

Massachusetts OHV Advisory Committee Meeting # 52 Notes
Tuesday, March 5th, 2024
Venue: Online Zoom 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

*Randy Toth – SAM representative

Jeff Miller - SAM

*Captain Jack Chapin – Law Enforcement / MEP representative

*Jim Caffrey – Large landowner representative

*Michael White – Mohawk 4x4 / OHV user representative

Shelly Kaleita – Beacon Hill Consulting

Jon Oulette – Southcoast Motorangers

*Max Rosbold-Gabbard – DPH Massachusetts

Paul Jahnige – MA Office of Outdoor Recreation

Filipp Baccari – DCR

Samantha Szala – DCR

*Matt Westfield – OHV user representative

Chris Spillane – DCR

Dan Donahue – New England Outbackers OHV club

*Mike Toomey – Friend's Group representative

Steve Oulette – DCR

Matt Roche – DCR

Robert Gubala – Patriots ATV club

Roll call and introductions begin at 10:05 AM

Mr. Morrill opened the meeting with an EEA update. Mr. Morrill announces that he has been working with the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council on bringing a Great Trails Workshop to Massachusetts in June. Mr. Morrill stated he has been scouting possible locations for the workshop and will likely be held at October Mountain State Forest. The hope is to add trail building and design skills to agency and volunteer personnel, strengthening the capabilities of the OHV community and continue with capacity building.

The next item to be addressed was a comment by Robert Gubala of the Patriots ATV club. Mr. Gubala had requested to speak at the meeting so that he could address the confusion and unhappiness about DCR's fine filter process. Mr. Gubala expressed frustration that the process was not to be found anywhere online and there was limited information on the matter. This sentiment was seconded by Raffi Peterson of NETRA. Mr. Gubala stated that there was a feeling of bias against the OHV user group and

asked if they were the only use that was subject to this “filter” process. Mr. Morrill confirmed that OHV use was the only use subject to this process. Mr. Gubala stated that he wished to continue the conversation further with DCR leadership and the commissioner.

The next update was provided by the newly appointed Paul Jahnige to the newly created Office of Outdoor Recreation. Mr. Jahnige provided an overview of the office. Mr. Jahnige said that the position would report to the undersecretary and work with EJC's, the MA Office of Tourism, and user groups. The goal is to promote outdoor recreation in the state. Mr. Jahnige stated that there would be a focus on inclusivity, and he was creating a grant that would support this goal. Randy Toth of SAM asked Mr. Jahnige if he would assist them in connecting with the MA Office of Tourism in promoting snowmobiling in Massachusetts as there is very little to no mention of snowmobiling on their website. Jon Oulette of the Southcoast Motorangers mentioned that it would be nice for the OHV program to create and distribute OHV pamphlets across the state. These brochures or pamphlets could be distributed to dealers. Mike Toomey of the Friend's Group Alliance stated that positioning these at rest areas, service plazas, and like areas would also be a good idea and help spread info on MA OHV use. Mr. Toth then commented that the state recreation map, printed by MA DFG, removed OHV use altogether.

The next update was provided by Raffi Peterson, the NETRA representative. Mr. Peterson started his update by saying Mr. Morrill had attended the NETRA annual meeting to address the board and that it was appreciated and went well. Mr. Peterson stated that NETRA hosts over 60 events annually, all over New England. He stated that there were multiple clubs volunteering at all the state parks which permit OHV use. The Pathfinders at October Mountain and Pittsfield, the Berkshire Trail Riders at Beartown and Tolland, King Philips at Wrentham / Foxboro, and Pilgrim Sands at Freetown / Fall River. Mr. Peterson said that the riding season starts in May and there was concern for his club for a hiking trail that had been developed which uses part of the existing OHV trail. Mr. Peterson said that he was concerned about user interactions and that people who choose to use that section of trail should be made aware that it was also an OHV trail to avoid confusion and negative user group interactions.

Randy Toth of the Snowmobile Association was next in providing the snowmobile update. Mr. Toth stated that this was an exceptionally bad year for snowfall. He also stated that it was more extensive than a regional lack of snowfall as SAM had answered calls from riders in the Midwest inquiring whether or not there was snow and riding in New England. Due to the lack of snow, sales of trail passes was much lower than usual. Mr. Toth noted that improvements have been made in their snow groomer app and things on that front looked promising. The SAM magazine is fully digital and the magazine is still going strong. Mr. Toth stated that with the relaxation of purchasing

requirements with the RTP program, more vendors with groomers will attend next years snow expo.

Captain Chapin of the Massachusetts Environmental Police was next to provide an update. Captain Chapin said that they share the OHV users' frustration in lack of legal riding areas as it pressured MEP in enforcing no riding areas when there is no other options available for the public. He also stated that OHV registration numbers were not an accurate measurement of how many OHV's were in the state as many people refuse to register due to the lack of riding opportunities. The Captain also stated that snowmobile accident numbers were obviously way down due to the lack of snow and riding opportunities.

The DCR update was provided by Samantha Szala and Filipp Baccari. Ms. Szala, the supervisor of Freetown / Fall River , stated that she was working on improving signage at her park and continuing to work with NEMBA and NETRA in repairing and improving the trail system at that park. Mr. Baccari, the supervisor of Wrentham / Foxboro / F Gilbert Hills, stated that things were progressing nicely and OHV equipment that had been moved out of his park was recently returned. He expects to continue communication with the King Philips riding club to repair trails at his park.