

Governor's Snowmobile Council November 1, 2023

Present:

Pat Poulin, Chairman
Jeff Halpin, Governor Appointee
Michael Smith, Vermont DMV
Claire Polfus, Forest Parks & Recreation
Jenna Reed, Fish & Wildlife
Paul Doucette, Chief's Association & Southern VT Wilderness Search & Rescue
Stan Choiniere, Governor Appointee
Mike Mustachio, Governor Appointee
Jacob Metayer, VT State Police
Marc Poulin, VT Sheriff Association & Washington County Sheriff

VAST Staff Present:

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

The meeting was convened at 3:03PM via Zoom by Pat Poulin.

Approval of Minutes

Stan Poulin moved to approve the October minutes as presented; Stan Choiniere seconded. MOTION CARRIED.

Approval of SSTP Financial Report September 2023, Matt

September SSTP Financial Report was not included with the Governor's Council reports prior to this meeting. Will be emailed for review and voted on at the December 2023 Governor's Council meeting.

The September SSTP Financial Report included standard administrative and office expenses as well as \$239k for liability insurance.

Agency Reports

Vermont State Police, Jacob Metayer

Two in-person classes are scheduled, with a third pending in the Williston area for Dec. 3rd.
61 online courses completed with a 100% success rate.

Fish & Wildlife, Jenna Reed

Wardens have been busy with hunting-related issues.

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

Sheriff's have been very busy.

Caledonia & Bennington Counties looking to connect with VAST for winter patrol program.

Chittenden County: Discontinuing with the program due to limited staff.

Washington County: Sleds from Chittenden County have transitioned to Washington County, as they're newer than their current sleds.

Central VT Safety Courses coming up soon. Have noticed challenges with varying comfort levels with

snowmobiles during training.

Sheriffs are frequently asked what the VAST trail map may look like for the 2024 season.

Discussion on VAST trail updates from Cindy & Matt.

- Majority of trails are expected to reopen
- Washington County: Significant damage to 2 suspension bridges. Working with SBA & FEMA for support with damages, estimated to be at least a year out.
- Windsor County: Significant damage to 2 bridges.
- Mapping system transitioning to a different company, currently in the process on the details. More information to come.
- VAST eNews will be including info on trails & clubs
- Trail projects are being funded to help connect trails with hopefully minimal interruption.

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

Things are on track for the start of the 2024 season.

Wilmington obtained a new trailer and Dover a new snowmobile.

Department of Motor Vehicles, Michael Smith

2023: 10,290

2022: 10,643

2021: 11,381

DMV hasn't received much feedback regarding changes for registration stickers for snowmobiles. As of November 1st, vehicles will no longer be issued registration stickers.

Cindy & Matt to issue a press release regarding an update of VAST trail system.

Forest, Parks & Recreation, Claire Polfus

Big Announcement: FPR launched Move Forward Together VT, a planning process that combines the SCORP & VOREC action plan to help develop priorities for outdoor recreation. There will be opportunities for the community to engage via a public survey available to both recreation associations and those interested in VT recreation. [Here is a link to the website.](#) The survey is anticipated to be available in January.

VAST

July Flood Damage, Cindy

Discussed previously in the meeting.

TMA Sales

To date, TMAs sales are ahead of last year.

| TMA's Sold | Revenue |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 2024: 1,270 | 2024: \$196,202 |
| 2023: 879 | 2023: \$130,908 |
| 2022: 2,351 | 2022: \$349,009 |

Law Enforcement (LE) Committee, Cindy

Email to Becca Washburn, FPR and Michele Boomhower, AOT asking for the \$50k LE funds to be moved to VAST. Both replied they are working with their Finance Depts. For the transition in funds. Updates soon. \$21k of LE funds has been allocated to Bennington County for two new snowmobiles.

LE funding formula and contracts are being worked on and should be sent to LE soon.

VAST Safety Ambassador Orientation & CPR Refresher held Saturday 11/4 at the VAST office. Currently, 40-42 VAST Safety Ambassadors are located throughout Vermont.

AOT is interested in establishing a program similar to VAST Safety Ambassador for the LVRT. VAST suggested the Rails to Trails program may be a better alternative program to simulate for LVRT.

VAST Safety Committee, Stan

Met last month, and have resumed a monthly meeting schedule.

Updates for 2024 season: Continue safety messages of Hands on For Safety & Zero Alcohol through the VAST eNews & articles in the Snowmobile Vermont magazine. Possibly consider creating some brief safety videos, more information to come.

SSTP Trail Report, Matt and Cindy

Clubs working diligently on trail work and signing to prepare for the upcoming season.

Meeting was held last week with AOT, VAST & clubs in Hardwick & Wolcott that are along the LVRT. All of those trails are scheduled to open for the 2024 season. AOT working on temporary solutions to help to reopen trails. Meeting Wednesday 11/1 with AOT & clubs.

Legislative Report

House Report, Matt Walker

Not Present.

Senate Report, Jane Kitchel

Not Present.

Appointee Reports

Northwest, Star

Snowing currently.

Clubs are working on trail work & signing.

Landowner recognition was recently held in Chittenden County.

Northeast, Mike

Northeast has been preparing for the upcoming season.

Restoration in Caledonia County: signing & bridge redecking

Twin State walk through recently on the project in southern Essex County.

Central, Jeff

Lots of projects are being worked on throughout the county.

Estimated 80% of Washington County trails to reopen for 2024 season. Major corridors will reopen – except for 2 suspension bridges in East Montpelier & Waterbury.

Clubs are working on signing & groomer maintenance.

Discussion on options for a winter video potentially including LVRT winter use.

South, Stan

Reached out to southern county directors on topics to bring forth to the Gov. Council.

Windsor County: Lots of damage, clubs working diligently & signing.

Coming up soon groomer training & fundraising

Wardsboro Pathfinders working hard to reopen. Meeting Sunday 11/5 with landowners. Issues remain in the northern end of the National Forest. The club has been asked to update their members. More information to come.

The Green Mtn Sno-Dogs (GMSD) have replaced the Green Mtn Trailblazers (GMTB). The new president met with Billy Burns of GMTB last weekend. GMSD has registered with the State of Vermont, has an EIN#, club BOD, by-laws & submitted an officer contact form to VAST. Trails will be the majority from GMTB with some offshoots. VAST will be issuing "VAST trail stops here" for marking trails that have ended.

Next meeting is Wednesday, December 6, 2023 at 3pm via Zoom.

Motion to Adjourn:

Star Poulin moved to close the meeting at 3:48pm; Cindy Locke seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Mandy Dwinell
VAST Office & Programs Manager