



EXPANDED ELIGIBILITY?
A Report From The RMVR Board
June 20th, 2009

As many RMVR members know, eligibility rules have been a subject of discussion at the past several Board meetings. The importance of this subject prompted the Board to have a special strategic planning retreat on June 20th to help us put any potential changes in eligibility rules into the proper context from an overall long-term strategic point of view. The purpose of this report is to share with RMVR members our observations, conclusions and recommendations.

Background:

Several things have prompted the Board to consider the possibility of expanding years of eligibility. First, as everyone is quite aware, over the past year quite a number of our members began running cars that did not meet our current eligibility rules and did so via the Exhibition “loophole.” Secondly, and most importantly, the Board is painfully aware of the long-term negative trend of event participation at RMVR and that this trend must be reversed in order for RMVR to remain viable.

Observations:

Regarding the recent plethora of Exhibition cars, readers of Board Minutes from the past several months should be aware that the rules and procedures surrounding Exhibition Cars has been firmed up. This was done to restore the notion of Exhibition cars BACK to its original intent – i.e. cars of special interest to a specific event and entered at the discretion of that Event’s Race Chair. The Board also recognized that the recent use of Exhibition as a solution for any deficiencies in our years of eligibility was not the proper long-term solution. Thus the concept of Exhibition cars was simply returned to its original purpose with the understanding that the real problem (and potential solutions?) was more properly related to eligibility.

In our 1998 race season we had 1,284 entries, but that was the last year of Steamboat and probably not a valid comparison. However, in the 2000 race season (two years after the loss of Steamboat), RMVR had eight events and 1,061 race entries. In the just-concluded 2008 year we had 5 events with only 621 entries. Point being, regardless of how you slice it, the decline in events and participation has been relentless over the past 8 to 10 years. The Board understands this is unsustainable and must be addressed.

The Board believes the long-term decline in participation is probably due to four major causes:

- The loss of Second Creek and other tracks.
- The loss of Steamboat as a marketing tool.
- The fact that our years of eligibility have been largely unchanged for years.
- The decline in the number of available pre-1973 cars.

The good news is that the loss of Second Creek (and other tracks) will to some degree (hopefully a significant degree) be offset by HPR now coming on line. It's clear that HPR is key to increased participation by all the Front Range clubs. And encouragingly early returns suggest that HPR will indeed represent a big positive trend and a reversal of the negative influence of previously lost tracks.

Steamboat will never be replaced. Oh that it could be! Steamboat (aside from being a pot-full of fun) was clearly a primary marketing tool in attracting members and entrants for RMVR. The Board's conclusion is that RMVR will have to begin some seriously improved marketing for our club. We've got a great product and it has probably been undersold in recent years. The Board resolves to actively pursue enhanced marketing opportunities. Many ideas were discussed at the retreat and they will be pursued. It seems essential to do so to help reverse the loss of Steamboat's marketing effect. This will be a challenging but essential effort.

With regard to years of eligibility for cars, RMVR has clearly been less than progressive in terms of expanding eligibility. It is the belief of the Board that we are behind the times, that a wider range of accepted cars can help attract more interest, that more and more of our cars are getting difficult to find and to race, and that there is a good population of perfectly acceptable "vintage" cars that can and should be considered.

Conclusions & Recommendations:

The Board cannot and will not dictate expanding years of eligibility. Rather, the Board feels strongly that such an expansion should come from the members, but with advice, counsel, and urging from the Board and the Eligibility Committee. We are quite sincere in only wanting to implement change that is accepted and endorsed by our existing members. We cannot run the risk of disenfranchising existing members and have no desire to do so. That would be counterproductive, indeed.

Thus we are asking each of the primary run groups, i.e., big bore, small bore and open wheel, to consider expanding years of eligibility for cars included in their respective groups. We ask that those discussions be done with the following in mind:

- For big bore and small bore, the 1981 National SCCA GCRs may well be a good source of ADDITIONAL production cars and classifications. There are any number of additional cars that clearly fit the spirit of "vintage" sports cars included in the '81 GCRs. And the rule book has already been written. No need to reinvent the wheel.
- It should be kept in mind that any expansion of cars or classes will NOT disturb existing classes or preparation (to the '67 or '72 GCRs). Existing cars will continue to run and compete as they do today and would not be required to "update" or "upgrade" to '81 GCRs. Cars would be classified and identified in our race results by what GCRs they followed (i.e. '67, '72 or '81).
- Any expansion should be done as additional cars and new classes so that it will not compromise existing cars and classes. Any upgrade to a newly established class would be purely optional on the part of the owner.
- For open wheel cars, the Monoposto Register may be a good place to start for open wheel cars. Again, the Register has already written rules for our open wheel drivers to consider.

Pros and Cons of Expanding Years of eligibility:

Clearly there is no guarantee that expanding years (and thus cars and classes) will promote more interest in RMVR. But other clubs have been able to do it. It seems silly to say that a '67 MG is OK but that a '68 isn't. Or that an early Z-car is OK, but a 260Z is not. In the opinion of the Board, a more enlightened and expansive view is warranted especially towards such "continuation" cars.

Often a concern is expressed that more cars means less track time. This may not be so. Please understand that the purpose here is to have bigger grids in each run group, not necessarily more run groups. That translates as more racing fun, not less, and it does NOT imply less track time. However, it may well be, if very successful, that expansion could mean some additional run groups. Please consider that this also does NOT necessarily imply less track time. Scheduling and run group management can create solutions to an additional run group or two. Just look at our club's own history and the experience of other clubs — many, many events with six or seven run groups are run with perfectly adequate track time. It can be done. Don't be put off by the notion that expanded eligibility equals less track time. It just isn't so.

Summary:

This Board strongly believes that the long-term financial health and well being of this club is partially dependant on a well thought out expansion of the eligibility. The Board strongly encourages that all interested parties be involved in this process. The general membership should be doing the bulk of the work developing any new rules that affect them. The Board recognizes that this is not an easy process and it will require significant effort. It is the board's sincere desire that a balance be found that supports our current core car owners and yet encourages new cars and new members to join.

Each run group should drive this process. The Board and the appropriate representative from the Eligibility Committee stand ready to share our perspectives, thoughts, and suggestions. But in the final analysis, the Board will only approve what is accepted and recommended by our existing members. We are asking that any discussions consider the following:

- Take a proper broad view of the long-term health of RMVR,
- Consider the changes in the context of the vintage community,
- Seek to arrive at the best possible solution for the club, and
- Try to avoid the temptation to focus solely on the individual's self-interest or bias and rather think about the club's longer-term goals.

Respectfully submitted,
RMVR Board of Directors