

Governor's Snowmobile Council

February 7, 2024

Present:

Pat Poulin, Chairman
Jacob Metayer, VT State Police
Jenna Reed, Fish & Wildlife
Marc Poulin, VT Sheriff Association & Washington County Sheriff
Gary Nolan, VAST L/E Committee Chair
Claire Polfus, Forest Parks & Recreation
Michael Smith, Vermont DMV
Matt Walker, Vermont State Representative
Mike Mutascio, Governor Appointee
Star Poulin, Governor Appointee
Jeff Halpin, Governor Appointee
Jim Hill, Pending Governor Appointee

VAST Staff Present:

Cindy Locke, VAST Executive Director
Mandy Dwinell, Office & Programs Manager
Matt Tetreault, VAST Trails Administrator
Tina Bedard, Office & Programs Assistant

The meeting was convened at 3:02PM via Zoom by Pat Poulin.

Approval of Minutes

Star Poulin moved to approve the January minutes as presented; Mike Mutascio seconded. MOTION CARRIED.

Approval of SSTP Financial Report of December, Matt

Star Poulin moved to approve the December SSTP Financial Reports as presented; Mike Smith seconded. MOTION CARRIED.

Agency Reports

Vermont State Police (VSP), Jacob Metayer

Online: 707 In-Person: 83 (updates from 1 class pending)

790 students to date with a 100% pass rate.

About a dozen patrols with 103 inspections, 300 +/- miles and 87 hours logged.

Discussion on patrols, to date, 1 warning for no TMA. The majority of violations are for no safety certification.

Fish & Wildlife, Jenna Reed

429 contacts

148 Inspections

3 crashes (1 on ice)

3 no TMA tickets so far

189 hours logged (~80 hours training on trail and in class)

A few sheriff's departments reached out on dual patrols regarding drinking.

Received a request for snowmobile trail training for new wardens.

2-3 warnings for no TMA, several warnings for display and insurance violations, and lack of safety certification card. For warnings, riders are given a specified timeframe to present documentation if not, they receive a fine.

Sheriff's Association, Marc Poulin –VT Sheriff Association & Washington County Sheriff

Windham County purchased 2 snowmobiles from receiving the VAST grant, they are setup and ready to go, The first detail for Washington County last Saturday, law enforcement has been patrolling new gas stations and park & rides. To date, 12 safety inspections have been performed.

Police Chiefs & Southern VT Wilderness Search & Rescue, Paul Doucette

Not present, attending NY State Parks training held February 5-9, 2024.

Limited snow was reported in Southern VT.

Department of Motor Vehicles, Michael Smith

Updates for January 2024 of 17,671 registrations. DMV has noticed there are registrations received from a variety of other states.

DMV registration validation stickers are not currently on the legislative bill.

Discussion on updates for wheeled vehicle registrations and topics that are currently in the Misc. Transportation Bill.

Forest, Parks & Recreation, Claire Polfus

Public survey for Move Forward Together Vermont active.

The mobile-friendly online survey takes approximately 15-20 minutes and asks general and specific questions related to how and where you spend time outside and your opinions about priorities for outdoor recreation in your community.

Move Forward Together Vermont is a project of the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation and the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative. The yearlong process will result in a vision and priorities for outdoor recreation in Vermont that will direct funding and resources for the next five years. Learn more at the Move Forward Together Vermont website.

Survey link - https://croplanning.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eaMDILnMgHD0690

Website link - <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/e349623726f9407d8d14c5cc2470dcb6?item=1>

Discussion of February 2024 being Star Poulin's last meeting as a Governor Appointee. Jim Hill is a pending Governor Appointee representative for Northwest area.

VAST

TMA Sales

To date, TMAs processed are 18,730, down an estimated 2k TMAs to date last season.

Finding the majority of riders are legal except for carrying their safety certification card. Working with the Safety Committee for an increased notification of awareness of the safety course.

VAST is working on reviewing potential incentives and raffle for the 2025 season for Early Bird TMA purchasers.

Areas throughout Vermont are seeing low snow and experiencing early-season conditions.

Discussion on the reminder of additional safety awareness for the April 8 eclipse as there is expected to be a significant increase of tourists to the state who may not be familiar with the areas and private trails.

Discussion on new safety equipment project reaching out to area search & rescue departments for feedback on their equipment and accident response frequency. Goal of the project to help determine areas of potential equipment need where equipment grant funds may be used.

Law Enforcement (LE) Committee, Gary

Grants received by Windham County for 2 snowmobiles and Fish & Wild for snowmobile trailers.

Recently received a call from Hardwick Police Chief RE: questions about violations for riders trails that are closed on the VAST map to a warning.

Discussion on off trail riding.

VAST Safety Committee, Stan

Not Present.

SSTP Trail Report, Matt

Anticipating some winter weather to come.

There is riding in pockets throughout Vermont, seen lots of grooming in these areas.

Areas of low snow and waterholes throughout Vermont.

Clubs have been updating trail conditions and frequent updates on their club Facebook pages.

Legislative Report

House Report, Matt Walker

Nothing new to report.

Discussion on an electronic insurance card for snowmobilers being passed the last session effective July 1, 2023.

Senate Report, Jane Kitchel

Not Present.

Appointee Reports

Northwest, Star

Little to no riding in the area. Clubs have been out clearing trees & debris.

Northeast, Mike

Decent riding in Essex County.

A recent artery to Island Pond from Newark closed due to off trail riding.

Despite low snow conditions, businesses have seen positive support from snowmobilers.

Central, Jeff

A mixture of snow conditions throughout the region. Anticipate may trails to be under caution or closed by the weekend.

200+ riders attended the "Old Iron Vintage Ride" in Washington last Saturday.

South, Cindy

Great snow was reported in Barnard, Cavendish & Woodstock. Woodford Snobusters & Deerfield Valley Stump Jumpers areas have seen a lot of traffic.

Discussion on April eclipse safety reminder to VAST members.

Next meeting is Wednesday, March 6, at 3pm via Zoom.

Motion to Adjourn:

Michael Smith moved to close the meeting at 4:10pm; Mike Mutascio seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Mandy Dwinell,

VAST Office & Programs Manager