

Finance Committee of the Snowmobile Recreation Council
DNR Wautoma Service Center
Tuesday, June 20, 2006
Wautoma, WI

Present: Bev Dittmar, chair, Mike Cerny, Mike Willman, Karen Carlson

Others: Larry Freidig, DNR and Danny Carlson

Meeting called to order at 10:00 AM.

Motion by Mike Willman, second by Mike Cerny to accept minutes of the previous meeting. Motion Carried

2006-07 funding status

Larry distributed to committee members a draft of the proposed 2006-07 county snowmobile program as a basis of discussion. Larry noted that the gas tax calculation was based on a slight reduction in snowmobile registrations over last year and reflected what is the next-to-last year of an increase in the per gallon excise tax. With the repeal of the indexing formula by the Legislature, Larry indicated that the 2007-08 gas tax calculation would be the last to see an automatic increase in the per gallon excise tax.

Larry distributed a brief outline of unobligated balances as of May 31, 2006. Committee members reviewed Larry's suggestion of making available \$356,000 of unobligated gas tax funds and \$200,000 of registration funds. After a brief discussion, it was the consensus of the committee to increase the unobligated total made available from gas tax funds to \$400,000.

Supplementary status

Larry briefly reviewed the amounts available for supplementary maintenance payments for the 2005-06 season. He noted that the present formula total of \$547,020 for the non-resident trail pass transfer could possibly be reduced as a result of any outstanding refund requests from non-bonded agents. Larry briefly discussed his guesstimate of the total supplemental request based on his observation of state property requests already received compared with similar requests of last year. Larry indicated he expected that a prorate would be necessary. The committee briefly discussed on whether to recommend setting aside funds for aiding supplemental payments through a future 13.10 request. The consensus of the committee was not to recommend holding back funds for supplemental purposes.

Trail requests

Larry briefly reviewed the total request received by category. He indicated that the ranking meeting for federal recreation trail program funds will be held within a week and may have an impact on the preliminary figures listed. With regard to new trail additions, Larry indicated that he had circulated to the regional community services specialists the summary of cooperative rail trails for updating. He also requested that the CSSs indicate the top two priorities for new trail additions in their regions aside from rail grade projects. Larry explained that he had not requested the CSSs to formally evaluate all the new trail requests in their regions because of the workload involved and the uncertainty of having a large amount of funds available for new additions.

Larry also distributed the latest update on the Hubbleton bridge project that indicates that problems with property owners on one side of the proposed bridge location have forced the county to review alternative bridge sites. This will likely result in design modifications. Larry briefly reviewed the funding history to date (\$200,000 snowmobile funds) and reported that there was no current request for additional funds.

2007-09 biennial budget

Larry distributed a brief preliminary summary of adjustments and requests impacting the snowmobile program. He emphasized that these preliminary requests are just that—preliminary. He indicated that the proposals are internal at this point and that final Department recommendations had not been made or conveyed to the Natural Resources Board for their review and action. Larry briefly described the adjustments based on registration number projections, the small request for community financial assistance for supplies and the request for additional law enforcement funding and positions from tribal gaming. He noted that the law enforcement request was a result of a major strategic initiative called “Survive to Ride”. Larry indicated that he would forward more detailed information when it was available. There was a brief discussion on the current use of snowmobile funds for law enforcement/safety purposes.

Non-resident trail pass

Larry indicated that this issue was referred to the committee by the council. There was a brief discussion on the merits and the timing of approaching an increase in the fee. It appeared that Wisconsin was in the middle of the fee range between Michigan and Minnesota. There was also some concern noted on the potential for a continuing decrease in registration.

Motion by Bev Dittmar, second by Karen Carlson that the committee recommend to the council that no increase in the non-resident trail pass be sought at this time. Motion Carried

Member items

Mike Willman questioned the progress on the Bearskin State Trail. Larry indicated that the acquisition issues relating to the bridge had apparently been cleared up but he was not aware of any further activity [Follow-up: the Department is seeking a design- build contract for the bridge over the Tomahawk River from DOA]

Motion by Karen Carlson, second by Mike Cerny to adjourn at 11:25 AM. Motion Carried