

THE ALBERTA Snowmobiler



PAY YOUR SHARE!

IT'S VOLUNTEERS VERSUS BUSY BEAVERS OUT ON THE TRAILS
BY LYLE BIRNIE, President

Every year the snowmobile clubs have to clear the trails due to windblown trees, heavy wet snow pulling down the willows and, of course, the beaver. Our "busy beaver" just won't give up—he has to build a dam, cut trees for the construction of the dam and some for food. For the most part, he just makes a lot of mess. If we could get into some of the areas in the summer then we could control the beaver population and keep the dams open. Whatever happens, Mister Beaver will have the upper hand and win the battle. I guess we just carry on and keep clearing the trails year after year. It is the volunteers that keep the clubs going and when the trails are cleared they can be proud of their accomplishments.

I have talked to some of the clubs and they are having the same problems. The Westlock club has logged over 150 hours with clearing and signage repairs, etc. Most of the trails get damaged by the wheeled units through the summer months because there are not many designated areas to ride. If there is enough snow then the groomer will fill the holes and make the trail decent.

We also find that there are many riders who refuse to buy trail passes to help with the trail maintenance. They claim that it is Crown land and they have the right to ride wherever they want. This is true, but if they would stop and realize who is funding the trail system then common sense should prevail. Then there are the special supporters that buy passes and don't even

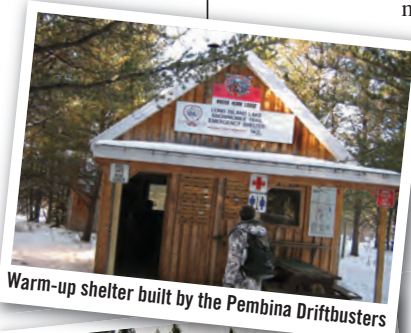
ride. Trail riding is a privilege, not a right. The volunteers from all the clubs donate a lot of hours keeping the trails in a safe condition but it still costs a lot of money for fuel, equipment depreciation and signage. The new year has arrived and may 2013 see some changes in the way the trail riders support the local clubs.

This time of year the snowmobile rallies start up and it looks like Mother Nature has done her part with lots of snow in all the areas. Support your local club rallies as this is a good fundraiser for them.

Not buying a trail pass is like saying you don't care about the volunteer time your friends and neighbours have put in to make that trail so nice for you to ride. Who do you think clears the fallen trees, cuts the brush back, builds the cabins and stocks them with firewood? Who do you think is out there at night driving the groomer? It is your local friends, and when you don't buy a trail pass you are making their job even harder. Did you know that the clubs all must have insurance on the trails in order to get permission to use them? The trail pass helps to pay for the trail insurance. If you are not

going to buy a trail pass, you are costing us time, money and effort. Shame on you.

The ASA trail pass is just about the cheapest in Canada. At \$60 (compared to Ontario at \$280) you get access to over 5,500 kilometres of trails in Alberta. Be fair and pay your share if you choose to ride our trails.



Warm-up shelter built by the Pembina Driftbusters



One of the many trails maintained by volunteers



ASA trail pass funds help run our school safety programs and much more besides.

>> EVENTS

Hosting an event or ride? Don't forget to post it on the ASA website calendar for all to see!

Snowmobile Sneak Peak April 9, 2013

Produced by the ASA, come see the 2014 sleds before anyone else! In Edmonton at the Hangar on Kingsway (Alberta Aviation Museum, located at 11410 Kingsway Avenue)

ASA Annual General Meeting Edmonton • April 27, 2013

International Snowmobile Congress June 5 - 8, 2013

Green Bay, Wisconsin
www.isc2013.org

Alberta Snowmobile & Powersports Show October 18 - 20, 2013 Edmonton Northlands Expo Centre www.albertasnowmobileshow.com

>> NEWS

2013 Go Snowmobiling Take a Friend Snowmobiling Campaign

Want to earn \$5,000 for your club? ISMA (www.snowmobile.org) has sponsored a contest to get your friends out on the trails with you. Check details at the ASA website.

SledNSnap.com launched!

The ASA, along with Flaman Trailers and the associations in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, have again launched this online photo contest. Enter to win at www.slednsnap.com.





A good running start

SAFE RIDERS PROGRAM SEES RECORD-BREAKING NUMBERS

BY CHRIS BROOKES, Executive Director

Well, 2013 is off to a better start than 2012 was. We have snow! I remember writing for this issue last year and most of the snow had melted. We were cancelling rides and were worried about rides in February being cancelled as well. The snow dance worked this year for sure and, as a result, membership sales are steeply on the rise. What a great problem to have to start the new year. At the end of last season we had many unsold passes still in the office. This year they were all distributed before December was out. Nice!

With lots of good snow I have one less thing on my plate to deal with, but a new opportunity has come our way to take its place. For many years, our four manufacturing partners (BRP/Ski-Doo, Arctic Cat, Polaris and Yamaha) have held a spring Sneak Peek Tour of the coming year's models. Run by the manufacturers, the tour was held for the last few years at the Mayfield Inn & Suites conference centre in Edmonton and featured all the latest models of sleds (and some summer machines). It was a quick one-day event, advertised through the dealerships and some limited media locally. The ASA was always invited to participate as the provincial snowmobiling body in the area.

This year the manufacturers offered the entire national tour to the Canadian Council of Snowmobile Organizations (CCSO), of which we are a member. As the producer of snowmobile shows in Alberta for over 25 years, we at the ASA immediately recognized the value of this opportunity and jumped at it. There will be shows in Edmonton, Saskatoon and Winnipeg, as well as two in Ontario and two in Quebec. We, of course, will produce the Edmonton show and plans are already finalized. Tuesday, April 9, at the Edmonton Aviation Museum (the Hangar on Kingsway to locals), the ASA will be pleased to present the 2014 Snowmobile Sneak Peek Tour (www.snowsneakpeek.com).

Having another snowmobile show to quickly put together gave us a good running start to get working on the 2013 Alberta snowmobile show, as we had to book the halls already and are starting to contact exhibitors for October. It's amazing how quickly the year goes by when you are constantly planning six to eight months ahead of time. We had to order more ASA trail passes to be printed in early January for this season and we are now looking at printing next year's trail passes even earlier, to have them available at the Sneak Peek show. How many to print for next year? Good question!

On the provincial front, the proposed trail legis-

lation that was supposed to be introduced in the Legislature in the fall was removed and may not be back until next fall. I have mixed feelings about this proposed provincial trail authority, only because of the proposed funding mechanism, which taxes motorized trail users for the benefit of all. There needs to be an equitable funding mechanism brought in to make it fair. The flip side of the proposal is that we may finally get formal recognition of our trails and the ability to legally protect the hard work and countless hours that our volunteers put in. Currently our trails enjoy little to no protection on Crown land. More times than I can count have I heard and witnessed the trails being damaged and destroyed, whether purposely or not. Survey crews, logging, pipelines—all seem to enjoy free rein over our trails. In the winter as well, we are not able to keep other motorized users from our groomed trails, where their damage quickly destroys the hard work and long hours put in by our grooming crews. Under the proposed legislation, our trails may finally enjoy some legal status and give us the ability to say, "This is our trail—use it respectfully or go elsewhere."

Our work with the Canadian Avalanche Centre (www.avalanche.ca/cac) continues as we strive to get the message of avalanche safety out to as many sledders as possible. This season sledders on their way to the mountains of B.C. will see large billboards with the message of avalanche safety on the highways into Crowsnest Pass, Golden and the Yellowhead. Sponsored by the ASA, the avalanche centre and Sandman Hotels, the three organizations put our heads together and came up with a way to reach more sledders than just those who belong to an organized group. Safety is the goal, whether you belong to the ASA or not (though we would prefer that you did!).

The ASA Safe Riders program is also all around the province and we again are on course for a record-breaking year for numbers. Last year our instructors presented our free program to almost 14,000 Alberta students, who would not normally get instruction in safe and responsible off-road riding. Our free-to-schools program presents to students the basic fundamentals of riding with respect—respect for yourself, respect for the machine, respect for others and respect for the environment. Using the Ride with Respect curriculum that the ASA developed with the province, our instructors bring this program into schools as it is not covered anywhere in the

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>> CLUB NEWS

Safety message: beware of fences

—by Scott Kruk, Central Region Director

Well everyone, our collective snow dances have paid off and there is some good riding to be had. If you're like every other sledder, you can't wait to get out there and make some tracks. Riding is our passion and what we all live for, whether it's heading down your favourite groomed trail or across that untouched open meadow. But let's not lose our heads with this "get out and go now" crazy urge. Keep in mind that cattle pasture locations may have changed, and cattle mean fences.

Every year we hear about some unfortunate soul tangling with a fence. Most are lucky to only get some scratches, a torn snowmobile suit or maybe lose a wind-shield, but a few aren't so fortunate. Please everyone, ride safely and be on the lookout for the fences because a fence can change an awesome ride into a horrible nightmare in the blink of an eye.

Something we should all be carrying when we ride is a roll of high-visibility reflective tape. Then, if you come across a fence or hazard, whether you are breaking trail or following someone else's, mark it—it could save someone's life.

That's my public safety announcement for everyone. Now go out and have a blast and remember to take a friend along because snowmobiling is the best part of winter.



**Remember...
Don't Drink
and Ride!**



► CHRIS BROOKES

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current Alberta school curriculum. If your school hasn't had a presentation yet this year, it might not be too late. Get in touch with the ASA office

and we will check schedules for your group. Remember—it's free! There's no reason why your local school shouldn't book a presentation. It is available for Grades K-3, 4-9 or 10-12.

Remember, ride safe and ride sober.

Another successful jamboree

BY ADDAM SARUK, Northeast Regional Director

This year the Myrnam River Ridge Riders took on the task of putting on the jamboree on February 16 and 17, the Family Day long weekend. This club has run a rally on this weekend for over 25 years. People come from all over the province to take in this event.

This time the club did a pre-registration online, which helped with lineups on Saturday morning. Pre-registration was also available on Friday night from 7 to 11 p.m. and registration was still available Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon.

The ride took us through the area's rural landscape as well as the North Saskatchewan River Valley and north to Derwent and back again. A midway lunch was provided to participants; it

was donated by local businesses and run by the Myrnam Elks. Supper was held at the Myrnam Elks Hall at 6 p.m., followed by the prize presentations, dance and beer fest. The cost of the rally was \$20 per driver and \$20 for supper.

The following day the club hosted an antique snowmobile Show & Shine, along with a ride. This event is one of the largest antique snowmobile shows in the province. It ran from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and the \$10 cost included dinner and prizes. The prize presentations started at 2 p.m., followed by the ride to one of the local cabins along the groomed trails.

It turned out to be a successful weekend and a great time was had by all!

Sticking together nationally

BY VINCENT KIRKHAM, Mighty Peace Regional Director

With governments giving low priority to small organizations, it is time for the local clubs across Canada to stand behind their provincial organizations. As individual groups we don't have a chance to save sledding areas across the country. As a whole, however, the sledding communities, both provincially and nationally, will have a strong voice within the government. As of 2006 there have been over 700,000 snowmobiles registered in Canada. The economic impact of sledding on local communities is huge, but I am not sure that all the local governments know just how large this number is.

Based on estimates, I figure that in one day I spend \$60 for sled fuel, \$80 for truck fuel, \$60 for meals, \$20 on two-stroke oil and, say, \$20 for miscellaneous items for a total of \$240 per day. In an average winter, if I go out 12 weekends, the total spent in my local community is \$5,760. If the 550 members of the Swan City Snowmobile Club, of which I am a member, each average the same, the total dollars being spent in our community would be \$3,168,000. This figure does not include large-ticket items such as groomers, groomer fuel, sled trailers, trucks, hotel rooms, or truck, sled and trailer maintenance. In addition, what about the accessories like beacons, avalanche gear, jackets, boots, or the most important item—the sled. Where does it stop?

The government is on a campaign for healthier

Canadians and spending large amounts of money on advertising to that end.

I would estimate there are more than 1 million snowmobilers in Canada and as a group we would have a voice with our local and national governments in promoting our sport as a healthy lifestyle.

We, the sledding communities, need to promote responsible no-trace snowmobiling—this includes staying within open sled areas. And maybe with some letter writing by our snowmobile communities to our local politicians, we can get provincial and federal governments to realize that we are an important part of the healthy economic growth across Canada. The government also needs to be made aware that sled clubs also have an interest in forestry, parks and wildlife habitats and we, as a community, understand that there needs to be a balance within these areas. So some areas may need to close, and as responsible snowmobilers we understand that. We also know the importance of keeping these areas here for the next generation of up and coming snowmobilers.

As Canadians we have the most majestic country anywhere, and as snowmobilers we get to see parts of our country that most people will never get to see. As a mountain snowmobiler, as I sit at the top of the Canadian Rockies on a bright

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>> CLUB NEWS

A happy compromise

—by George Deputat, Secretary/Treasurer

Peter Kent, our federal environment minister, announced that they would not be allowing drilling in the Suffield Base.

One could say that this would be an industrial calamity, not a victory. We are constantly being told that we must do our part in preserving areas for species at risk—the mountain and plains caribou, the grizzly bear, the burrowing owl, and the list goes on.

The snowmobiler has been closed out of many areas, but oil has not because it produces jobs that we cannot fill with local people. So we import people to work these areas and, of course, more people, more environmental damage. Our politically correct will not admit that the reason we have more pollution is we have more people, so we must set aside areas with little or no development, but we must also keep in mind that if we shut out access entirely we are denying existing citizens the right to Alberta's nature.

Non-motorized trails are a good idea for short, easy-access areas but for large expanses we need good, well-maintained and policed motorized trails or no one will use them. In Alberta we have again tabled the trail corridors issue. I'm not sure the way this system was set up was the right way to proceed but it was a start.

Call your local MLA or write the premier about getting this initiative going again.

Until next time ride safe, ride sober and get involved in trail reform.

For Safety's Sake ... never ride alone!



The perks of volunteering

ENLARGING YOUR CIRCLE OF FRIENDS IS A BIG BENEFIT

BY JANET RIOPELE, Northwest Regional Director

The other day I realized that, as ASA board members, we are always asking you to volunteer your time and energy for the sport of snowmobiling. It doesn't matter whether we ask as a club member or a board member, but we are always asking.

You know it is always for the good of snowmobiling; often it is for help with building or clearing the trails, help with the fundraising or just to do some of the paperwork—it all helps in the end. But I wonder if you all know some of the perks of volunteering for the snowmobile community. I call it community because it is more than just your local club that benefits from your volunteering hours; it is the whole community and, in many cases, all of Alberta benefits from your volunteering time and efforts. You may be asking by now what benefits you get from donating your time to snowmobiling.

Well, let me tell you how it enhances your life. Many people start off with just attending their local club meeting. By attending the meeting you can see what the club has planned for the upcoming year and also what the long-term plans are.

Many of the clubs have three- to five-year plans, and would much appreciate the help from more volunteers. After you attend some meetings you then know when the work committee plans on working and what all has to be done to put on the planned event—that is when you can really shine by stepping up to the plate and volunteering some of your time. And what is the perk to that? Well, you have just met more snowmobilers who, just like yourself, have a passion for snowmobiling and would like to see the club grow by keeping the trails clear and building new trails. So your circle of friends has grown, and you can never have too many friends. And that, my friends, is the best perk of all!

Let me tell you about a couple of experiences that I have had. A few years ago my email and Facebook page were hijacked, and all of my contacts were sent an email saying that I had gone on a trip and my passport purse with all my ID and credit cards had been stolen, and could someone please send me some money to get home. Well, I had 12 snowmobile friends call my house and

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>> CLUB NEWS

► STICKING TOGETHER

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sunny day, looking around I am in absolute awe of what we have, and without national, provincial and local clubs fighting to keep these areas open we will lose it all to better organized interest groups that will do what they think is best.

Support your local clubs; tell your fellow snowmobilers who do not have memberships to these clubs that we need their support, which then also supports provincial clubs. Provincial clubs need to help other provincial clubs and if we all work together we will have a strong voice of responsible Canadians with a common interest. We all have a love for this sport no matter which province or territory we live in. Governments work for

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THE 2014 SLEDS ARE HERE



ARCTIC CAT
ski-doo

POLARIS



YAMAHA

SHOW YOUR BUDDIES THE TAIL LIGHT THEY'LL BE CHASING — ONLY AT THE 2014 SNEAK PEEK

Be the first to see the 2014 snowmobiles from Arctic Cat, Polaris, Ski-Doo and Yamaha at the 2014 Manufacturers' Sneak Peek. Don't miss it!

Admission is FREE

Tuesday, April 9, 2013 • 10 am - 7 pm

**Edmonton Aviation Museum (the Hangar on Kingsway)
11410 Kingsway Avenue, Edmonton, AB**

snowsneakpeek.com



► JANET RIOPEL *Continued from page 28*

cellphone asking how they could help. It made me feel that I had some wonderful friends and I know that if I ever do get into trouble somewhere, I have some awesome friends I can call for help.

The other experience I want to tell you about is how snowmobilers can make you feel special. Every time we go to Fox Creek, we are welcomed with open arms by the club and the townspeople. When we check into the Foxwood Inn & Suites to meet up with Harold and Helen Bellwood and family, we receive hugs from everyone, and who doesn't like hugs? I did tell you that snowmobilers are huggers, didn't I?

This year when we went to Alberta Beach to see how they were doing at the open house for Ecko Marine Ltd., we were met with open arms by Sara Gilles, followed by Tyler, Marlene, Marvin, Don and Gerry Picard, who is a rep for BRP in Alberta. The club was having a great time cooking hotdogs for everyone who came out to the open house and was making sure

that everyone who came into the shop was informed about all the activities that the club has going on for this year. But the hugs were a great perk to receive by just showing up to a club activity. Not only did I receive some great hugs, but Marlene introduced me to her son, Steven, who now owns Ecko Marine, and before we left I was the proud owner of a glorious sled at a fine price. Gerry Picard, who has been after me to get a new sled for the last couple of years, chipped in for a new helmet. So that is another perk to volunteering—all the great deals you get.

There is also the ASA Excellence Awards, where the clubs nominate other club members and snowmobile-related people and businesses each year and it is a great honour to be nominated for any one of the awards.

So now that you know about a few of the perks

of volunteering for your local snowmobile club, please sign up and help shape Alberta's snowmobile trails. Until we meet, remember to ride safe and ride sober. See you on the trails with my new sled and helmet!



>> CORPORATE SPONSORS

Supporting Tracks on the Snow

The ASA has many partners/sponsors that support the overall goals and objectives of the association and assist in delivering many of our important programs and services. The sponsorship program has been developed to provide information outlining the opportunities for sponsors and partners to assist us in our mission and duly recognize the sponsors for their efforts.

Sponsors 2012 - 2013

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Bronze Sponsor

American Income Life Insurance
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ATV World
Back Country Access
Cycleworks
Ecko Marine
Piasta Printing
Prineth
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The Alberta Snowmobile Association further thanks our Safe Riders partners:

Alberta Transportation
Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks
& Wildlife Foundation
International Snowmobile
Manufacturers Association

► STICKING TOGETHER

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us, but only if we are able to tell them as a unified group what we want. As an avid snowmobiler I believe we need to come together and be one voice nationally.



The annual sledder migration

SOUTHERN ALBERTA SNOW CONDITIONS ARE EXCELLENT

BY BOB JONES, Southern Regional Director

Well, another riding season is underway in Southern Alberta and snow conditions are good and improving each week. The early season snow conditions in the mountains were better than average this year, which resulted in a mass migration of sledders to their favourite southern mountain riding areas during the holiday season. Between Christmas and New Year's it seemed that every third vehicle heading down Highway 3 toward the mountains was hauling sleds and the staging areas on both sides of the divide were very busy in spite of some cold temperatures in late December.

On the Alberta side of the mountains, trail grooming was started in early January both north and south of Highway 3. The trails are all in good condition, although some caution should be exercised when riding in the old Lost Creek fire burn area, as deadfall on the trails may be present after a strong wind. Avalanche conditions in the area have been low below the treeline and moderate above the treeline so far this season, but be sure to check conditions before heading to higher elevations. The trails in the Cataract Creek snowmobiling area in Kananaskis Country, which

have traditionally been the home riding area of the Calgary Snowmobile Club, are no longer being groomed at this point in time.

I've been involved with the Crow Snow Riders club in the Crownstest Pass area of Southern Alberta for many years and have a lot of experience with how many volunteer hours go into maintaining the trails, shelters and staging areas, doing fundraising, etc. This is true of all other snowmobile clubs in Alberta and those in B.C. as well. I'd like to say a special thank you to all those individuals who so selflessly donate their time and expertise to making snowmobiling an enjoyable experience for us all. The next time one of these volunteers asks you for your trail pass or wants to sell you a day pass, consider saying thank you for the cleared staging area, the groomed and cleared trails, the warm-up shelter with its stockpile of cut wood, etc., rather than complaining about the cost of the pass. All things considered, that trail pass is one of the few financial bargains there is in the sport of snowmobiling. Anyway, the season is off to a good start and hopefully (at the risk of jinxing it) this is only the beginning to an awesome snow season.

Snowmobilers Care
About Our Environment



Canadian Council of Snowmobile Organizations



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ASA CLUB MEMBERS

Snowmobile clubs are an integral part of this popular sport with activities including development of trail networks and staging areas, competitive events, trail rides, picnic/bonfire rides, safety clinics, fundraising for charity, camping trips, search and rescue and maintenance clinics. Club activities are often family oriented, so all ages join in the fun and also the work to make the fun possible. Check out the list of member clubs. Is your club a member? The ASA can help you form a club if there isn't one in your area. Call us at our office (780) 427-2695 or visit www.altasnowmobile.ab.ca.

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Tri-County Snowmobile Club

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Watt Mountain Wanderers

Barry Andrews, Box 1634, High Level, AB T0H 1Z0
780-926-4783

Whitecourt Trailblazers

Ken Linford, Box 607, Whitecourt, AB T7S 1N7
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Coast to Coast by Dennis Burns

February is Environment Month

My name is Mario Côté, vice-president of the Canadian Council of Snowmobile Organizations and chair of the environment committee. I've been involved in organized snowmobiling for 35 years, as club president, director, vice-president and even president of the Quebec Federation of Snowmobile Clubs.

Today, I would like to discuss the environment, something we all care about dearly and which we have a duty to protect.

Certain environmental extremists would like snowmobiling to disappear. Snowmobiling, like numerous other activities, must be part of sustainable development. In order to do so, an activity has to, among other things, have a socio-economic character and programs designed to improve its ecological footprint.

Allow me to explain: the socio-economic aspect is rather obvious, for snowmobiling is a social activity that brings people together and the economic impact in Canada exceeds \$7 billion annually.

All activities have an environmental impact and in order to survive in a sustainable development

framework, it is this impact that must be reduced, but how?

Firstly, with new engine technologies such as four-strokes and direct injection two-strokes, the manufacturers have made significant gains and I am convinced that this evolution will continue.

For snowmobile clubs managing trails, we must ensure that all applicable environmental rules are respected and adhered to—from wetlands and the construction of bridges and culverts to proximity to residential areas.

Where and when possible, establish trails that are as permanent as possible so as to reduce as much as possible our ecological impact.

For individual snowmobilers, we must ride only in designated areas and keep our vehicles in good working order as it's proven that a well-maintained snowmobile has a reduced ecological impact. We must be responsible when trail riding and when the time comes to purchase a new snowmobile, choose one equipped with the latest available technology.

Have a great season and please be respectful of the environment!



Snowmobile responsibly

From safety to the environment, we all make personal choices in our daily lives, including our snowmobiling activities. Here are some smart choices to consider.

Know Before You Go -

This applies to the thickness of the ice, the weather and avalanche conditions. You and your riding partners should all practise good trail riding etiquette as well.

Be Prepared - Your checklist should include sunglasses, good tie-downs, your trail or riding passes and a spare belt—how many times have you seen a rider with no spare belt? Oh yes, then you will need a tow rope and maybe a crazy carpet to get that sled out.

Arriving home safely after each and every ride depends primarily on planning, decisions and actions, so choose to snowmobile responsibly this winter. Remember, you are the one who can keep yourself out of trouble.

If You Pack It In, Pack It Out -

If you can carry containers full surely you have the room to carry them when they are empty—from water bottles to oil containers, not to mention blown belts. Remember, snowmobilers care about the environment and keeping nature beautiful!

Respect Sensitive Areas -

There are lots of other places to ride, so avoid areas marked as sensitive or protected.

Spread the Word - Snowmobiling is a good news story because snowmobiles have improved continuously.

Protect Wildlife - Animals are more vulnerable in winter, so keep your distance and leave them alone.



Dennis Burns

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