

1 **SnowTRAC Meeting Minutes 8/26/2015 - Approved**

2 **SnowTRAC Members Present:**

- 3 Dan Mayfield – Chair – Mat-Su/Copper River Basin Rep.
- 4 John Scudder – Vice-Chair – Anchorage Rep.
- 5 Erin McLarnon – Anchorage Rep.
- 6 Cynthia Hite – Mat-Su/Copper River Basin Rep.
- 7 Gary Anderson – Kenai Peninsula/Valdez/Prince William Sound Rep.
- 8 Justin Derr – Kenai /Southeast Alaska Rep.

9
10 **SnowTRAC Members Not Present:**

- 11 Stephen Enochs – Fairbanks Rep.

12
13 **DNR Staff Present:**

- 14 Ben Ellis – Director of Alaska State Parks
- 15 Jamie Walker – Administrative Operations Manager
- 16 Darcy Harris – Alaska State Trails Program Coordinator
- 17 Steve Neel – Alaska State Parks Grants Administrator
- 18 Justin Wholey – Resource Specialist - Alaska State Trails Program

19
20 **Others Present:**

- 21 Darrell Breese – Staff representative for State Representative Mark Neuman
- 22 Debra McGhan – Alaska Avalanche Information Center Executive Director
- 23 Rick Northey – Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers President
- 24 Jay Northey – Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers Administrator
- 25 Harry Holt – Lake Louise Snowmachine Club President
- 26 Randy Arndt – Lake Louise Snowmachine Club Treasurer

27
28 *New SnowTRAC member Justin Derr is in attendance via teleconference.

29
30 **Board Elections**

31 **Motion:** Gary Anderson nominated Dan Mayfield to continue serving as SnowTRAC Chair. Erin McLarnon
32 seconded the motion.

33 **Vote: Yes-5 No-0**

34 The motion passed. Dan Mayfield is Chair once again.

35
36 Dan Mayfield nominated John Scudder to serve as Vice-Chair for SnowTRAC. Gary Anderson seconded
37 the motion.

38 **Vote: Yes-5 No-0**

39 The motion passed. John Scudder is the new Vice-Chair.

40 **Public Comment**

41 Harry Holt commented that SnowTRAC, State Parks, and Alaska Snowmobile Association did a great job
42 informing people about the budget issue last year (SnowTRAC was not included in the Governor's
43 budget last year, but was later added to the state budget legislatively). He also thought that the board
44 should inform more people about what it is that SnowTRAC accomplishes, so it's not seen as just a
45 collection agency. He also wanted to make sure that people knew how important SnowTRAC trails were,
46 and how much they are used by snowmachiners, as well as other user groups.

47
48 Rick Northey thanked the State Parks staff that he had been working with over the last 4 or 5 years. He
49 also thanked the board members for taking the time to be at the meeting. He reported that after going
50 through the grant process with ORTAB, the Cabin Hoppers were awaiting delivery of a new PistenBully
51 trail-groomer. He said that it is a \$230,000 piece of equipment, with \$ 130,000 coming from the all
52 volunteer club, and \$100,000 from an ORTAB grant last year; the grant helped get over the mark to be
53 able to pay for it. He closed in thanking the parks staff for getting everything processed, and to
54 SnowTRAC for their efforts as volunteers.

55
56 Debra McGhan thanked SnowTRAC for performing a tough job that spread funds throughout the
57 statewide snowmobile community. She asked the committee to consider education as a key element in
58 their decision making process, and mentioned that during the last two years there were no education
59 grants funded by SnowTRAC. She said that she heard SnowTRAC's request that education projects
60 should be delivered on a statewide basis, and not a one-shot deal, and that hopefully this grant project
61 will meet the committees expectations.

62
63 Justin Derr explained that his goal joining the board was working on the Southeast region. He mentioned
64 that there was only one established Juneau (snowmobile) club, and a few private clubs, but he would
65 like to get more established clubs together and bring everyone in Southeast together to improve and
66 grow the riding community.

67
68 Cindy Hite commented that she would like to get the program running smoothly, have a statewide trail
69 system, and employ a full time trail coordinator to travel around the state and promote SnowTRAC. She
70 said that the safety part of the program should be the signs on the trails, and that the safety curriculum
71 should go a different route if we don't have all the SnowTRAC funding that we would like.

72
73 Gary Anderson thought that the program is doing pretty well with the amount of money available to
74 work with, but there have been cuts over the last several years. He mentioned that SnowTRAC has tried
75 to find more money by trying to increase registration rates over the years. He noted that the program
76 needs more money.

77
78 John Scudder commented that when SnowTRAC first started there were 500 miles of trails with a \$5
79 registration fee, and that this year there are 2000 miles of trail with the same registration fee of \$5;

80 Groomers have many expenses, and unless fees increase, money for the program will be tight for the
81 next few years.

82

83 **Past Year SnowTRAC Funding Issue**

84 Dan Mayfield outlined a budget issue that SnowTRAC encountered over the last year, and its eventual
85 resolution. The SnowTRAC line item wasn't included in the Governor's last budget. Only the legislature
86 could put the line-item back in by the time SnowTRAC was aware of the issue. Mayfield said that several
87 folks mounted a campaign with the legislature to get that funding put back in. Kevin Hite, Dan Mayfield,
88 and others wrote letters supporting the SnowTRAC line item, and it was added back into the budget by
89 legislators. Mayfield thanked Rep. Neuman, Rep. Kathy Tilton, Jim Culver, Sen. Huggins, and Sen.
90 Dunleavy. He also said that the entire Mat-Su delegation were extremely supportive, and possibly other
91 legislators. He also mentioned that the Governor was in support, but it was too late to change anything
92 in the budget when it was called to his office's attention.

93

94 **Draft House Bill & SnowTRAC Draft Resolution**

95 Dan Mayfield described a draft house bill that Rep. Mark Neuman and his office created to respond to
96 SnowTRAC's funding issues. The bill as written would increase the snowmobile and OHV registration fee
97 from \$10 for 2 years to \$20 for 2 years, with an optional 6 year registration for \$50; if passed the bill
98 could take effect on January 1st, 2017. Mayfield then presented a SnowTRAC draft resolution supporting
99 the bill; he also expressed interest in an automatic registration cost increase a few years after the initial
100 increase.

101

102 Darrell Breese (staff representing Rep. Neuman) described the draft bill as addressing the concern that
103 there is not enough money available for SnowTRAC. Breese noted SnowTRAC's interest in an automatic
104 registration increase a few years after the initial increase, and language in statute that automatically
105 triggers the money being included in the budget. Breese suggested that SnowTRAC include those desires
106 in their resolution language. Breese also said that Rep. Neuman's office is receptive to any suggestions
107 SnowTRAC has; he noted that if the registration is increased too much there is the risk of fewer people
108 not choosing to register their vehicle at all.

109

110 John Scudder asked if there could be a mechanism in place to increase registration in a few years
111 automatically. Breese said the language would have to be included in this draft bill, and the exact
112 increase amount and date would have to be stated, as well; he also said that legislators may resist
113 recurring rate increases, but that he would see if Neuman was receptive to a one-time increase, maybe
114 \$12 in 2020.

115

116 Dan Mayfield read the Draft Resolution in its entirety; it suggested revising snowmachine and off-
117 highway vehicle registration fees, and to give SnowTRAC increased authority for (recommendation of)
118 disbursement. It also referenced economic opportunity spurred from winter trails, that SnowTRAC is
119 underfunded, and that SnowTRAC supports Rep. Neuman's draft bill. The draft resolution also requests

120 that the DMV authorization to release funds should become codified so disbursement is automatic, thus
121 not requiring a line item in the state’s budget every year. The resolution also supports an increase in
122 funding authority authorized from the DMV, from \$250,000 to \$500,000, to meet demands of riders.
123 Dan Mayfield also discussed language to incorporate a fee increase in 2020 for \$12 for one year (\$24 for
124 two years). Breese also added that the resolution will be attached to the legislation, and if the board
125 wants them to review it yearly, then they should include that language.
126

127 **Appearance by Director Ellis**

128 Director Ellis had some suggestions to improve the resolution language. The last paragraph said the
129 DMV will release funds to SnowTRAC, but the DMV cannot do that, DMV would have to release funds to
130 the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) *for* SnowTRAC. Director Ellis also said that the
131 authorization limit at one time was higher, than it currently is, but it was reduced because the
132 registration dollars were not reaching that limit; he explained that the authorization limit should be at or
133 slightly more than the money available for SnowTRAC, as well. The Director mentioned that the DMV
134 has a poor accounting system currently, and because of this, registration numbers for snowmobiles vs.
135 OHV’s and new registrations vs. renewals is unknown. He also said that in the future there will be an
136 improved system where this data can be queried.
137

138 The Director also stated that Alaska has the lowest snowmobile registration fee in US, and that some
139 states have a one-time lifetime registration fee; he also said that SnowTRAC’s interest in a \$5 increase is
140 a good step forward until the new DMV accounting system comes online; then the committee could
141 analyze the data, and modify the registration fee structure differently, if needed. Director Ellis thought if
142 the point-of-sale registrations make up most of the funding, then it may be good to focus on those. Ellis
143 also mentioned that parks can roll over money to the following year, which could enable DPOR to
144 spread the funding beyond the year it is collected, for multi-year or one-time registrations.
145

146 **Motion:** John Scudder moved to modify the resolution to include mention of an automatic raise in
147 registration fees in 2022. Gary Anderson seconded.

148 **Discussion:** Cindy Hite thought that this was good language so the board doesn’t have to go through this
149 same process again down the road.

150 **Vote: Yes-5 No-0**

151 The motion passed.
152

153 Daryl Breese also noted that as the draft legislation is updated Sen. Neuman’s office will keep in contact
154 with Dan Mayfield and the committee.
155
156
157

158 **Motion:** Cindy Hite moved to approve the resolution (resolution hard copy passed out in room earlier) in
159 principle, pending the work out of the final details with Director Ellis, and present to the resolution to
160 the legislators. Justin Derr seconded.

161 **Vote: Yes-5 No-0**

162 The motion passed.

163

164 Director Ellis informed the board that DPOR or he didn't drop the ball, as a magazine article recently
165 stated, and that the governor's administration for the last nine years added SnowTRAC to the budget
166 automatically. Ellis said that when he found out he notified the Governor's Office immediately. The
167 Director pointed out that the new administration just didn't have experience with this like the previous
168 administration did, and SnowTRAC just fell through the cracks without intent.

169

170 Director Ellis said he supports putting in statute that the snowmachine registration money goes to the
171 DPOR only for snowmobile activities. Until then the committee should send the Governor's Office a
172 letter requesting that the Governor's budget include SnowTRAC funding, to make sure the funding issue
173 doesn't happen again.

174

175 Ellis also thought that the bill would likely have broad support and a good chance of passing. He also said
176 that he is committed to SnowTRAC and for the program to grow with more funding; he thanked the
177 SnowTRAC committee.

178

179 **DPOR Financial Discussion**

180 Steve Neel stated that the registration dollars for the past year were the lowest he'd seen, but there is
181 significant money left over from last season that evens this out somewhat. Neel also noted that there is
182 \$15,000 that was previously set aside for a rural Alaska safety grant, and that SnowTRAC should make a
183 recommendation for those funds.

184

185 **Motion:** Dan Mayfield moved to recommend the return of the \$15,000 that was set aside for a rural
186 Alaska safety grant back into the SnowTRAC pool of available funds. Tinker seconded.

187 **Vote: Yes-5 No-0**

188 The motion passed. SnowTRAC recommended returning the money to the SnowTRAC pool.

189

190 Dan Mayfield asked if the board could get an update to see when the DMV's new
191 registration/accounting system will be online. Jamie Walker says that DPOR can do that for the board.

192

193 **Safety & Education Grant Discussion**

194 Dan Mayfield noted that as his duties as assemblyman he sponsored a resolution (that passed
195 unanimously) to support the Alaska Avalanche Information Center Mobile App grant. He said he didn't
196 see it as a conflict, but would stay out of the vote if there were objections; there were none.

197 Cindy Hite thought that among the grants either the budgets were not complete or they were all
198 administrative costs.

199

200 **Live to Ride Another Day Mobile Game App – Alaska Avalanche Information Center, Inc.**

201 Darcy Harris noted that \$15,000 was a placeholder amount since there was no total listed in the budget.
202 She also noted that project materials from safety projects become property of that State of Alaska,
203 which she had been talking to the DNR IT department about. Dan Mayfield noted that the budget was
204 not complete. John Scudder thought that this app would be available to anyone on the internet, and
205 that SnowTRAC money should benefit only Alaskans. Gary Anderson said that ORTAB (Outdoor
206 Recreation Trails Advisory Board) would be a better funding avenue for this project. Cindy Hite stated
207 that the budget was poor, and that it was all administrative costs. Erin McLarnon commented that the
208 budget was not complete, as well.

209

210 **Aniak Snowmobile Safety Trails – Aniak Traditional Council**

211 Darcy Harris noted that this grant applied for signing and marking only; no grooming. Dan Mayfield was
212 concerned that the applicant is an extension of the local government, and would use this grant to fund
213 jobs, as well as fringe. John Scudder said that he supported trail marking, but not a project with a budget
214 this poor. Gary Anderson said that he likes the safety aspect, but would like the work to be by
215 volunteers.

216

217 **Alaska DPOR Interpretation & Education – Statewide Snowmachining Safety Brochure**

218 Dan Mayfield and Erin McLarnon thought the wages for the grant were excessive. John Scudder
219 questioned if more brochures would be printed when they ran out, and Steve Neel clarified that a much
220 smaller amount of money would be needed to distribute the same amount of brochures (once they
221 were designed).

222

223 SnowTRAC discussed the scores and decided to vote for each project individually.

224

225 **Motion:** John Scudder moved to recommend funding for the Alaska DPOR (Dept. of Parks and Outdoor
226 Recreation) grant. Erin McLarnon seconded.

227 **Discussion:** John Scudder thought that even though the budget was questionable, it would help folks
228 throughout the state. Cindy Hite thought that the State has too many fingers in the SnowTRAC money.

229 **Vote: Yes-2 No-3**

230 The motion failed.

231

232 **Motion**

233 John Scudder moved to recommend funding for the Aniak grant. Gary Anderson seconded.

234 **Vote: Yes-0 No-5**

235 The motion failed.

236

237

238 **Motion**

239 Cindy Hite moved to recommend funding for Alaska Avalanche Information Center’s project. John
240 Scudder seconded.

241 **Vote: Yes-0 No-5**

242 The motion failed.

243

244 Dan Mayfield suggested a tutorial to help applicants complete better applications, because quality
245 applications aren’t coming in. John Scudder stated that it may look like the board doesn’t support safety,
246 but a groomed and marked trail is a safe trail, and will save more lives than a piece of paper or an app.

247

248 **Grooming Grant Discussion**

249 Darcy Harris announced that Lake Louise Snowmachine Club applied to add a new trail (Crosswind
250 North) to the grooming pool, as well as funding in their grooming grant. Dan Mayfield questioned
251 whether the board should add new trails to the grooming pool, and mentioned that SnowTRAC decided
252 not to fund new trails at prior meetings. Cindy Hite thought it was important for folks to apply even if a
253 trail is not funded, so there is an assessment of need, but until there is more funding we shouldn’t fund
254 new trails. Harry Holt said that his club spent a lot of time getting the Crosswind North Trail legal, and
255 that having it in the pool would allow flexibility if other trails weren’t suitable to groom.

256

257 **Motion**

258 Dan Mayfield moved to accept this new trail (Lake Louise Snowmachine Club’s Crosswind North) into the
259 grooming pool and recommend funding its grooming for this season. John Scudder seconded.

260 **Discussion:** Cindy Hite said she didn’t support new trails because it doesn’t further a statewide trail
261 system.

262 **Vote: Yes-2 No-2**

263 The motion failed.

264

265 Cindy suggested putting together a list of trails that would be in the grooming pool, but recommended
266 for funding if more money became available. This list would include Lacey Lane and Crosswind North.

267

268 **Motion**

269 Cindy Hite moved to put the Lake Louise Trail in a file for legal trail status, and when funding becomes
270 available, we will revisit and take a vote on the funding recommendation for this trail. Gary Anderson
271 seconded.

272 **Vote: Yes-4 No-0**

273 The motion passed.

274

275 Dan Mayfield noted that \$278,326.27 is available for funding, and State Parks staff has put together a
276 spreadsheet with several funding options, and grooming can be funded at the 77% funding level.

277

278 **Motion**

279 John Scudder moved to go with column one, at the 77% (funding level) and zero grants. Gary Anderson
280 seconded.

281 **Discussion:** Cindy Hite asked why Lake Louise asked for \$10,000 less than last year. Randy Arndt
282 explained that the person that submitted the grant made a mistake.

283 **Vote: Yes-5 No-0**

284 The motion passed. SnowTRAC recommended funding grooming at the 77% funding level.
285

286 John Scudder noted that in theory, there may be some money available for Lake Louise if other areas
287 aren't able to groom as much as they want due to weather. Harry Holt asked what the chances of
288 getting reimbursed for grooming over their grant amount if they checked in with parks first, and Steve
289 Neel said to check in and parks can work with him to try and work something out if possible.

290
291 Dan Mayfield noted that the Mat-Su Borough has a recreational grant program for (501(c)(3) non-profit
292 organizations for gasoline and maintenance reimbursements. The deadline is August 28, and Community
293 Development Director Eric Phillips is the contact. Mayfield also said the Mat-Su Borough is funding
294 brushing; trail brushers can be rented. Also, he said that the Mat-Su Borough is putting together a
295 recreational trails bond package to fund bridges, trail hardening, and interpretive signs. It will likely be
296 finished in December, and be voted on next election.

297
298 Darcy Harris explained that there were three year board terms and one year elected terms.
299

300 **Motion**

301 Gary Anderson moved to have the elected positions (chair and vice chair) in SnowTRAC last for two
302 years. John Scudder seconded.

303 **Vote: Yes-5 No-0**

304 The motion passed.
305

306 Cindy Hite requested that the trails approved for SnowTRAC, but not being funded should be added to
307 the DPOR spreadsheet for the meetings. Darcy Harris took note of this.
308

309 Dan Mayfield expressed interest in looking into why some groomers are increasing the amount of funds
310 requested.
311

312 Cindy asked Justin Derr about the grant scoring process for a new member. Justin Derr said it was quite
313 difficult. Darcy Harris told the board that the score sheet would be improved for next year.
314

315 **Public Comment**

316 Rick Northey expressed interest in having signs available for groomers to indicate SnowTRAC funding for
317 trail grooming, also if there is a template available he would be able to make his own signs.

318 **Motion**

319 John Scudder moved to adjourn. Tinker seconded.

320 **Vote: Yes-5 No-0**

321 The motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 2:45pm.

322

323 ***Note:** All SnowTRAC members were not present to vote on all motions.