe to look into public
comments from around the state would be interesting too.

MS. HARRIS: Thank you, that’s a good idea.

MS. HITE: So that’s it. I think it’s time to wrap it
up, folks.

MR. GAUNA: Thanks, Cindy.

MS. HARRIS: Thank you, Cindy. Are there any other
final comments from folks on the phone?

MS. HITE: Oh, I’m sorry, I did have one question. It was a lady, I don’t know who it was in the room that said something about we need your help.

MR. GAUNA: That was Ester.

MS. HITE: I’m actually kind of curious about she was asking about. I mean, what she wants help from the advisory board. Through the years of help, you know, change in the application and volunteers for trail inspections, you know, funding for the statewide trail system idea, so I’m trying to figure out what help you need from the advisory.

MR. MAYFIELD: It goes in one ear and on somebody’s desk, right, Cindy?

MR. GAUNA: Wait, you guys, wait. This is Joe, hold on. That was Ester saying when they start the process of changing away from DMV and getting the budget going.....

MR. MAYFIELD: Oh, okay. Got it.

MR. GAUNA: .....she is going to need our help that’s when I pledge that they’ll have it.

MR. MAYFIELD: Okay. See, I was confused, that’s exactly what I needed to know. Thanks, Joe.

MR. GAUNA: Yeah.

MR. MAYFIELD: Yeah, this is Dan. I -- you know, I am fairly sure that I can pull together my 200 members in support of any DNR initiative to increase the grooming pool.
MS. HARRIS: The other issue with grooming, we’ve gotten several people who have wanted to add new trails, one in Southeast and one Sitka and are interested in that, and that I think should also be an option. If we’re going to build this program to be bigger and better, we ought to allow more people to apply for the trails in their areas, you know?

MR. GAUNA: This is Joe. Let’s keep -- there’s two parts to this. We said last year we’re going to not add any trails to be groomed.....

MS. HARRIS: Right.

MR. GAUNA: .....but there should be a process of some sort to identify a trail as a dedicated Snow Trac trail.....

MS. HARRIS: Okay.

MR. GAUNA: .....that would make it eligible for grooming in the future at some time. Okay? So let’s make sure that we’re talking the two things. Maybe Southeast wants to put a trail in and Copper Center, they wanted to put in a trail, okay, well that’s fine, let’s designate it as a Snow TRAC trail and then when money comes, they can put in for funding.

MS. HITE: The trails to nowhere again. Instead of making a statewide trail system where everybody actually has a trail somewhere in their district then and is getting money for it from Snow TRAC.

MR. GAUNA: Right, and Cindy, that’s where DNR says when
they start getting the statewide trail system designated, that’s when we’ll jump in and help out as well. Well, we probably should need another telecon in a few weeks or take this up in the August meeting. We do have to button up.

MS. HARRIS: Thank you. Does anyone else have a final thought at this moment? We didn’t come away with any action items, but I do think we opened some discussion topics here and I really want to continue this discussion. What I’m going to do is when Director Ellis gets back to town, I’m going to -- we’ll have a very clear record of the meeting and everybody’s comments and concerns and I’ll sit down and talk with him about these things and people’s concerns, solicit some more public comment at some point, that’s very important, Cindy, and come up with some different and maybe a different set or proposals for solving some of these issues.

I know that one thing that Deputy Commissioner Fogels has said that he really wants us to have a clear identification of some of these issues that are most important to us and ones that we would prioritize for solving or resolving. And so maybe we can also come up with a clear short list of the most important problems that we see as the ones that are most important to come up with solutions for in the short-term or in the long-term, either way, but the ones we really want to prioritize.

So I’d like to get that to the Commissioner’s Office at
some point and......

MR. WILKE: Darcy, this is Mark.

MS. HARRIS: Yes, Mark.

MR. WILKE: I think I can probably sum this up pretty succinctly on what I heard and through all my experience in doing this is that it would be the feeling of this group that the Department of Natural Resources should be requesting grooming money in the budgetary process and that the Snow TRAC program, grant program, the $5 DMV fees could be used for safety and education and trail development programs.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Here, here, Mark.

MS. HARRIS: Yep, that sounds right.

MR. WILKE: I think that’s as simple as it gets right there.

MS. HARRIS: Thank you, Mark.

MR. WILKE: Let me clarify one thing. Grooming, staking and marking should all be paid for through the budgetary process.

MS. HARRIS: Yeah, that’s all part of the same thing, making the trails clear and safe and marked. Thank you, Mark, that was excellent.

MR. BIESEL: Hey, Darcy, this is Wayne, I just got one quick item.

MS. HARRIS: Yes, Wayne.

MR. BIESEL: For the next agenda items for future Snow
TRAC conferences or whatever, we do need to finalize what the
grooming standards are. I know they’ve been kicked around and
you know, I’m hearing that it’s on somebody’s desk. That’s
because we don’t have a sanction set by both the Snow TRAC
board and state parks, so we need to work that one out so that
we can include those in the next grant cycle.

MR. LUTH: Hey, Wayne, can you take and email to the
board your thoughts on what should be on that and we could
just reply to you directly and get that cleared up real
easily?

MR. GAUNA: Yeah.

MR. BIESSEL: Let me get back to you on that. I think
it’s -- it’s not something that I’m specifically going to
recommend because there was a lot of work done.....

MR. GAUNA: Yes, yes, yes.

MR. BIESSEL: .....that I wasn’t a party to.

(Indiscernible) did a lot of work on this a few years ago and
I know it was a controversial issue with the board, so this
needs to be kind of a separate -- we need to talk about this
separately and I don’t think we have the time right here to do
it.

(multiple speech)

MR. LUTH: Maybe we could have a mini meeting just with
you and the board.

MR. BIESSEL: Thank you, Bill.
MR. MAYFIELD: Darcy, this is Dan. Those standards need to be talked about in the public form.

MR. BIESSEL: I’m not comfortable just putting off recommendations right now because I don’t know enough about it and -- yeah.

MR. MAYFIELD: I think it just needs to be another agenda item at our next discussion.

MR. GAUNA: This is Joe. Wayne, you’ve been doing this stuff for a number of years. How about at least starting with a draft like we did today. Let’s talk with some -- just some talking points, but you need to do it, not us.

MR. BIESSEL: I’ll talk to Darcy about it.

MR. GAUNA: Okay.

MS. HARRIS: Sounds good. Thanks, Wayne. Okay, any other final thoughts? I think we’ve talked about having another meeting at some point. Yes, John.

MR. SCUDDER: Are you going to email us the minutes like you did last time?

MS. HARRIS: Yes. When we get them, we certainly will, absolutely everybody will have them. You bet. Of course. So then everybody will have a record of these things and we can come up with the next agenda and where we go from here for our agenda items. Does anybody have any final thoughts? I think Mark had a good summary of what came out of here and -- somebody have a thought?
MR. MORRISON: This is Andy. Yeah, and it’s -- the other thing with (indiscernible) with DMV and I understand, you know, going through a bunch of (indiscernible) it’s a good idea and it could also take five or 10 years.

MR. GAUNA: Nope.

MR. MORRISON: Is that if we can get mobile DMV (indiscernible) and like Arctic Man, (indiscernible) Alaska, Iron Dog, maybe Petersville Road on a busy weekend and just make it easy for people to register their sleds instead of asking the troopers to do it. I think a lot of people will glad to spend the 10 bucks, 20 bucks and you’d probably get (indiscernible) maybe $50,000 or $60,000 (indiscernible).

MS. HARRIS: Okay, we’ll add that to one of the ideas, Andy, thank you very much. I really appreciate everyone’s input and time away from your busy days. It’s really valuable to have all of you share your thoughts and ideas for how we can make this program better and that’s really the goal here. Me, as a new program administrator, is I’d like to see whatever this program turns out to be, I’d really like it to be an excellent program that we can all be really proud of and happy with and I’d like it to be accountable and we have everybody can say they were part of doing something that was excellent for the state and the citizens.

So whatever that evolution needs to be, I’d like to be a part of that and I’d like you guys to continue the dialogue.
Thank you very much for joining us today.

(Whispered conversation)

MR. SCUDDER: See you guys.

MS. HARRIS: Bye everyone.

MR. BAKER: We are off record.

(Off tape)
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June 22, 2012

Sonya Hewes