

Meeting Notes

Non-commercially Guided Snowmobile Access Program (N-CGSAP) Working Group

January 13, 2014

Present:

Chris Jourdain, ACSA
Bert Miller, WY SMA
Christina Mills, NPS
Alicia Murphy, NPS
Kim Raap, Trails Work Consulting
Wade Vagias, NPS

Jack Welch, Blue Ribbon Coalition

Not Present:

Jeremiah Rieman, WY Gov Office
Scott Christensen, GYC
Bart Melton, NPCA

Notes:

1. The group accepted meeting notes from the December 2013 meeting.
2. Update on funding progress
 - a. Alicia updated the group on progress securing funding to develop the Yellowstone Snowmobile Education Certification (YSEC) course. Dan Wenk, Wade, and Alicia met with representatives from the state of Wyoming (including Kim Raap) to talk about the possibility of applying for a RTP grant. Alicia is working to complete the application in time for it to be presented at the January 24th WY Trails Council meeting.
3. **Discussion Topic: Metrics of success for the N-CGSAP — what do we monitor and how?**
 - a. The group reviewed the document sent out with the agenda, titled “N-CGSAP Metrics of Success Background Info.pdf,” which includes law enforcement citation information for oversnow vehicles from 2002-2010 and the current standards to which commercial snowmobile guides are held. *Note: Alicia provided an edited subset of 30 of the overall citation stats, weeding out many that only occurred once or were ambiguous in their application to this group.
 - i. The top cited violation in the time period was speeding, with 1789 citations
 - ii. The group asked for the information to be further split into two categories: 2002-2003 and 2004-2010 to get a better understanding of how violations have changed since commercial guides have been required. **ACTION: Alicia will provide this breakdown before the next meeting.**
 - iii. The group agreed that in looking over all the citations, they could be lumped under 6 different broad headings:
 1. Speeding
 2. Careless Operation
 3. Leaving designated roads
 4. Permit violations
 5. Impaired driving
 6. Wildlife interactions
 - iv. The group reviewed the requirements from the commercial tour operating plans. Of particular interest were the requirements that commercial guides have full first aid certification/equipment and radios.

1. The group does not want to overburden the program participants with too many equipment violations—that could impair the success of the program
2. Wade suggested asking NPS law enforcement officers what they think we should require the public to carry in the park. **ACTION: Alicia will talk to law enforcement personnel about this topic and report back to this group at our next meeting.**
- v. The group tabled this discussion pending updates from the action items listed above, with the tentative agreement that the 6 broad headings will be the overarching metrics of success for the N-CGSAP.

4. **Discussion Topic: What should be included in the YSEC course?**

- a. Participants reviewed the document, “YELL Learning Objectives.pdf,” which had been provided with the agenda.
 - i. Alicia stressed that the overarching theme to the course, and which will be repeated throughout the learning modules, is the protection of resources and human health and safety.
 - ii. Alicia asked for continued feedback on course information—this is a dynamic list that can be added to as the group thinks of more information.
 - iii. The course is broken into 4 modules:
 1. Planning ahead
 2. Safe riding practices
 3. Encountering wildlife
 4. What to do in an emergency
 - iv. Group members suggested the following additions to the course:
 1. Stay on the right, pull over to the right, stop in proper snowmobile etiquette
 2. Do not let snowmobiles idle
 3. How to navigate road rutting, something which many members of the public have probably not encountered before
 4. How to navigate woodchips, which can be found in several areas of the park.
 - v. Alicia and Christina went out with the park videographer last week to set up staged shots of passing wildlife, how to ride through ruts, various riding positions, navigating woodchips, passing snowcoaches, and general riding conditions.
 1. Used a standard video camera and a GoPro, which is mounted to the snowmobile in various locations to provide first person shots
ACTION: Alicia will send a shot list to the group, which will include video and still shots that will be used in the course. This will help the group identify missing information.
 2. The group suggested that the park provide laminated pocket maps (with mileage) for N-CGSAP operators so that they can have a good, waterproof map to find important features such as warming huts, fueling stations, and developed areas.
 3. The group agreed with the idea that the park should provide a manual for students to print out and bring with them when they come to the

park. Included in this manual would be hand signals, maps, trip checklists, etc.

- a. Alicia and Christina noticed that there is a discrepancy for hand signals among guides and NPS personnel. Several group members seconded this observation.

ACTION: Alicia will talk to Law Enforcement, Concessions, and Safety Office personnel to determine how to ensure that all snowmobilers are consistent with hand signals, which will determine what we present in videos for the course.

5. Update on balloon tires for snowcoaches
 - a. Wade is conducting snow rutting tests with a variety of snowcoaches this week. This involves a freshly groomed track at Old Faithful and a tool on loan from McMurdo Station in Antarctica to measure the effects of snowcoaches in a somewhat controlled environment.
 - b. The company from Jackson, WY that wants to experiment with balloon tires has been held up with other projects, so that snowcoach is not yet on the roads.
 - c. Two other companies are operating with snow tires and Wade expects that this will be a 2-3 year testing period to see how they work on Yellowstone's roads. Therefore, he doesn't have any updates at this point.
6. Closing and next meeting:
 - a. Alicia will post a Doodle poll for February's meeting and email invitations to the group.
 - b. The next meeting will focus on aspects of the lottery and follow-up to the action items from this meeting.

Action Items

- Alicia will:
 - Create a Doodle poll and email out invites by 1/14/2014.
 - Send meeting notes to the Group by 1/16/2014.
 - By one week before the next meeting, Alicia will;
 - Disseminate information to working group members regarding LE incidents
 - Disseminate the shot list for videos and still photographs
 - Send an agenda for the next meeting
 - Talk to NPS personnel regarding hand signals and safety items for snowmobile operators and report back at the next meeting
- The Group members will:
 - Complete the doodle poll for January's meeting by 1/24/2014
 - Read over the material Alicia sends out before the next meeting

Working Group Operating Principles

- The National Park Service is the final decision-making body for all aspects of the Non-commercially Guided Snowmobile Access Program (the Program)
- The Program will be consistent with the framework contained within Appendix C of the final Plan/SEIS, the Record of Decision, and the Final Rule
- This Group is a portal to encourage creative ideas and insight on how to best develop the Program

- We will be respectful of all ideas and each other and will entertain new possibilities and consider how they might work
- We'll ask tough questions