



KOOTENAI COUNTY

NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL

KOOTENAI COUNTY **SNOWGROOMER ADVISORY BOARD**

Minutes of Meeting

Advisory Board Meeting – March 2, 2020

Elmer's' Restaurant

290 W Appleway Ave.

Coeur D Alene, Idaho

Members Present: Ted Burnside Vice Chairman, Steve Powers Board Member, Joe Wuest Board Member, Donald West Board Member

Members Absent: Dale Adickes Chairman, Lavern Welton Board Member, Al Beauchene Board Member

Staff Present: Nick Snyder Director, Jake Strange Operations, Lynnell Smith Administrative Secretary, Leslie Duncan Kootenai County Commissioner

Others Present: Orin Moses CDA Snowmobile club, Rodney Waller, William Klinkefus Kootenai County Sheriff's Department, Adam Zitterkopf Kootenai County Sheriff's Department, Ian Cotter US Forest Service, and Mike Waller

Vice Chairman Ted Burnside called the meeting to order at 7:05 am.
Had a quick introduction of everyone because of all the new faces.

Vice Chairman Burnside asked for approval of minutes of the last meeting.

Motion: Steve Powers moved to accept the minutes as written. Joe Wuest seconded.
Motion carried.

Old Business:

Ted Burnside asked about an update on Communication devices for Groomer operations. Joe Wuest talked about a device called (In Reach) that Nate Sparks suggested and explained that they worked well. The board would really like to see our ridership improve. A website letting people know where the trails have been groomed would be fantastic. Nick Snyder spoke to the board stating the Snowgroomer department was looking in to a couple different options and assured the board that by next year we would have communication devices on all the groomers in the backcountry. Satellite phones seemed to be one of the better options the Kootenai County Snowgroomer department may use next winter season.

Motion: Joe Wuest made a motion to recommend go forward with the communication device purchase for Snowgroomer by next season. Steve Powers seconded. Motion carried.

Rodney Waller said his biggest frustration was not knowing what the trail conditions are. This would be a huge improvement. If we had a website letting people know this information it would be wonderful. Rodney also has many volunteers that want to help with the grooming activities helping clear the trail etc. They are going to get their names on the list for Forest Service saw training.

Map for trails and brush removal: Ted Burnside mentioned brush removal in narrow areas on the trails. Stating Skittish is a problem area. Ian Cotter asked anyone who saw roads/trails that needed to be addressed to send him a list with a map showing the locations.

Right of way timber clearing: A State grant would be needed for brush clearing. Someone would need to note which trails are in the biggest need of tree and brush removal. Ian said we could get on the Avenza Maps system. It would show exactly what trails were groomed and we could download it. It is a very easy way to track the trail grooming activities of the day.

New Business:

Wage increase for Snowgroomer operators:

Joe Wuest stated that the board has asked for an increase for many years. The Advisory Board would recommend asking for this in the budget. Other groomers are paid at least \$17.00 an hour most places. Retention of Snowgroomer employees is important. Nick Snyder stated that he may take a different approach. He is looking into adding full time employees to run the Snowgroomer machines. That way we get to retain the knowledge, if we can get this to work we would be able to have 30%-40% more groomed trails during the season. Volunteers can help with clearing trees etc. as long as they have passed the Safety class with the Forest Service. The Snowgroomer Department is looking into also adding some snowmobiles to the fleet in order to help with service for breakdowns and get out ahead of the groomer to move trees before the groomer even gets to the spot. This would be much more productive.

Snowmobile Groomer Registration:

Ted and Joe committed on an increase of registration: It is a bit of an issue that Shoshone and Kootenai are the only ones in the State of Idaho that require a groomer sticker. An increase of registration of about \$20.00 would make a big improvement to the program. Joe Wuest would like to see a comment from the county about increasing the registration fee. We could do away with groomer sticker if we had a \$20.00 increase in registration overall. Approximate cost would be \$52.50. Would be about \$15.00 more for snowmobiles. Would this be enough to give us a bit more money to our program?

Volunteer hours should be tracked in order to show exactly what it costs to run the program. We really need to show these details.

Joe Wuest would like to see the Snowgroomer Department answer the four questions on the Northern Region Groomer member's questionnaire. Director Snyder said he would look at them. The questions would most likely have to be answered by the Board of County Commissioners and not the Snowgroomer Department.

Replacing Sander Truck & Plow for Fernan Hill:

The department is hoping to add a plow and be able to attach a sander to the current dump truck. They would also like to purchase some automatic chains in order to save time, money and backs.

FY2021 Budget: Director stated that the department should come in on budget this FY2020, however they will need to use some fund balance in order to repair snowgroomers and fix up the shop. They will have to repair and replace all tracks and hydraulic hoses. Tools will need to be ordered. Chain saws will also be needed. They currently have 2 saws, however this is not sufficient.

Reports:

Forest Service: Ian gave heads up that tree planting will start April 1st on Route 3097 up to Curran Saddle. This will impact groomer operations. Internally, the forest service is now working on hiring seasonal employees and that is consuming a lot of their time.

Kootenai County Sheriff's Office: Sergeant Klinkefus stated this has been a good season overall. Compliance has been good; 10 - 15 citations were issued. He reported a decrease in riders this year. February 28, 29 and 30 was a lot busier than it has been. The biggest issue in Kootenai County is that there is no destination location any longer. People like to ride in, have a hamburger, and ride back out. Priest River or Look Out are more popular because they have a destination place. Side by sides with tracks are becoming way more popular.

Director, Nick Snyder: The department is pulling groomers out by Friday the 13th or early the following week. Permitting for wide loads has been arranged, and then the barricades will also be pulled.

CPR/First Aid Classes are being arranged in order to take the Saw Safety class with the Forest Service.

The department is planning on making the groomer stickers available at their office and make online purchasing available, in order to try and help increase the revenue.

Public Comments: Commissioner Leslie Duncan wanted to say thank you to the Snowmobile Advisory board for all the hard work they have put into this program over the years. And thank you for being flexible and going with the changes.

Motion: Joe Wuest moved to adjourn the meeting, Steve Powers seconded; motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:54 am

Respectfully submitted,

Lynnell M. Smith
Recording Secretary