



Off-Highway Motorcycle Council
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 7th, 2023
via Zoom

Council Members Present: Bryan Much (Chair), Rob McConnell (Vice Chair), Craig Johnson, Jeff Long, Mitch Winder
DNR Staff: Jillian Steffes
Public: none

1. Call to order – 7:00 PM by Bryan

2. Approval of previous meeting minutes

Motion to approve minutes by Jeff, 2nd by Craig. **MOTION PASSED**

3. Chair Report – Bryan Much

- Bryan and Rob have been discussing proposals for development of the program for the future, particularly on trails shared with ATV/UTVs. Drafted a statement of the facts, attached to the minutes.
 - Council reviewed, discussed and agreed that this is the consensus of the Council.
- Next meeting – Dec 12th

4. DNR Report

- **Jillian Steffes (Grants)**
 - Appropriation 952 is a continuing appropriation so we have the ability to use the chapter 20 spending authority \$61,100 + any encumbered funds from previous fiscal years...which would be significant. For example, somewhere around \$350,000 for FY24.

6. ACTION ITEM: Review of and funding recommendations for grant applications

- No new requests at this time.

7. Open Grant Projects

- Tigerton plans on placing the bridge in the spring.

8. Public Comment

- None

8. Council members' matters

- Rob – Check out our 'RideSafe Foundation' video at [RIDE SAFE FINAL FULL VIDEO.mp4 - OneDrive](#)
We just did some events in September in northern Wisconsin, and looking forward to doing more next year.

9. Other matters that may come before the Council

- None

10. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Mitch 2nd by Rob. **Motion carries.**

Notes Regarding Maintenance Agreements with ATV Trails

Priorities:

The OHM program is a very small program that has been only slowly growing since its inception.

The OHM program has been able to develop and rehabilitate some OHM trail projects using OHM sticker funds. OHM trails generally require only minimal development so they are affordable within the resources of the program.

Typically, OHM trails resemble well-worn game trails with a narrow treadway on native soils. They are very inexpensive to maintain as they do not require gravel and are not routinely groomed for smoothness like some other trails are. Most of the maintenance involves trimming brush and fallen limbs. Some work can be required on treadway hotspots. Many trail capable motorcycles have 12 inches of suspension travel to absorb unevenness on the trail. Some of that can be considered a favorable feature on a trail.

Relative size of the program:

In past discussions the OHM program was generally considered to be 1/100th the size of the ATV/UTV program. This is largely based on sticker sales but it is important to note that the ATV/UTV program receives gas tax rebates and the OHM program does not. This widens the gap between the two programs even more. Actual trail use on the limited number of ATV/UTV trails open OHM is also considered to be about 1/100th of that of the ATV/UTV program on those same trails.

The less the use, the less the impact on a trail.

Some may assume that since an additional use is added to a trail that things like rehabilitation project expenses would be split via the number of different uses on the trail versus the actual numbers of users on a trail by type. In other words, adding motorcycles to an ATV trail should not imply a 50/50 split when one program is only 1/100th the size (and likely use) of the other program. It is important for all involved with a trail sharing and funding agreement to understand that rehabilitation costs need to be proportionately calculated and not simply assumed to be 50/50. In cases where a greater number of OHM on ATV trails can be substantiated (like in a park), an agreement could be reached to fund rehab at a higher level. It will be important to consider the impact on the trail by the conveyance involved as well since this will vary by use.

If the OHM program entered into a routine maintenance agreement with all ATV trails the cost would likely exceed the annual resources for the OHM program and there would be no money for OHM projects, OHM maintenance, or rehab on any trails.

Potential to enter into maintenance agreements on ATV/UTV trails:

The OHM program supports entering into maintenance agreements with some ATV/UTV trails. Due to the limitations described above, this would generally involve:

- Trails in an underserved area where there are little opportunities for OHM trail riding.

- Trails that offer the preferred recreational experience for OHM riders. Some linear gravel railroad grade type trails will likely be of limited interest to the program. These offer few features of OHM trails and are often graveled which is not preferred by off-road riders.

- Since the OHM program has only limited resources, they may not be able to buy into an entire trail system county-wide. Funding limitations are such that only certain portions of the system may be within reach. These would

likely be those portions that have the best recreational experience for OHM riders. It is understandable that some systems may not be interested in only partial use agreements.

-The OHM program would pay for the additional costs of signage related to OHM use on trails systems or portions of trails where an agreement can be reached.

-It would be best to work with the OHM association to develop a common interest in opening a trail system or a portion of a trail system prior to submitting a grant application. This can be helpful to all in working through issues of interest to all.

-Part of the agreement would be an understanding of proportional requests for rehabilitation on the trails involved. This is to ensure that expectations are clear ahead of time. A single rehab request has the potential to use nearly all the funds available to be spent in a year effectively wiping out the program.

-Generally, the preferred recreational experience for OHM riders involves winding paths with elevation changes with good native soils that are best suited for motorcycle traction.

-We can only operate within the limitations of a spending cap related to our program funds. We must operate within limits so that we can meet our obligations and priorities within those limits.

Other alternatives:

OHM riders prefer single track OHM trails but there is a popular component that involves dual sport motorcycling. Dual sport motorcycles are trail capable DOT licensed motorcycles that can operate on roads open to licensed vehicles. There are thousands of miles of GPS guided dual sport paths for dual sport OHM riders to enjoy that offer much of the preferred recreational experience. Many of these paths involve forest roads that are open to motorized travel.

In some places, OHM riders may have a designated and funded OHM trail but are not allowed on ATV trails in the same county. Vilas County is an example where this is the case. Vilas County also has many miles of GPS guided dual sport routes that do not involve ATV trails. With the OHM trail and these GPS guided routes, the county has become a popular destination for OHM tourism. The expense to OHM program is the costs to develop and maintain the OHM trail. Gas taxes collected from dual sport riders support roads open to licensed vehicles.

Historically, RTP funds have been generated on gas taxes from off-highway motorcycles. WI has benefitted from those funds including supporting motorized trails. In that fashion, OHM have been contributing to trails that have used RTP.

Another alternative is for a county to implement a local sticker program for motorcycles on their trails. This can be a good way to allow access and get paid for it proportionately since only OHMs that ride trails in that county would be involved. Revenue would fairly represent actual use by motorcycles. This could work well with the OHM program. Even if an OHM trail were developed in the county using OHM program funds, access to the ATV trails could still be managed with a local sticker.

Other remarks:

The OHM program would prefer to be able to join into agreements with nearly all ATV/UTV trail systems. The reality is that as things stand today it is not possible. Although it is beyond our control in the near term, perhaps it will change in the future as the program grows. It took a while for snowmobiles and ATVs to grow as well.

Obviously, we respect the choice officials might make to exclude OHMs from access to a trail system that we are unable to support via an agreement.

Some may look at the mileage rate for OHM access to ATV trails under a maintenance agreement and decide it is not enough money to make it worthwhile to process each year.