

Maine Snowmobile Association 544th Directors Meeting

February 19, 2019 • Eastern Maine Snowmobilers SC, Holden

At 7:15 PM, President John Monk called the meeting to order.

Secretary's Report: There were no corrections or omissions on the January Secretary's Report. Motioned by Brad Barker to accept the minutes as distributed, second by Mark Chinnock, all in favor.

Treasurer's Report: Harvey Chesley read the Treasurer's Report.

Jessica Leahy, PhD and Ian Hathaway with the University of Maine presented on the Economic Impact Study that they are composing. The study will outline how winter tourism is affected by snowmobiling. The last Impact Study was completed in 1998 with 75,000 registered sleds in the state. Snowmobile activity has increased dramatically and it is expected that the Economic Impact has also increased. Approximately 2,400 surveys will be mailed to Maine residents as well as out of state registrants in order to collect the necessary data. The study will be completed June 2020.

President, John Monk welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the Eastern Maine Snowmobile Club for the wonderful meal. John has been out on the trails meeting folks and is very impressed with trail conditions and the work that clubs have been doing.

Executive Director, Bob Meyers reported, " Things are going great. As of February 10, registrations are at 67,817 – that's up 11% over the same time last year. Resident registrations are over 50,000, now and non-resident totals are at 17,500, up 25% over last year. It looks like things will be OK to fund the grants this year and hopefully provide some supplemental funding based on the length of the season. I know that Joe is already working on that.

Memberships are still coming in very well – Keep up the good work.

Things are starting to get going over at the State House and some of our bills are starting to come up.

On the 11th, I testified in favor of LD-321, An Act To Ensure the Continuation of the Landowner Relations Program. This would provide \$150,000 in General Fund money to support the Landowner Relations Program. This same bill passed during the last legislature, but died on the Appropriations Table at the end of the session.

I also spoke in favor of the confirmation of Judy Camuso as Commissioner of IF&W. I have met with her, and I think she'll do a good job. She was previously director of their wildlife division. She is also retaining Tim Peabody as deputy commissioner and Joel Wilkinson as Chief of the Warden Service.

This afternoon I testified in favor of LD-446, An Act to Appropriate Funds to the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry To Maintain Snowmobile Trails. This would appropriate \$300,000 of General Fund money for the Snowmobile Program. This is tough to do, but we'll give it a try. The last time we got General Fund money was in 1999, and it was used as seed money to begin the Capital Equipment Program. This one is a group participation bill and everyone needs to contact the committee and their own legislators. I have sent out an alert.

Tomorrow is the hearing on LD-382, "An Act To Increase the Registration Fee for Snowmobiles," sponsored by Rep. Stanley from Medway at the request of one of his constituents. It would increase the resident registration fee by \$10. What do you want to do with it?

There will also be a hearing soon on LD-887, "An Act To Equalize the Distribution of Gasoline Tax Revenues between Snowmobiles and All-terrain Vehicles." This was sponsored at the request of ATV Maine who wants to get the same amount of gas tax money that snowmobiles get. I have spoken with the Representative and he gave it to the Revisor's Office to draft without clear instructions. As written it would take about \$600,000 of our Gas Tax money and give it to the ATV Program. He clearly didn't support that and is considering withdrawing the bill. Hopefully, ATV Maine, who met this past weekend was going to support doing that. Stay tuned.

You may have received an email or letter from Rep. Head of Bethel or one of her constituents about LR-1788, "An Act Regarding Snowmobile Registration Fees." The bill hasn't been printed yet, but it proposes to have Maine adopt a two-tiered registration system like New Hampshire and also for some reason asks to reduce the MSA dues from \$15 to \$6. It sounds like a hot mess. We'll know more when it's printed. Incidentally, there are bills in the NH legislature this year to eliminate their two-tiered system and also to increase their registration fees by about 50%.

There's about twenty other bills that I'm monitoring, and we'll keep everyone posted as the session goes on.

Remember that nominations are due by the end of the month for the annual awards – groomer, snowmobiler, business, dealer and club of the year. Time to get those in and recognize people who have made an extra effort."

Executive Vice President, Mike Grass Jr. thanked the Eastern Maine Snowmobile Club for the wonderful meal. Mike reported that he has been riding throughout the state and conditions have been amazing.

Eastern Region, Eileen Lafland thanked the members of her region for all of their hard work. Downeast has started grooming. Clubs continue to work hard with fundraisers and club rides. The Clifton Area Club will host a dinner/dance on February 23rd. This fundraiser has been a huge success over the last few years. Eileen has been out touring her region and things are looking great.

Coastal Region, Dave Watson reported that some clubs are grooming and some are unable to due to lack of snow; but people are riding. Dave thanked everyone in attendance for their dedication to the support.

Trails Committee, Mark Chinnock thanked the Eastern Maine Snowmobile Club for the wonderful meal. Mark reported that the Trails Committee has been busy inspecting ITS trails. Trails have been fabulous but he feels that signage needs to be improved. The Committee will putting together a new signage plan for next year.

Scholarship Committee, Harvey Chesley reported that they have been working on an updated list of committee members. Dick and Alice Peck have asked to be involved in the transfer of the committee and they will be involved in the scholarship selection this year. Scholarship applications can be found on the MSA website.

Safety, Al Swett reported that he had been to Jackman teaching a safety course to students from Unity College. He attended a groomer rodeo in Medway and also taught a Groomer Certification Class; 13 people attended. Al attended a Life Flight safety demonstration in Medway, the Blessing of the Sleds in Mexico, a cookout in Unity and Orrington Vintage Snowmobile Show. There have been five fatalities this season. There does not seem to be an answer as how to prevent these accidents but we will continue to educate people about snowmobile safety. Joe Higgins will be surveying clubs regarding rescue bog-gans. In addition, he would like to have a designated landing area for LifeFlight within every clubs jurisdiction. Landing areas are easy to create and only need a 100 SF area.

Hospitality, Debbie Scates read Therese Lussier's report on the several cards that were mailed to members

Hall of Fame, Beth Bowie was not in attendance but did request that nominations be submitted before the end of February.

Nominations, Chris Richards & Mark Chinnock

President – Mike Grass, Jr.

Executive Vice President – Alan Swett

Treasurer – Barry Ryan

Assistant Treasurer – Harvey Chesley

Secretary – Lori Hemmerdinger

Vice Presidents:

Eastern Region – Eileen Lafland

Central Region – Vacant

Northern Region - Vacant

Coastal Region – David Watson

Western Region – Roland Bowie

Regional Directors:

Eastern Region – Paul Bolstridge, Larry Lafland, Gary Dowling, Chuck Loring, Chris Richards

Northern Region – Gary Marquis, Lendall Buckingham, Jeff Brooks, 1 vacant position

Western Region – Peter Ford, Paul Gallant, Jon Wakefield, Gary Okenquist

Coastal Region – Rodney Berry, 2 vacant positions

Central Region – Jerry Withee, Sally Withee, David Cogley, Alan Dugas, 1 vacant position

Jim Boyce of Kingfield was nominated from the floor for a Western Regional Director position.

Additional nominations will be accepted at the March meeting.

Unfinished Business: None

New Business: A discussion was had regarding the increase in Maine resident registrations. John Monk sits on the Advisory Council and stated that funding is discussed at every meeting. A \$5 increase was implemented 3 years ago. Year 1, Municipal Grants were increased, year 2, club grants were increased from \$145 to \$180 per mile, year 3, all grants held and clubs that proved that fuel was purchased between March 8th and April 8th in that season year in order to continue grooming were reimbursed for the expense. This forecasted year, clubs in the snow belt area that exceeded their grants by two or three times received another 20 or 40% increase. Registrations are up again and we are on par to add additional grants. John's personal opinion is that the increase should be implemented in two years and be broken up with \$5 toward trail funds and \$5 toward the Capital Equipment Grant. Most members felt that the registration fee should not be increased this year for fear of losing involvement in the sport. Another member from Kingfield felt that the increase would be helpful with the extended season in his area and the rising costs of fuel.

A vote was taken to oppose LD-525, "An Act To Increase the Registration Fee for Snowmobiles". Motioned by Harvey Chesley, second by Brad Barker, motion passed with 2 votes against. The MSA will pursue a registration increase later to take effect in 2 years; further details to be discussed.

Pot-O-Gold – Presque Isle Snowmobile Club. They were not present.

50/50 winner – Laurie Carr.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Hemmerdinger