

VAST BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING

February 25, 2008

DIRECTORS, ALTERNATES & STAFF PRESENT: Steve Fielding-Addison; John Perkins-Bennington; Ken Gammell-Caledonia; Jeff Fay-Chittenden; Dave Page-Essex; John Ross-Franklin; Bill Oakes-Grand Isle; Brian Wells (*absent*)-Lamoille; Larry Trotter-Orange; Brian Cook-Orleans; Merritt Budd-Rutland; Johnny Lynds-Washington; Roone Gibbs-Windham; Bruce Murray-Windsor; Pat Poulin -President; Jim Hill-Vice-President; Mark Ellingwood-Treasurer; Bonnie Holbrook-Recording Secretary; Bryant Watson-Executive Director, Alexis Nowalk-SSTP Trails Administrator; Kent Gardner-VAST News Editor, Ann Shangraw-Past President

GUESTS: Mitzi Oakes, Jim Holbrook, Star Poulin, Conrad Stewart, Ed Hebebrand, Mark Reeves, Mike O'Hara, Frances Pillsbury, Josh Nelson, Joe Cicia, Sandy Woodbeck, Doug Wilson, Mike Sisino, Dan Begiebing, Bob Stebbins, Mike Majors, Doug Wilson, Doug Lawrence, Jeff Duda, Bob Campo, John Plante, Josh Nelson, Eric Paige

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by President Pat Poulin.

AGENDA: *Larry Trotter moved and Jeff Fay seconded to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried.*

9c Toyota-Scion offer

SECRETARY'S REPORT: *Jim Hill moved and Roone Gibbs seconded to approve the minutes of January 28th, 2007 Board of Directors meeting. Motion carried.*

TREASURER'S REPORT: *Roone Gibbs moved and John Perkins seconded to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Motion carried.* We spent over \$1,000 last month for mileage reimbursement due to the VAST vehicle not being available. There were questions on the costs of UPS and whether we get quotes from other carriers. There was also a question for the check for legal fees which is for ongoing situations. There is still no clarification for credit card charges, the Executive Committee needs to work on this. There were questions regarding why we paid over \$11,000 for a 2-place trailer, questions on the amount of money spent at All Around Power and charges on the credit cards which were for trail counters for the Trail Impact Study.

CONSENT CALENDAR-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT and TRAIL ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT: *Roone Gibbs moved and John Perkins seconded to approve the Consent Calendar as presented. Motion carried.* Bryant Watson asked each Director to update the contact information for their county officers.

COUNTY REPORTS: **Caledonia County** reported that everyone is grooming and their trails are the greatest they've ever been. **Rutland County** has a washout on Corridor 4 in the Trolley Line area of West Rutland. The rising water has washed out about 30 feet of the trail and they had to close the trail as of Sunday. The trail may have to be rerouted. The trails in the mountains of **Bennington County** are in great shape. The Feeder trails are very tough though because the groomers cannot break the ice on the trails which makes it tough down to get gas. **Windham County** is in good shape although they have a lot of water problems that need to be fixed after each rain. The director has not heard from the southern part of the county. **Orange County** is in pretty good shape. There are a few spots that are a little rough even with grooming being done almost daily. We had the Make-A-Wish Donation drive at Carol's Corner where Jim & Bonnie Holbrook served hot dogs courtesy of Orange County. Sheriff Bill Bohnyak sent two deputies up and they did a lot of safety inspections for riders that requested them. We collected \$258 in donations. **Essex County** is good but has some spots that are rough and they have received some complaints about not enough grooming. They are only grooming two times a week because that is all they get paid for with their grooming contract. **Grand Isle County** is in pretty good shape and has some great riding. **Chittenden County** is hit or miss with snow coverage depending on where you are. Their Make-A-Wish Donation site was at Frank's Motorcycle and they raised \$500 with 30 donations including club donations. **Washington County** had a death on their trails yesterday. There are a few issues around the county. They have some amazing riding. The Iron Dog Brigade Ride was held in Washington County this year and it was a lot of fun and included folks from the west. Johnny Lynds was very instrumental in the ride. The Killington & Stowe Snowmobile Tours both hosted donation drops for Make-A-Wish and they raised \$730. **Addison County** has some of the "worse trails" due to a lot of water, mud and low snow or no snow coverage. **Orleans County** has some of the best trails in the past few years. They have a lot more riders this year. **Windsor County** is well and has some good riding. **Franklin County** has to go east if they want to ride.

BARRE SNO-BEES – GROTON STATE FOREST TRAILS: John Plante presented a brief history beginning in 1997, of the Route 302 trail from Barre to the Groton Railroad Bed trail. The Barre Sno-Bees are asking for help from VAST and they want to work with VAST on keeping this trail open. The Sno-Bees, at the invitation from VTC (Vermont Traditions Coalition), met with Secretary of Natural Resources, George Crombie last week. Mr. Plante shared quotes from Secretary Crombie which included no "Seyon Preservation" meaning they want a working landscape where people would appreciate the environment and for people to use the land. The Sno-Bees asked President Pat Poulin to appoint a VAST committee with representation from Orange, Washington and Caledonia Counties to address this. The trail has a major impact on snowmobile trails in those three counties. The Sno-Bees also presented a list of proposals to the Board.

VAST WEBPAGE STATUS AND TIMELINE - KENT: Kent Gardner distributed a sign up sheet and asked each Director to let him know if they would like a bundle of the VAST News to distribute in businesses in their areas. He did a presentation on the new website. He showed

how we can update the website easily. He posted the minutes that were approved tonight. If we like this model, we can go live this week or as soon as the Trails Conditions are updated. On Trail Conditions, he broke it down by regions in the state and not by specific counties. There is a section for clubs. Even if a club does not have their own website, they can still enter events and information from their club. With Magnolia the website can be expanded and can accommodate online sales. Mark Reeves questioned the ability for clubs to update their TMA sales with the Excel spreadsheets they currently use for TMA sales. You will need to have Firefox browser to be able to update the site. In building this site, Ryan Gardner has been contributed ten to fifteen patches to improve Magnolia. *Ann Shangraw moved and Bonnie Holbrook seconded that we go live as soon as Kent Gardner feels the new website is ready to go live. Motion carried.* Jeff Fay suggested that we submit a major press release when we go live. It is Kent's personal opinion that we get as many clubs as possible to come on board. He is recommending that we offer clubs to have a website on this server at no cost to the club. He has received some suggestions regarding some cost sharing. Each Director is asked to go back to their counties and find out from each club if they have an interest. John Perkins suggested that if we offer a completely free website it might help to have the trails conditions updated more frequently. There will be different levels of editing privileges. The clubs will be responsible for their club content.

SNOWMOBILE LAW ENFORCEMENT: Bryant Watson put this on the agenda due to discussions at the Governor's Snowmobile Council regarding law enforcement funding in addition to a letter from the Chester Snowmobile Club. We have received numerous calls and comments regarding inconsistency to law enforcement coverage. The letter from the Chester Club came about due to a club ride in Essex County where they were stopped multiple times by law enforcement during a 125 mile ride. One of the things that were suggested by the Club was for the officers to have offenders pull their sleds over to the side of the trail, move others through the inspection point so they can get on their way and then write the ticket(s) to the offenders.

Doug Lawrence from Fish & Wildlife felt that there is not a problem with different law enforcement check points being in a small area. He feels the Safety Inspection Sticker is a complication because some riders think that if they have the safety inspection sticker they should not get stopped again. An article in the VAST News talking about the Safety Inspection Sticker and just what it means to have one was suggested. Bob Stebbins will work with Kent Gardner to produce the article.

Dan Begiebing from Vermont State Police pointed out that we have more snow this year and more funding available so they are more visible on the trails. They have been working out some problems they've notified of. The State Police do their entire marine and snowmobile patrolling with Auxiliary Troopers. The Auxiliary Police are usually part time and do not receive benefits which is a cost savings to the snowmobile law enforcement funding. Every year they have a weekend of special training that he brings in his auxiliary troopers in for. The Southern Task Force has a Snowmobile Task Force Training for law enforcement officers too. The Southwest Snowmobile Task Force allocated \$35,000 a year for enforcement and is comprised of a group of law enforcement officers work over-time and patrol trails. Dan Begiebing has been working with the new supervisor of the group and is now getting reports from them which were not made available in the past.

Bob Stebbins, Chittenden County Sheriff's Department suggested that if there is a problem to please contact your law enforcement right away instead of waiting. If you have a problem with a law enforcement officer, get their name and badge number and get in touch with their corporal or their sergeants and discuss the problem. Bob Stebbins has developed a great working relationship with folks in his county and he goes to all the county meetings and works very closely with his county. He has ridden patrols with Bill Oakes, Pat Poulin and Jim Hill and asked for feedback from them. They have learned by working together and building a strong partnership. In Chittenden County they will wave sleds through if they are stacking up. He encouraged everyone to create an email list and contact list of your local law enforcement. Bill Bohnyak reported that the Sheriff's Department alone has issued over 14,000 inspections this season. Coordination in the local area comes about by building partnerships with the local law enforcements and clubs. His department works with the Orange County clubs.

Pat Poulin asked Dan Begiebing to address the Law Enforcement Agencies request at the Governor's Snowmobile Council for increase in funding. Without VAST and the VAST funding for snowmobile law enforcement, there would not be snowmobile law enforcement funding in the State of Vermont. For the amount of funding that the State Police get, they can only cover weekends for 12 weeks. Bob Stebbins explained that the idea of increasing snowmobile registrations was to help increase law enforcement coverage. The snowmobile registrations have not been increased in about ten years. They (the law enforcement agencies) would like to see an increase in snowmobile registrations and that the increase would be earmarked by VAST as additional funding for snowmobile law enforcement.

UPDATE ON ATR GROOMING: Alexis Nowalk gave an update on the grooming of the ATR (American Thunder Riders). Lamoille County Director Brian Wells has been doing the grooming.

OTHER: Merritt Budd asked how the Safety Stickers work. The State Police orders the stickers, distributes them to the participating agencies and VAST pays for stickers. The money that is paid for Fees and Fines are supposed to come back to VAST. Rutland County thinks there are too many TMA forms and they would like to have them consolidated. Rutland County also asked about the safety lights from Impact Industries.

MILEAGE FOR LAC MEMBERS – JIM HILL: Agenda will be tabled to next month.

APPOINT TRUSTEES FOR VT SNOW TRAILS CONSERVANCY & TRUST: Pat Poulin has not secured the seven members for the Board of Directors for the Conservancy but is working on them. He plans to have a slate to present to the Board next month.

TOYOTA-SCION OFFER: John Henning from Courtesy Toyota & Scion contacted Bryant Watson and asked what it would take to have VAST endorse Toyota. He has offered a Tundra V8 4x4 Crew Max and VAST would pay for DMV fees and insurance. Bryant Watson suggests that we keep the Chevy we have now and use it along with the Toyota if we accept the deal. Courtesy Toyota-Scion is also requesting exclusive automotive rights to the VAST member list for marketing purposes for the term of the lease which would be three years. They would also offer monthly specials to all VAST Members including VIP pricing, service coupons, accessory coupons, among other savings. *Ann Shangraw moved and Jim Hill seconded that we extend the meeting for 45 minutes. Motion carried.* There was a discussion on the access to the VAST membership list. John Ross suggested that we do not jump onto this offer but check with other dealers. Larry Trotter suggested that we check with Courtesy Toyota & Scion to offer access to inserts in the VAST News or use a mailing house so they do not see the actual mailing list of VAST Members. The concerns are with the mailing lists and communications with other local dealers prior to accepting a deal. *Ken Gammell moved and Steve Fielding seconded that we authorize Bryant Watson to go to Courtesy Toyota & Scion and see if they will accept our offer of keeping the VAST Member list private from them. Motion carried with Jim Hill abstaining.*

VAST EQUIPMENT GRANT-IN-AID POLICY CHANGE: Alexis Nowalk did a presentation on the proposed change to the Equipment Grant-In-Aid Program. A couple of years ago, the Trails Committee created a subcommittee to evaluate the current Equipment Grant-In-Aid program and to make any proposed changes. As of last year, the subcommittee determined that the current program for Equipment Grant-In-Aid does not help the smaller clubs with few members or fewer miles. Last year the Board did authorize an increase to \$50,000 for Class I Groomers which was a temporary fix. The Trails Committee proposes that we continue use of mileage contract and add five-year grooming weeks to the formula. The clubs that do not meet the new criteria that are under the current contract would be grandfathered for the term of their current agreement. The grooming weeks average will be based at the conclusion of this year's grooming season. Alexis reviewed the full proposal from the Trails Committee. The bottom line is that we are looking at a 21% increase in the Equipment Grant-In-Aid program if this is approved. The Trails Committee has approved this proposed policy and they are asking the Board to review the proposal and then vote on it next month. Doug Wilson pointed out that if we want to keep our equipment up to date in the state, we would need to plan on updating ten units a year. This proposal is to help more clubs afford to upgrade equipment. The Trails Committee has decided that the grants for drags are working and is 50%. Alexis will make sure all Board members will receive the PowerPoint presentation to share with their counties.

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS: The Marketing & PR Committee reported that we raised about \$3,000 from the Make-A-Wish Donation Drops. The VAST 40th Anniversary Event will be July 26th at the Hartland Rec Center. There will probably be a motorcycle event during the day with a BBQ and bands playing from the afternoon into the evening. Each Director is to bring a list of Invitees for Trails Conservancy Ball to Josh Nelson. The Awards, Recognition, Scholarship & Volunteerism reported that the Scholarship Application deadline is March 1st. The deadline for nominations for the annual awards is May 5th. The committee is planning on completing nomination forms to use as guidelines and having them available in March.

OTHER: NY Times article did an article about snowmobiling in Vermont that was very good publicity. It was a very positive article.

The next Director's Meeting is March 24th, 2008 at 6:00 PM with refreshments provided by Essex County. *Bruce Murray moved and Dave Page seconded to adjourn at 9:45 PM. Motion carried.*

Respectfully submitted by,
Bonnie Holbrook
VAST Recording Secretary