

Yellowstone Non-commercially Guided Snowmobile Access Program Working Group Meeting

April 23, 2014, 10-11am MST

Present:

Bruce Austin
Chris Jourdain, ACSA
Kay Lloyd
Bert Miller, WY SMA
Alicia Murphy, NPS
George Pryich
Kim Raap, Trails Work Consulting
Wade Vagias, NPS
Jack Welch, Blue Ribbon Coalition

Not Present:

Kennedy Brown, TwoTop
Scott Christensen, GYC
Dave Hodges
David McCray, TwoTop
Jamie McCray, TwoTop
Bart Melton, NPCA
Jeremiah Rieman, Wyoming Governor's
Office

Agenda:

- Greetings
- Approval of March's meeting minutes
- Update:
 - Snowmobile education course funding and development
 - Kim and Alicia hope to have the RFP for a course host out for bid next first.
 - Metrics of Success: Law Enforcement Discussions
 - Alicia will meet with Law Enforcement staff later today to discuss the metrics of success. Alicia will incorporate that information into the white paper and distribute it for comment before our next meeting.
- **Discussion Topic: Group-driven questions**
 - Should we encourage all participants to take the Yellowstone Snowmobile Education Course in case of emergencies?
 - Jack asked if the course could be open to the public? Alicia—Yes, as long as the course software and hardware can handle that many students. Kim and Alicia have put out the RFT with a maximum of 10 students at a time as the anticipated class load.
 - Bruce suggested encouraging all participants take the class, but be aware that underage drivers are still ineligible to drive—the class is not the only requirement.
 - Jack—Stress that if you intend to rotate drivers, all should take the course.
 - Bert—We should encourage all participants to take the class, especially when it is only a group of 2 individuals.

- Should we educate people on how to transport snowmobiles outside the park?
 - All members of the group agreed that it is not the park’s responsibility to teach members of the public how to transport vehicles—we are only responsible for teaching them how to operate a snowmobile safely in Yellowstone and protect the park’s resources.
- Should we require that participants rent snowmobiles so that we can be sure snowmobiles are BAT? *See Kim Raap’s “BAT Snowmobile Rental Considerations” document*
 - Jack mentioned that it is possible that some could have their own BAT machines and requiring them to rent would not reduce the price of the trip, which is one of this program’s assets.
 - Bert agreed that down the road, new-BAT machines may be more common.
 - Kim is cautious because Yellowstone’s new-BAT is very narrow, so there may not be very many privately owned machines out there. He is concerned that the program might collapse if there is no fleet of rentals for the 90-99% of people who will need them.
 - We need to be very clear, early and often, in the process that people need to have new-BAT machines.
 - Need to publish and make available a list of new-BAT machines.
 - Concerned that there won’t be rentals at the East gate because there is only one concessioner at that gate.
 - Christine noted that both rental and airport information needs to be obvious for those who are new to Yellowstone.
 - George asked if TwoTop wants to rent to non-commercial groups, but none of their representatives were on the phone.
 - **Action: Bert will talk with Gary Fales at the East Gate to see if he is planning to offer rentals.**
 - Wade—Thinks that concessioners will want to do this (rent machines) if there is a profit in it. Could Jack, Bert, and Kim talk to their connections to see if there is interest in this?
 - Not sure that the park service can “require” people to rent snowmobiles. **Action: He and Alicia will look into the question of authority.**
 - Bruce suggested a concern that some rental machines aren’t going to be well maintained, and thus won’t actually meet new-BAT.
 - This discussion was tabled in the interest of time
- Should we allow people to change entrances from East to Mammoth and South to West when roads are closed due to avalanche danger?
 - Kim—the logistics of changing gates at the last minute are very difficult; does this group want to put energy into this question?
- Round Table
 - Jack asked what happens if people get stuck in the park due to weather?

- Bruce suggested that it may be ok to have multiple groups at one entrance.
 - Bruce asked that we invite a law enforcement staff person to participate in these calls to answer questions for the metrics of success.
- **Discussion Topic: Lottery Development**
 - Testing the lottery
 - The lottery is open for testing and Alicia requests that everyone in the group try to “break” it by applying for different dates, putting in wrong dates, trying to reserve more than one trip, etc. **Action: Alicia will send out testing instructions and an issues log. Please get the log back to Alicia by April 30.** We will have further opportunities to test the lottery in the coming months.

Action Items

- **Action: Bert will talk with Gary Fales at the East Gate to see if he is planning to offer rentals.**
- **Action: Wade and Alicia will look into the question of authority for requiring snowmobile rentals.**
- **Action: Alicia will send out testing instructions and an issues log. Please get the log back to Alicia by April 30.**
- **Action: Alicia will send out a Doodle poll for our May meeting.**

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