

**Massachusetts Off-Highway Vehicle Advisory Council Meeting #49**  
**Tuesday, June 6, 2023**  
**Venue: Purgatory Chasm State Reservation**  
**198 Purgatory Rd, Sutton, MA 01590**

**In Attendance: (\* Indicates OHVAC member or sitting in for a member)**

Scott Morrill (EoEEA / MA OHV Coordinator)

\*Raffi Peterson - NETRA representative

\*Randy Toth – SAM representative

\*Lt. John Girvalakis – MEP ATV and Boating Safety

\*Jim Caffrey –not for profit representative

\*Michael White – Mohawk 4x4 / OHV user representative

Shelly Kaleita – Beacon Hill Consulting

John Oulette – Southcoast Motorangers

\*Colin Novick – Not for profit representative

Nick Vanderheld – DCR

Jeff Miller – SAM

Kurt Gaertner EoEEA

Stephen McGinn – New England Outbackers

Dan Donahue – New England Outbackers

Terry Sinclair – OHV User / Maine ATV

Robert Gubala – Patriots ATV

Meeting #49 was chaired by Scott Morrill from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs (EOEEA). The meeting was held in the conference room at the DCR Purgatory Chasm State Reservation Visitor Center, in Sutton, MA from 10 AM to 2 PM. There were 18 attendees; 8 official committee members.

Following the introductions Scott Morrill of EoEEA opened the meeting with discussing the planned Great Trails Workshop which will be provided by the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council (NOHVCC). Mr. Morrill stated that he did not have an exact date but stated that it should be expected within the next calendar year.

Mr. Morrill discussed with the committee his hopes of having a private page, set up by members of the OHV community, that would serve as a conduit for him to communicate such things as trail closures, volunteer needs, and safety concerns, to the public. Mr. Morrill stated that many state employees are not permitted to have a public social media account and he stressed the need to have a better line of communication with OHV users in the state. Matt Westfield updated the OHVAC on his progress on developing an OHV website for all Massachusetts OHV users and that this would be the conduit that Mr. Morrill had been asking for.

Mr. Morrill then responded to earlier OHVAC requests about information on an ongoing issue with out-of-state plates being attached to non-road compliant OHVs in Massachusetts. Mr. Morrill acknowledged that he was aware of the issue and that it was

being addressed in the state's court system, though he did not have any information as to the current state of the litigation.

Mr. Morrill then discussed with the committee the state's OHV Fund and how it was meeting the mandatory twenty-five percent requirement for trail repair and construction. Mr. Morrill stated that they were behind in meeting this goal, though his hopes were that there would be an opportunity in the future to use the funds that had been saved to purchase land specifically for OHV use. As of the meeting, twenty-five percent of the OHV Fund was \$1,917,493. Of this a total of \$748,834 had been spent on trail improvements and opportunities. Raffi Peterson, of NETRA, noted that since his participation in 2016, nothing new had been provided for OHV users in the state. He noted that people were desperate to find legal places to ride, but none are readily available. Lt. Girvalakis of MA Environmental Police offered the idea of looking into utility corridors as a way to connect smaller riding areas and creating something more significant such as a regional long-distance trail network.

Mr. Morrill then spoke about working with clubs in helping them navigate and submit grant applications to the Recreational Trail Program. Clubs have voiced their concerns over what they describe as an increasingly more complex and robust application process. Mr. Morrill noted that he would make himself available to clubs upon request for assisting them with their applications. Mr. Morrill also noted that the director of the program, Amanda Lewis, has routinely offered workshops and that she makes herself very accessible to the public for answering any questions and helping with any issues that arise. Clubs from the OHV community at large also complained of another permitting process within DCR that had made getting work done and volunteering "extremely difficult". Club officials have requested that Mr. Morrill update them on DCR's "Green Docket" program and what was being done to improve the process.

Randy Toth from the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts informed the committee that grooming was now being reported on the SAM website and the SAM app was up and running and available for \$4.99 annually. SAM is also hoping to add a groomer tracking aspect to the app. Mr. Toth also reported there to be major trail connection issues, one being from the very popular trail systems of Windsor / Savoy and Mt. Greylock. Mr. Morrill stated that he was aware of the issue and was working with DCR and SAM in trying to solve the issue. Mr. Toth also noted that there were new signs posted on Mt. Greylock, by DCR, stating that there was insufficient snow and the trails were closed, though many riders stated that there was plenty of snow, there were just areas where the topography aided in snow being blown off the trail and snowmobiles cresting a hill and eroding snowpack. Mr. Morrill suggested that it may benefit SAM and DCR to designate certain individuals as assessment volunteers who could communicate with DCR regarding the status of trail conditions. Mr. Toth noted that trail passes had dropped due to the poor snowfall this past season. Mr. Toth did note, however, that the hybrid model of selling passes both online and in-person had worked very well. Mr. Toth

stated that the 2022 Sled Expo was a success, and many clubs were awarded grants in the latest round of RTP grants.

Raffi Peterson, the NETRA representative, confirmed that the 2023 riding season was underway with over seventy events planned for the year. Mr. Peterson stated that NETRA was focused- as usual- on focusing on safe and legal riding. Mr. Peterson stated that the new trails located in Freetown / Fall River State Forest were being used and he was pleased with the popularity.

Kurt Gaertner, of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs updated the committee of a new position and office that was created. The new position is the Director of Outdoor recreation and will be in the office of the same title. Mr. Gaertner also stated that there were many new commissioners to environmental agencies.

MA Environmental Police Update provided by Lt. Girvalakis reported new registration numbers:

OHV accident report #'s from 03/01/23 – 05/31/23

9 Total

4 ATV (3 on-road, 1 off-road), 1 side x side (on-road), 11 dirt bike (9 off-road, 1 track, 1 on-road) 1 snowmobile.

Lt. Girvalakis also informed the committee that a replacement had been appointed for Capt. Walker and the new MEP representative would be Captain Chapin.

The DCR update was provided by Nick Vanderheld. Mr. Vanderheld informed the committee that the OHV crew had returned to their seasonal positions and had most of the OHV trails cleared by the end of the first week of opening on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Vanderheld said that the OHV trail crew was currently working on trail repairs at Beartown State Forest.

Open forum discussion

Mike Toomey, the representative for the DCR Friends Groups, stated that volunteerism from clubs should be documented and publicized to combat ill-informed public opinion of the motorized community. Mr. Toomey stated that there needs to be a shift from the negative to the positive and that perception becomes reality. Mr. Toomey stated that for there to be real change and efforts made to accommodate new riding opportunities, such as local policies, they needed to change their image. Mr. Toomey advised clubs to engage their local press and create local stories in hopes of connecting with people opposed to their recreational use.

Robert Gubala of the Patriots All-Terrain Club discussed his repeated attempts at requesting new riding opportunities from both legislators and DCR leadership. Mr.

Gubala brought in a paper highlighting the areas he asked for a review of, as well as e-mails sent requesting a meeting with the DCR commissioner.