

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF NOVEMBER 16, 2006**

### **BMRA OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

The meeting was arranged as a teleconference with a dial-in time of 7:15 PM, however four of the members of the committee were present in person. The meeting was also attended by three members of the Executive Board of the TMTC; as this was the first formative meeting of the committee. At 7:30 PM, with one member not having dialed-in, the meeting was called to order by the Chair.

First order of business was a roll call; each member and guest identifying themselves and their position as follows:

Jimmy Jones, Chairman  
Tom Mitchell, Secretary  
John Harris, Committeeman  
Rick Hawkinberry, Committeeman  
by telephone connection, Greg Trulove, Committeeman  
Gary Hazel, TMTC President  
Jack Slack, TMTC Vice President  
Dick Stuart, TMTC Secretary

Absent Committeeman was George Caraway

Chair called on Greg Trulove for a report regarding the issue of night time trail riding at BMRA. GT had acted on the authority given him by the TMTC BOD at its July 29, 2006 meeting to publicize this issue through one or more Web based sites for the purpose of generating a petition of signatures by members desiring to re-establish a provision for riding after the 10:00 PM limit that is currently enforced. GT stated that two sites had totaled +/- 135 signatures, but he estimated that +/- 35 of those were spouses of members, or other persons who were not voting members of TMTC. GT stated his belief that +/- 100 members had signed onto this issue.

Much discussion followed:

Jimmy Jones questioned the general safety aspects of night time riding.

GT answered by listing the three prime areas of concern that he considers important;

- 1) noise issues
- 2) alcohol consumption
- 3) access problems.

Tom Mitchell spoke on drinking issues, stated that in his opinion, many persons out driving on back roads late at night were drinking or smoking "left handed" cigarettes, or both; and he expected the same to be true at BMRA. Considerable discussion went around the table on this issue.

John Harris asked about the Superlift Event, and whether night rides had taken place over that weekend. Reports by Gary Hazel, Jack Slack, and Dick Stuart (all of whom were in attendance at various times during the Superlift weekend) indicated that some

“unofficial” night time riding did take place, and that there were two or three problems and complaints. JH spoke on seasonal changes in hours of daylight, and noted that in winter months there are 4-5 hours of darkness by 10:00 PM; he questioned the legitimate need for additional night hours.

GT stated his opinion that a trial program might be considered, he suggested that a special privilege situation might best be suited, perhaps a night time poker run with a sign in sheet for participation. That would allow a limit on the number of vehicles, a pep talk on drinking on the trails, a pre-selected route to keep participants away from problem areas adjacent to BMRA, and a way to observe and keep track of the participants by persons who would have authority in case of misconduct.

GH responded by listing three observations:

- 1) Hot Springs property has only one night per month during which night riding is allowed,
- 2) Past experience at BMRA with drinking and alcohol related behavior problems,
- 3) Past experiences with adjacent landowners who have complained about night time activities.

JS commented that Hot Springs enforces their limits for a reason.

DS commented that enforcement of rules by volunteers would not be a satisfactory answer to police when a neighbor called in a complaint.

Rick Hawkinberry commented that alcohol problems are always going to lead to people problems.

JJ questioned whether the new property at Ozona might be a better test case for night time usage.

GT responded that it might be the case depending on the location and proximity of adjacent homes and hunting camps. He stated his personal doubts that a successful program at BMRA can be achieved by a “self policed honor system”, but believes that limited and monitored program during the summer months might be a workable solution. GT made a motion for the committee to study the concept of having 1 or 2 special guided events at night during the upcoming season and report this to the BOD in January. JJ seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Following that GT ended his telephone connection with the committee to attend to a prior commitment.

DS will set up an Operations Committee chat room within the TMTC web site.

JJ asked about BMRA operational hours during the holiday season. GH stated that he has given permission for Lawton and Karen Watts to be off duty over the Christmas

weekend. Discussion followed that no one was likely to want to sit in for the Watts' over Christmas weekend, and it was agreed that BMRA would be closed for December 22, 23, and 24<sup>th</sup>. The following weekend would be a four day weekend, open December 29, 30, 31, and January 1<sup>st</sup>. All present agreed.

There followed a discussion regarding expenditures of monies for maintenance and improvements at BMRA. There was general agreement that numerous areas need attention.

Items discussed included the need to build an electrically operated gate that could be opened and closed with a remote device.

Discussion followed about repairs on the TMTC tractor, and SWECO dozer, and the Honda ATVs. Comments were made that Lawton was sometimes trying to do more with the equipment than it was designed to be able to perform. Dr. Don Pierson has purchased a small bulldozer and has indicated that he might be willing to sell/lease/rent it to BMRA at some time in the near future. It would provide a more useful tool for some of the heavier projects at BMRA.

There was discussion regarding a need for Lawton to focus more attention on smaller maintenance issues. GH stated that he had spoken with RH about his becoming an active supervisor over Lawton and Karen Watts. RH has agreed to take on this responsibility, and will now be the "go to" person for day-to-day operational needs and questions between the committee, the property managers, and the BOD.

RH also agreed to bring the Honda ATVs to his shop and do minor repairs and maintenance on them on the basis of reimbursement and a per hour labor charge.

Discussion followed regarding the need to make repairs to the bathhouse facilities. DS has built replacement wooden floors for the dressing areas adjacent to the mens showers, and it was agreed that similar work was needed in the womens showers, and various other wooden structures and devices. Lighting in the bathhouses needs to be improved, and we have two donated urinals that would be useful in the mens side.

Outside lighting at the pavilion needs to be repaired, and the dumpster beside the pavilion is not being utilized and might be removed and a larger dumpster placed at the exit road by the office. RH will look into these items.

Discussion followed regarding the need to write SOPs for the Operations Committee. All present were asked to jot down any thoughts for a future session on SOPs.

TM discussed his concern that TMTC has failed to make BMRA a more "beginner friendly" facility. He stated his intent to create better mapping of the MC Loop system to provide to members, and his belief that we need to create and establish signage for some easy trail sections for beginners and children. He also stated his opinion that there needs to be a mapped and signed loop for "street stock" OHVs, something that a first time customer can get around without damaging their vehicle and still get a preview of what BMRA offers.

There was discussion regarding the new Texas Off-Road Sticker program and how that program relates to TMTC and BMRA. We are supposed to be getting a sign from the State that provides general information, and it will be posted in a prominent location. Dis-

cussion followed regarding our responsibilities to the State for enforcement of the new regulations. GH and JJ reported their conversations with Steve Thompson, with TP&W. It was agreed that BMRA will promote awareness and compliance with the program. We will stock and sell stickers for the State, handle funds generated by sticker sales, and forward those funds to the appropriate officials of TP&W. But, neither TMTC or BMRA has any policing or enforcement powers granted by TP&W, and we are not responsible for the behavior of individuals who neglect or refuse to purchase or display appropriate stickers on their personal vehicles.

There was discussion regarding conflicting information about reciprocal agreements with numerous other States, which also issue off-road permits and stickers. Again, after referencing conversations with Steve Thompson, it was agreed that TMTC at BMRA would honor any sticker or permit displayed on any vehicle which is current and would still be honored by the State that issued it.

It was reported that BMRA would be able to send three or four persons to a training to be held at the Angelina National Forest in early 2007. This school is sponsored by the manufacturer of the SWECO dozier, and will be taught by Cam Lockwood, the California based trail design expert who came to BMRA with the National Forest Service group from Angelina during the summer of 2006. The focus of the training is on proper trail design and construction techniques, and how the SWECO machines can best be used for both construction and maintenance. Persons expressing interest in this training include Dr. Don Pierson, Layton Watts, JS, and TM.

JJ spoke on the possibility of obtaining and keeping several cattle on the property at BMRA for the purpose of establishing an agricultural property tax exemption here. JJ stated that our current tax bill is approximately \$18,000; compared with a current tax bill at Ozona of \$900. He believes that keeping a handful of cattle at BMRA would result in a savings of approximately \$8,500 per year. It was agreed to explore this idea for possible implementation in 2007.

RH asked for permission to speak with the TXDOT engineer for Upshur County in hopes of their reconsidering a traffic signal, or improved warning signage on Hwy 155. There have been two recent accidents near the entrance to BMRA and it is hoped that these will result in some increased awareness of the dangers inherent in this hilltop intersection. It was agreed that this discussion be pursued.

Finally, there was agreement that the committee needs to meet at least once again prior to the BOD and General Membership meetings scheduled for January 27, 2006. It was decided that a meeting of this committee be scheduled for January 13, 2006; at a time and place to be determined.

Meeting was declared adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Submitted by  
Tom Mitchell