



Snowmobile Advisory Council Equipment Ad Hoc Meeting Minutes

Saturday, October 30th, 2021
Bradley Town Hall, Tomahawk

Council Members Present: Dale Mayo, Bob Lang, Gary Hilgendorf, Joel Enking, Andy Malecki, Mike Holden
DNR staff attendance: Jillian Steffes
Public attendance: Jason Guthrie, and another club member from Monroe County

1. Call to order at 9:00 AM

2. Agenda Repair

- Adding public comment to the agenda

Motion to approve amended agenda by Mike, 2nd by Joel. MOTION PASSED

3. Public Comments

- **Jason Guthrie, Snowmobile Trails of Monroe County (alliance)**
 - i. Our drags were built in the 1990's, with a frame width of 8'6" to accommodate trail width and trailering at that time. Over time, extensions of 18" on each side were added for wider trails (needed to accommodate larger sleds). The drag frame could not be increased due to the landscape (bridges, tunnels, etc). In 2018, members of the Snowmobile Trails of Monroe County attended Council meetings to discuss the specifications for wings on drags. At the end of that meeting, Monroe and the Council felt they were on the same page, and as such Monroe went back and extended wing LENGTH to meet the specs. In 2021, the Alliance received notice that our drags don't meet the specs, but we believe they do.
 1. **Wing width of 24"**. Council meant EACH WING must be 24", but the specifications say "24" minimum width". Alliance interpreted this as cumulative width.
 2. **Hydraulically operated.** Alliance's wings deploy hydraulically, but then cannot be adjusted hydraulically. The Council meant for this to mean wings could be repositioned in conjunction with main frame cutting blades during operation with hydraulics.
 3. **Similar structural material as main frame.** While the Alliance's wings are made of steel, they are of different structural design and function differently than the main drag. Straight curved blades on main drag, alternating angle blades on wings. Council is concerned that these two types perform a different action and thus do not work well together and do not meet the intent of this specification. Concerns that snow is not being moved into the center.

Alliance would like to have wings included in their specifications, and more specifically, have the reimbursement rate for the 20-21 season stand, as they felt they were in the correct class based on their interpretation of the specifications. Council does not agree. County could apply to the Department for the 20-21 season costs. But moving forward, it has now been made clear to all that the Council intends the 24" wing width to apply to each wing, not cumulative, along with other discrepancies.

Some debate on if wings were ever intended to be included in the drag dimensions in the years preceding 2018. They were not explicitly mentioned. The original specifications referred only to the **frame**. Council felt they were not intended to be included, some clubs made assumptions that they were. Hence the attempt to clarify in 2018-2019.

Alliance feels that if they remove the wings, the club will have to double drag (both directions) which may cost the program more. Council points out that other clubs drag one side every

night. Drag one direction night 1, then the other direction night 2. There are many other options and methods of grooming.

Discussion on the mechanics of the drag and it's affects on the trail surface. Having a drag that can cut out humps and holes, mix and redistribute the snow is more effective than one that simply cuts the tops off of humps and drags the snow into holes.

Mike – What are other states doing? None of the other states he researched use a 12' drag. Many of them only go up to 10'. Maine won't even reimburse for use of a drag larger than 10'. Some states also do not adjust reimbursement for the puller's specs – flat rate regardless.

4. Discussion: Future Drag Specifications

Discussion on the pros and cons of wings.

PROS

- Necessary for narrow bridges and tunnels
- Grooming can be done in one pass
- Can keep puller away from the edge of the trail.

CONS

- While wings may be increasing the CLASS, they may not actually be in use, thus claiming more in reimbursement than is earned. It was clear from field inspections that some clubs wings were not regularly used (paint untouched)
- There is no cost effective way to monitor the use of wings
- Purchase price of winged drags is much higher than cost of similar size solid frame drags
- Winged drags are not as effective as similar size solid frame drags
- Winged drags are much more susceptible to damage than solid frame drags
- Winged drags are heavier, which increases the cost to the program (larger bridges, larger pulling units, etc). The winged drags can weigh 5k to 6k pounds.
- Wings were historically not intended to be included in the drag specifications.

Motion by Dale, 2nd by Gary for the Ad Hoc Committee to make a recommendation to the Infrastructure Committee to readopt the language from the 2017-18 equipment rates stating "Wings that fold down outside the frame do not increase frame width for funding proposes. "

Motion also recommends grandfathering those drags that were previously funded and meet these specifications, for as long as that grooming entity owns that drag. MOTION PASSED

SPECIFICATIONS FOR GRANDFATHERED WINGED DRAGS (PREVIOUSLY FUNDED)

Wings increase frame width with all of the following conditions:

- hydraulically operated
- must cut and pack snow
- similar structural design as main frame
- each wing has 24" minimum width
- extend full length of the main frame

Another point of discussion is the practice of welding on additions to a drag simply to increase dimensions to move up in class, even if the additions are not functional.

**Motion by Mike, 2nd by Bob for the Ad Hoc Committee to make a recommendation to the Infrastructure Committee to adopt the language “Entire drag length and width must perform the same cutting and packing function. Modifications to original drag will not increase funding class.”
MOTION PASSED.**

5. Member Items

- Gary – Can SNARS be modified to add a 4th piece of equipment? For example, if one club member goes out to brush they might reasonably use a truck, trailer, chainsaw and ATV on the same day. It used to have this capability, why was it changed? It was changed because some folks were trying to charge for multiple pieces of equipment at the same time that could not reasonably be used at the same time (brush hog on back and on side plus boom).
 - i. Answer – Jillian will discuss with Nathan adding in a 4th piece of equipment. It won't be addressed until the summer, however.
- Bob – Can the grooming unit area of SNARS be altered to allow for uploading of photos? It would be very helpful to see photos of the grooming units.
 - i. Answer – Jillian will discuss with Nathan. It won't be addressed until summer, however.
- Mike – Discussion on complaints about some clubs “grooming too much”. While it may seem unnecessary to groom when it's not snowing, sometimes it may be needed to address drifting, damage from riders, etc. There is really no way to determine when the grooming is justified. Still have to rely on the honor system to some degree.

6. Adjourn

- **Items for next meeting**
 - i. Schedule Infrastructure meeting for Tuesday, Nov 16th at 9AM (Zoom). Share today's minutes with full Council so they can review and weigh in at that time as well.

Motion to adjourn by Mike, 2nd by Gary. MOTION PASSED