

Massachusetts OHV Advisory Committee Meeting # 56 Notes
Tuesday March 4th, 2025
Venue: Online Zoom Virtual Meeting

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

Scott Morrill (EoEEA / MA OHV Coordinator)

*Thomas Galvin - MA Law Enforcement representative

*Raffi Peterson - NETRA representative

Jeff Miller – SAM Executive Director

*Colin Novick – Non-profit representative

*Captain Erik Tynan – Law Enforcement / MEP representative

Ale Echandi – MA DCR Trails

*Matt Westfield – OHV users' representative

*Michael Toomey – Friends Group representative

Matt Roche – DCR

*Randy Toth – SAM representative

Dan White – DCR

*Michael White – Mohawk 4x4 / OHV user representative

Shelly Kaleita – Beacon Hill Consulting

John Bartley – Beacon Hill Consulting

Filip Baccari – DCR

Jon Oulette – Southcoast Motorangers

*Max Rosbold-Gabbard – DPH Massachusetts

10:05 Meeting is called to order.

Introductions are followed by Scott Morrill providing an EEA update.

Mr. Morrill updated the committee on current issues related to trail connections and steps being taken to address these issues. Mr. Morrill referenced his initial plan for STRAPP (Snowmobile Trail Repair and Protection Program). This program would identify trails in need of repair and are at risk of loss at an earlier stage thereby creating a better opportunity in keeping major trail connections open and viable. SAM members discussed programs they have as well as newly appointed trail members in avoiding potential trail loss. Mr. Morrill also noted that there was another successful year of RTP (Recreational Trail Program) grant submissions, and he was optimistic that the grants would be important in maintaining OHV trails. Mr. Morrill also highlighted the continued importance of volunteering and expressed his gratitude to all those who give their time and effort to volunteer in our state parks. Mr. Morrill stated that he had begun work on his earlier-announced 2025 OHV strategy plan, and that he was working on creating two grants; one that was developed by Mr. Morrill a few years ago that aided entities in

purchasing land or recreation easements for OHV use, and another, smaller grant for assisting in club and agency operations.

Raffi Peterson of the New England Trail Riders Association then provided the NETRA update. Mr. Peterson stated that this was the quiet time of year for his organization and clubs were busy preparing the upcoming year's schedule of events. Mr. Peterson also noted NETRA's need and desire to be part of DCR's RMP's so they would not be forgotten during the planning stage. Mr. Peterson said that there were clubs that were supporting DCR personnel with their submissions for RTP grants. Mr. Peterson stated that NETRA was looking forward to assisting DCR by volunteering in multiple parks this year.

Following Mr. Peterson, Randy Toth of the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts provided the SAM update. Mr. Toth stated that due to a late snowfall, the number of trail passes sold had increased in the past year. Mr. Toth also noted that the new grooming app was functional, though due to some small bugs, manual online reporting was still up and running. Mr. Toth also stated that due to confusion and miscommunication, the very important trail connector from Savoy / Windsor to Greylock was closed. Attempts were underway in hopes of remedying the situation. Mr. Toth noted that the past Snow Expo was successful and reports from vendors were positive. Plans are underway for next year's expo. SAM is also directly participating in the United Snowmobile Alliance and is in direct communication with the head of the International Snowmobile Manufacturing Association. SAM also stated that they proposed that the Massachusetts Office of Outdoor Recreation host a multi-use OHV trail discussion at the Massachusetts Trail Conference, but it was rejected during final decision making. Mr. Toth also stated that there were multiple SAM members in attendance during the Pittsfield State Forest RMP session and that he was pleased to see that there were no negative comments made regarding the OHV community. Mr. Toth also commented on SAM's charity event raising winter clothing for those impacted by the severe weather in North Carolina. Between the snowmobile communities of New Hampshire and Massachusetts, 125 bags of winter apparel weighing 4,000 pounds. Mr. Toth also announced that SAM has proposed legislation which would allow for a three-day reciprocal permit for snowmobiles registered in other states to be operated lawfully within Massachusetts for the above-mentioned duration without the need for a SAM sticker or MA OHV registration. SAM also mentioned their concerns regarding possible new tariffs and the effect it might have on equipment procurement.

Captain Tynan of the Massachusetts Environmental Police presented the next update. Captain Tynan stated that MEP has responded to some of SAM and the public's concerns regarding disruptive OHV use by conducting direct patrols in problem areas. Captain Tynan stated that it has been difficult to respond to the high volume of calls- not just for OHV but ALL MEP related issues- with their low staffing numbers. Captain Tynan also stated that there are some officers scheduled for upcoming snowmobile training.

Ale Echandi, a trail planner at DCR, began the DCR update by thanking all those who attended the public RMP (Resource Management Plan) session held online for the Pittsfield State Forest Complex. Ms. Echandi noted that SAM, with DCR, was currently undertaking the extensive task of GPS'ing their trail inventory and evaluating their status. SAM stated that they were fearful that important trails may be forgotten and were grateful that DCR was involving them in the process. SAM also stated that they would provide DCR with passwords allowing DCR to access their trail app for assisting with trail identification. Ms. Echandi also noted that third-party vendors were assisting with the GPS'ing of some of DCR's trail system. Ms. Echandi also stated that DCR had a vendor out at October Mountain State Forest assisting with a project for repairing damaged or unsatisfactory bridges. The firm will assist in GPS'ing, delineation, and permitting. Ms. Echandi mentioned that some bridge repair was allocated in the fiscal year 2026 capital plan.

Phillip Baccari, the supervisor of Wrentham and Foxboro state forests, stated that he was working with the local NETRA (New England Trail Riders Association) club in formulating work plans to repair and assess issues that exist. The hope is to ascertain what is needed and develop a strategy for securing the equipment and funds needed.

Michael White of Mohawk 4x4 briefed the committee on his club's volunteer and charity work over the past year. Mr. White stated that the Mohawk Trail Challenge generated \$4,350 for the Berkshire food bank which will assist in securing 13,050 meals. Over the past five years, Mohawk 4x4 has contributed to raising funds for over 46,636 meals for the food bank. Mr. White also mentioned that they have been working with Tread Lightly, the Northeast Association of 4x4 Clubs, and DCR in a volunteer event on Earth Day.

Matt Westfield commented on state legislation related to the Off-Highway Vehicle Advisory Committee and how it operates. Westfield stated that he would volunteer to be chair and suggested that having a secretary may also help Mr. Morrill with the functions of the committee. Mr. Westfield also stated that the committee could provide updates and recommendations to heads of state agencies that are associated with OHV use. Colin Novick made a motion to nominate Matt Westfield as chair which was seconded by Randy Toth. This will be voted on at the next OHVAC meeting in June.