

Law Enforcement Committee of the Snowmobile Council
Monday, June 27, 2005
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Service Center
West Conference Room
910 Hwy. 54 E.
Black River Falls, WI.

Call to order by Rick Steimel, 10:00 AM

Members Present: Tom Thornton, Jon Schweitzer, Mike Cerny, Rick Steimel and Thomas Chwala.

Department Liaison : William Engfer

Welcome to new committee members: Rick Steimel

Recognize others in attendance and explain procedure to allow citizen input: Mr. Steimel noted that Scott Makowski, President of the AWSC was in the audience and also Mr. Jerry Green a Council member. Mr. Steimel noted that public comments were welcome at the meeting, and that AWSC representation had been invited, along with Chair Mike McFadzen of the Wisconsin State Trails Council. Mr. McFadzen had been unable to attend, but did submit comments in support and explanation of the STC resolution discussed at the last SRC meeting.

Approve Minutes of previous meeting: Move by Tom Thornton and second by Rick Steimel to approve minutes of last meeting. **Motion Passed.**

Chairman Report: Rick Steimel noted that he has been at the DNR office getting the statistics and other information from the DNR on accidents from this past year.

Department Report: Bill Engfer reported on the following:

- Snow/ATV Administrator position should be announced today for nationwide recruitment.
- Current amount of hours used in the snowmobile account is 668 over the allotted amount. This will go up slightly as there still is one more pay period in the fiscal year. Bill noted that the snowmobile community does not pay for the hours worked over the allotted hours.
- Bill answered questions on the amount of funding that there is for local patrols and questions regarding the number of counties participating. Bill noted that the Department will meet with any sheriff that does wants to learn more about the program and that he will be giving a talk to the sheriff's conference on the funding program.
- Bill noted that the sound rule has not progressed any farther than from the last meeting. Bill did note that the industry is working with the legislature to pass a

statutory change to create the sound law as there is no movement on the rule process.

- Bill then presented a sheet which identified key areas that need to be looked at to address the fatality rate in snowmobiling (see attachment). This sheet contains the three areas of need; Cultural Change, Law Change and Enforcement Direction. Bill also explained the 8 ideas that have been discussed that would address the concerns of the areas above and reduce snowmobile fatal accidents.
 - o Specialty snowmobile accident reduction teams
 - o User group cultural change
 - o Speed limits
 - o Tougher OUI laws that tie into motor vehicle drivers licenses
 - o Check Point stops
 - o Trail Ambassador program like ATV's
 - o Public Service Announcements with Council, AWSC, DNR and Tourism
 - o Billboards

Final Summary Report on 2004-05 Fatal Accidents: Rick Steimel handed out a 1986 to 2005 comparison graph of fatal accidents along with 2004-2005 snowmobile Fatality Crashes/Incidents report which broke down the fatal incidents by categories. This was very useful for the council

Discussion on the need to address legislative initiatives: Rick Steimel gave an overview of the need and what other groups have asked for from the snowmobile community. Rick also gave background on what has been done in the past. . Rick also handed out a letter from James Langdon, former member of the Snowmobile Recreation Council in which Mr. Langdon expressed his concerns on the rate of fatals and the need to do something to address the problem. Also handed out were statistics from Michigan and Minnesota for the 2001 to 2005. It was noted that Michigan experienced one snowmobile death for every 15,200 snowmobiles registered and Minnesota experienced one snowmobile death for every 17,900 snowmobiles registered compared to Wisconsin which had one snowmobile death for every 5,900 snowmobiles registered.

What kind of legislative initiatives to pursue: Tom Thornton gave a data from his perspective and from meeting with the Governor. Tom felt that something will be done whether the council moves forward or not. Bill Engfer gave a synopsis of Secretary Hassett's and Chief Warden Stark's comments to the AWSC meeting at the DNR. Rick Steimel pointed out that three main areas that needed to be addressed would be speed limits, check point stops, and OUI DL-tie in. There was considerable discussion on the dangers of requesting too much right away. Jon Schweitzer suggested that the council support speed limit. Rick Steimel stated that check point stops need to be looked at. Jerry Green agreed with check point stops. Tom Chwala felt that speed limits would be around today if the emergency speed rule had been presented correctly. Tom Thornton felt that speed limits are very practical given the trails and visibility allowed by headlights in Wisconsin. It is not practical to operate at night beyond this speed

Rick Steimel discussed the scenario of how much time it takes to stop as you increase your speeds and the increase of just 10 mph can be a major change as you go faster due to the energy and mass. Tom Thornton stated that he likes the:

- Enforcement Team idea
- Billboard and posters idea for cultural change
- Speed limits (at least at nighttime for a start)
- PSA Ad campaign
- OUI tie in should at least be pushed for
- Check point stops
- Trail ambassadors

Tom Thornton made a motion for the Council to approve the paper on possible efforts to reduce accidents and fatalities presented by the Department and to forward it to the full council. Thomas Chwala 2nd the motion. Mike Cerny discussed the need to address the issues more specifically and Tom Thornton withdrew the motion.

Discussion on Speed limit: Mike Cerny moved to recommend to the full council a 50 MPH nighttime only speed limit from a specific time at night to a specific time in the morning that represents the average sunset and sunrise statewide. Jon Schwitzer 2nd the motion. **Motion carried with no dissenting votes.**

Check Point Stops: Tom Thornton made a motion to remove the prohibition of Check Point stops for snowmobiles. Rick Steimel 2nd the motion. Discussion dealt with past requirements for LE and current requirements for conducting Check Point Stops. Bill Engfer explained the Department standards and the Federal law regarding Check Points which is all new since the removal of the snowmobile authority. It was noted that these are currently used by the Department for Boating enforcement. Current criteria includes announcing that check points will be done in the local media, contacting the District Attorney, notifying local legislators and other criteria before a check point is conducted. **Motion carried with no dissenting votes**

OUI law: Rick Steimel stated that addressing the tie in of the OUI laws to all activities might be too much at this time but needs to be looked at. This was also the general consensus of all, and it was pointed out that there would be much work to be done to get this going. Tom Thornton suggested that there needs to be continued work between the snowmobilers and other user groups regarding the OUI DL-tie in.

Tom Thornton spoke on the need for stronger penalties for snowmobilers fleeing officers. 2nd by Tom Chwala. Discussion was that unless the tie in of OUI laws occur, this is not needed. Tom Thornton withdrew the motion.

Specialty Enforcement Teams: Mike Cerny motioned to support this concept and Tom Thornton 2nd the motion. Discussion was that the Finance committee would take up the fiscal considerations of this proposal. **Motion Passed with no dissenting votes**

Cultural change, PSAs and Billboards: Tom Thornton made a motion to support these concepts which are numbers 2, 7 and 8 on the attached list. Tom Chwala 2nd the motion. **Motion passed with no dissenting votes**

Trail Ambassador: Tom Thornton made a motion to support this concept and Tom Chwala 2nd the motion. **Motion passed with no dissenting votes.**

There was discussion to have the Department bring back the placemats that were once used. Decision was to look at non-department entity to purchase these while still partnering with the department on funds and design for these. It was noted that the Billboards should tie into the placemats and brochures that the ISA is producing.

Future items for next meeting: Nothing

Member items: Tom Thornton wanted to look at the noise issue in the future meetings to determine where we are.

Adjournment: Tom Thornton motion to adjourn, Tom Chwala 2nd motion. Motion passed at 12:49 PM