

**Governor's Snowmobile Council
September 6, 2023**

Present:

Pat Poulin, Chairman
Star Poulin, Governor Appointee
Gary Nolan, VAST LE Committee Chair
Jeff Halpin, Governor Appointee
Shannon Fassett, 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
Marc Poulin, Vermont Sheriff's Association
Jane Kitchel, Vermont State Senator

VAST Staff Present:

Cindy Locke, Executive Director
Ken Brown, Trails Manager
Mandy Dwinell, Office & Programs Manager
Matt Tetreault, VAST Trails Administrator

The meeting was convened at 3:06PM via Zoom by Pat Poulin.

Approval of Minutes

Gary Nolan moved to approve the June minutes as presented; Jeff Halpin seconded. MOTION CARRIED. Jane Kitchel abstained from voting, as she wasn't in attendance at the June meeting.

One correction to the June meeting minutes noted by Claire Polfus to update her department from Fish & Wildlife to Forest Parks & Recreation.

Approval of SSTP Financial Report July 2023

Star Poulin moved to approve the SSTP Financial Report for July 2023 as presented; Stan Choiniere seconded. MOTION CARRIED

Agency Reports

Vermont State Police, Jacob Metayer
Not Present.

Fish & Wildlife, Jenna Reed

Wrapping up boat season.

3 new Wardens are currently participating in statewide training and will be assigned by early winter. Additional new hire of 1 warden.

Sheriff's Association, Marc Poulin –VT Sheriff Association & Washington County Sheriff
Nothing to report.

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

Connecting with police chiefs to start planning season.

Have secured the normal \$35k funds from the State of Vermont for patrols.

Application with VAST for more additional funds to allow for increased patrols.

Purchased 2 new snowmobiles for pickup at the end of the month.

Working with NY Forest Parks & Rec to attend their training in Old Forge, NY February 2024.

Currently NY Forest Parks & Rec has extended the attendance to 2 people, Paul and the Chief from Wilmington will be attending. Will share information and resources after the NY training.

Department of Motor Vehicles, Shannon Fassett

9/1/23 to present

6,164 Total Snowmobiles

Comparison from September 2022

6,604 Total Snowmobiles

\$406,116 Revenue

Forest, Parks & Recreation, Claire Polfus

FRP working on a VOREC program for outdoor recreation recovery grants, with more info to come. This program is based on the July and August floods and evaluated for the areas where it can be most utilized. Expected to launch soon.

Waiver for Buy America

Equipment purchased no longer has to be American-made as a requirement. Waives for all grants under \$500k – All VT grants are under this amount.

FPR is working on building back grant staff. Hoping for a Recreation Outdoor Grant Manager to be hopefully starting in October.

VAST

State Funded Equipment Grant Program, Jane Kitchel

Recently met with Cindy regarding the Transportation Bill \$750k for equipment.

After the flooding and storms from July and August the VAST BOD voted if possible for the \$750k to be transitioned with allocation for trails repairs. Administration reviewing damage for the options of state and federal funding.

Ability to reallocate fund to trails.

The Emergency Board Committee is chaired by Governor Scott. Meeting held tomorrow (Thursday 9/7) to take action of the \$750k reallocation request, with a push for urgency for the transition while being mindful for construction and repairs.

Acknowledged there were clubs who had applied for equipment grants prior to the July and August storms. Funds have not been disbursed to clubs as statewide damage is still being assessed.

Inquiry is whether there is additional resources for funding options available to clubs who had originally applied for the grants. Jane shared she's unsure on additional options and advised to review if the property may qualify as state usage.

VAST met with Doug Farnham with the State of Vermont Chief Recovery Leader, Dennis with State of Vermont Flood Recovery and the Guidehouse team regarding FEMA. VAST is applying for FEMA for an additional grant option. There is a 60-day deadline to submit all info when application is submitted by FEMA.

Discussion on Class 4 roads and residential requirements for FEMA.

Discussion on FEMA application and Public Assistance process and deadlines.

TMA Sales

Early Bird TMA go live on 10/1/23. All TMAs will be available 10/1/23 including volunteer. 2024 TMA prices will be discussed by BOD and member at the VAST Annual Meeting Sat. 9/9. If there's an increase 100% of it will go to trails.

Proposed for no TMA price increase for Vintage, Antique, Military and Ride for \$25 Weekend.

Vermont Snowmobile Registration Changes

No registration stickers from DMV as of August 1, 2023.

Discussion on a recommendation for additional exposure on the registration update from DMV.

Discussion that the State of Vermont is no longer suspending driver's licenses if civil fines are unpaid.

Discussion on Law Enforcement frustration with patrolling with the registration changes.

VAST Clubs in Good Standing

New addition as of last year.

Club must be in good standing in order to be eligible for VAST grant funding and trail insurance coverage. Clubs are subject to a random selection for a financial review paid for by VAST with a CPA.

To date, 1 club has refused the club review. The club, the Green Mountain Trail Blazers (GMTB) is no longer in good standing with the VAST BOD, VAST, and their trails are no longer covered by VAST insurance. Certified letters were mailed to the GMTB with the confirmation of delivery returned. After the VAST Annual Meeting, VAST to reach out to the club members and landowners. There has been discussion regarding a neighboring club expressing interest taking on the GMTB trails.

Paul Doucette asked for a copy of the letter that was sent to the GMTB.

VAST Annual Meeting

Saturday, 9/9 held at Kenyon's Field in Waitsfeld VT and is hosted by Washington County. Registration begins at 10am

Meeting will include a pre-meeting, meeting, vendors and food.

Law Enforcement (LE) Committee, Gary Nolan

L/E Committee meeting Wednesday 10/4 12-1pm held at the VAST office, lunch provided by VAST. L/E Orientation 1-3pm held at the VAST office to include L/E reporting, training, tickets/fines and Q&A. More information on both to be sent 9/7.

VAST Safety Committee, Stan

Next meeting 10/9

Discussion on \$50k AOT holding for L/E – could bill for AOT for the L/E grants to be used first before paying L/E charges. L/E applications accepted year round.

SSTP Trail Report, Matt Tetreault

Lots of statewide damage, clubs working on assessing damage. Hard part is finding contractors but feeling optimistic. Some clubs have started working on washouts and with standard maintenance.

Legislative Report

House Report, Matt Walker

Not Present.

Senate Report, Jane Kitchel

Discussed previously in meeting.

Annual Funding for Southern Vermont Wilderness Search and Rescue

Meeting to see how money within the task force to be divided among departments. \$35k received and hoping to last for the 2024 season.

Appointee Reports

Northwest, Star

First County meeting held on Monday, 9/11.

Clubs still assessing storm damage.

Northeast, Mike

Not Present.

Central, Jeff

Lots of damage throughout the County from summer storms.

Grateful for the hardworking volunteers.

Annual Meeting 9/9 hosted by Washington County, Vendor and L/E anticipated in attendance.

South, Stan

Ludlow area hit hard from the storm.

First County meeting held Wednesday, 9/6.

Emergency Windsor County held 2 weeks ago – 9 major areas damaged.

Discussion on the timeframe on availability of \$750k funds. Grant would need to be written through FRP.

Next meeting is Wednesday, October 4, 2023 at 3pm via Zoom.

Motion to Adjourn:

Marc Poulin moved to close the meeting at 4:09pm; Star Poulin seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Mandy Dwinell
VAST Office & Programs Manager