I’m sure that this past season in Manitoba will go down as the winter that never was. Records will prove that this was one of the warmest winters with the least amount of snow. Out of the 51 clubs in the province less than 50 per cent of the clubs had enough snow to groom trails. Thanks to those clubs that did have enough snow to open trails and their efforts to keep them in the best shape possible.

After last winter’s record snowfalls and long riding season, this year has been viewed by many as a real downer. The question that everyone is now asking is what will happen next season? Is climate change really happening? Will we have enough snow for next season? Well, if the weatherman and the best climatologists in the world cannot forecast the weather two to three days in advance, I surely am not going to try and guess what is going to happen next winter.

Maybe this past season was not the best, but we must move forward. Snoman has a few initiatives underway, one being the development of a provincial trail numbering system. I’m sure we all have been on the trail, looked at our map and tried to figure out where the next intersection is. Or we’ve been at an intersection and wondered what trail we should take to get to our destination. A committee has been given the mandate to bring forth a plan that would see all Manitoba trails with a designated number. The committee will be looking at other jurisdictions to try and align our system of trail numbering to be similar with other systems across Canada. We are hopeful to have a concept plan in place by the beginning of next season with possibly some implementation starting during the course of the season.

Snoman continues to work with MPI in order to bring improvements to our Snopass sales distribution system. One area we are trying to improve and make easier is the sale of Snopasses to out-of-province riders. There is a need to improve the process to make it easier for Ontario and U.S. riders to purchase their Snopasses. Out-of-province riders contribute significantly to our provincial and local communities’ winter economy.

Plans are starting to get underway for the second annual Snoman Snowmobile Congress. The congress will be held on November 9 and 10 at the Club Regent Hotel in Winnipeg. This year we hope to have different types of workshops; the intent is to set up the workshops so members will be able to attend more than one workshop and will be able to select the ones they wish to attend. A spousal program is being planned and will be expanded from last year. We will be addressing the concerns brought forth from last year’s event. Please keep an eye on the Snoman website as plans unfold we will be updating the website (www.snoman.mb.ca).

I suggest that snowmobilers take a similar outlook as farmers: “Oh well, let’s hope for a better season next year.” If you are looking toward next season and want a new sled, there are some great deals out there. Many dealers have a large inventory of sleds and are eager to reduce their inventory. Shop around; this is the time to buy.

For those that had snow, I hope you had a great season, and for those of us that did not have snow, thanks to the clubs that took the extra effort to ensure their trails were groomed so we could all enjoy at least part of the winter.

Have a great summer and see you on the trails next season.
The season of a trail auditor

All the trail auditors get together at a pre-season meeting to talk about last season and what changes need to be made before the season starts. We also discuss what club’s trails are going to be audited. At Snoman we have 10 people that work as a committee. This committee is structured with a chairperson, one staff person and two representatives from each of the five regions in our province. One of the main reasons for this committee is trail safety. We at Snoman want the trails to be well signed and as safe as possible for Snopass holders in Manitoba. The trail auditor will then contact the club he/she is auditing. At a pre-arranged time and place the auditor will meet with the club’s representatives. The trail audit is like a picture in time to identify a part of the club’s trail system. What the auditor is looking for is placement and the condition of the signs, designations or directional signs. They are also looking at the trail conditions and if the club wants to they could show off their grooming equipment—as auditors we all like to see that. Once the trail audit is done the auditor will sit down with the club’s representatives and have a debriefing session. This is when the auditor goes over any problems that were found. The auditor will ask the club if they have any questions about the audit or about Chapter 6 of the operation guideline manual. This is only a brief outline and I hope this answers some of the questions on what a trail auditor does over the course of a riding season.

What a winter!
ONLY THE NORTHERN REGION HAD ANY SNOW TO SPEAK OF

BY KEN LUCKO, Executive Director

The previous winter was my first season with Snoman and there are always the typical challenges with starting a new job. The one thing that really made last season special was that it was one of the longest riding seasons in memory with most of the province having at least 14 weeks of good trail riding. The spring Sneak Peek show had a great turnout and spring sales were looking great. Jump ahead to this season and it seems that Mother Nature has played a cruel joke on us. The snow was by no means just a Manitoba problem, but stretched throughout most of Canada and the northern United States.

In looking back, our club volunteers did a great job under very difficult circumstances, and in many areas were able to provide a safe designated trail system. We know that trying to predict the weather seems to be an elusive art, but with optimism we can hope that next year’s season will make up for this year’s disappointments. On behalf of our member clubs, board of directors and staff, I would like to thank all of those who purchased Snopasses along with our many sponsors for their support.

Groomer demo enjoyed by all

On the weekend of February 25 and 26, snowmobile clubs from Manitoba had a chance to test out some of the newest in trail grooming technology. A 2012 Tucker Terra 2000 pulling a brand new Mogul Master XLMBP 16-08 HD was purchased by Snoman and will make up for this year’s. Continued on sidebar
Springhill Trailblazers
BY SUSAN ROGERS

Three times—that is the number of rides I have been out on this winter. I was not trying to extend the life of my little 500 sled. I wanted to get out there and tear up those trails. (Groomer Rick, I really didn’t mean to say tear up the trails; it’s just a figure of speech!)

The club went on an amazing weekend trip to the Pinewood Lodge. The hospitality was terrific, the resort itself beautiful if you like pinewood, and I do. The club had pretty much taken over the main lodge and enjoyed having the pool and hot tub area for our evening chinwags.

Thirty-two members made the trip; some of us rode out there from our staging area not knowing what to expect with regard to the trail conditions, but the trails were pretty good. We didn’t hit too many rocks or tree roots. Our thanks to the clubs that had been out there grooming—we appreciated it.

We rode all day Saturday in the Whiteshell area. Al cooked us some tasty hotdogs in one of the Whiteshell club’s shelters. Our thanks to the club members from Whiteshell who had a nice fire burning in the wood stove. It was good to get in and warm up before we continued on our trek. We misplaced one club member along the way home. The lost found his way home and now he has a T-shirt that he must wear at all times while out riding. We all got together in the main dining area, and enjoyed a delicious meal on Saturday night and then gathered at the pool area for more “who spent more on gas than the other guy” talk. All in all, the weekend was a success and we are planning to go back next year.

Seriously, when out riding with a group you must follow some simple rules and one of them is, if you lose sight of the rider behind you, stop and wait for him or her, especially if you are making a change in trail direction.

We have pretty much had an organized ride every weekend; the lack of snow didn’t hold us back. I have included a few pictures of our rides, one of our group in front of the Pinewood Lodge, one of Ross with his new T-shirt and one of a group ride to the Grand Beach area. The scenery that day was absolutely magnificent, all the trees wearing white fur coats and the millions of diamonds sparkling on the hills as we rode through the trails.

People, it just doesn’t get much better than that unless, of course, you are sitting under a palm tree, sipping on a fancy pineapple drink somewhere, but that too is a matter of opinion. Until next time, get out there and take advantage of what little winter we have left.

Roblin’s vintage snowmobile derby
by PETER MYSKO

The 6th annual Makaroff Vintage Snowmobile Derby held on Sunday, February 19, was a huge success this year with nearly 200 vintage snowmobiles and enthusiastic riders showing up from four provinces. This was the largest turnout in the event’s history. We had two riders from Lloydminster, Alberta, as well as one each from Gifford, Ontario; New Lowell, Ontario; and Utopia, Ontario. The Ontario participants actually had their machines shipped to friends in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, a couple weeks prior to the derby and flew out to Regina where their pals picked them up the day before the derby and hauled them and their sleds to Makaroff to take in the ride. Now that is some commitment to vintage snowmobiling!

There were riders from all across Manitoba and Saskatchewan as well as a terrific showing from Roblin and surrounding area.

The Oldest Sled Award went to Lanny Westman, a couple weeks prior to the derby and flew out to Regina where their pals picked them up the day before the derby and hauled them and their sleds to Makaroff to take in the ride. Now that is some commitment to vintage snowmobiling!

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Trail ride of the week

BY GUS WRUCK

This ride in the Eastman region will take one over a wide variation of terrain. The towns of interest are Lac du Bonnet and Pinawa and there are numerous sights to see along this route.

Seddons Corner (PTH 44 and PR 214) is a favourite staging location for people wanting to go for a day of snowmobiling. There is a large parking area behind the fuel station to park a trailer and leave it for the day. The owners of the fuel station welcome snowmobilers. They have an assortment of refreshments as well.

From Seddons Corner the first destination is Lac du Bonnet by one of three routes. The first is along an old railbed just to the west of the station that parallels PR 214 to Lac du Bonnet. The second is to travel east on old PTH 44 for two miles to the Centerline Trail. This trail is an old fireguard road and was recently upgraded to allow for logging in 2011. This winter (2012) the trail has been one of our best trails. Along the trail, one will notice some clear-cutting of the forest. This is part of the province’s forest management practices. Regrowth will occur in the next few years and the forest will regenerate.

About eight kilometres down the Centerline Trail, one will come to a junction that offers two choices. Continuing straight will take one to Lac du Bonnet; alternatively, turning right here will take the snowmobiler across a swamp to the Halfway Hut. From there follow the signs to Lac du Bonnet. This trail is actually more scenic with a wide variation in tree growth. Oftentimes deer will be seen for an instant on the trail.

On the way to Lac du Bonnet in the Agassiz Forest, regardless of the trail you choose, about 15 to 18 kilometres from PTH 44 the trails come together as one trail. The second junction going straight will take one to the railbed and along the way one will pass the location of an old peat processing plant that was in operation about 105 years ago. Turning right at the second junction is a destination sign pointing to Lac du Bonnet for a slightly shorter route to that community.

In Lac du Bonnet there are two hotels and two motels as well as three fuel stations and several eating places. From Lac du Bonnet we will travel across the river to the east and connect to the Riverland Trail. After travelling about two miles we are in the forest again. At the first junction just inside the forest we come to the main access to the Lee River Trail system. We will continue straight to the next junction, turn left and travel in a straight line for about two miles to PR 520. Just across the road is the Pinawa Dam Provincial Heritage Park. This is the site of one of the first hydroelectric generating stations in Manitoba. Once in the park, one can go into the old forebay area and see the inside of the dam in its wintertime beauty.

Following the trail again, one crosses the Pinawa Channel in the direction of King’s Kookout Hut. After a short rest, we will continue to Pinawa along a winding trail that crosses a beaver dam or two.

Just before reaching Pinawa one will cross the large coffer dam that holds water to provide the required head for the Seven Sisters Dam. In Pinawa a stop at the Pinawa Club can be made as it is along the trail and marked. After resting one can follow the trail through

Continued on sidebar ▼

VINTAGE DERBY

Cont’d. from pg. 23 sidebar

Poker hand winners were:
- **1st place**: Lanny Westwood of Hamiota, MB
- **2nd place**: Megan Leflar of Roblin, MB
- **3rd place**: Tim Gregoire of Brandon, MB

The award for Rider from the Farthest Distance went to Kent Petch of Gilford, ON (2,312 kilometres); Sarah Ruf of Canora, SK, was the first-place winner of the Oldies Song Trivia Contest; and Nick Vogel was the winner of the Hard Luck Award, having broken down a few miles into the ride. He did, however, complete the ride on another sled. The True Grit Award went to the Gehl family of Regina and Tregarva, SK, who made it out for the ride six years in a row, despite having had a long day of racing at Earl Grey, SK, the day before the derby.
Support at the political level

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has met with the National Trails Coalition (NTC) group and has also spoken with CCSO president Kevin Sweetland (now past president) about trails in Canada. Stay in touch with your MP and look for their support for the future of snowmobile trails in Canada. The CCSO board of directors has placed a very high priority on finding a way to start replacing the groomer fleet in Canada.

Thank you to the volunteers, landowners and corporate members/sponsors

Thank you to the thousands of volunteers that make the snowmobile trails magically appear. Each and every one of you deserve our admiration for the long hours and dedication. Every job requires a special talent and the willingness of a person to have a “git ‘er done” attitude. No job is too big or too small. Also some special recognition for the hundreds of thousands of dollars that you raise for so many charities and worthwhile causes—we can never thank you enough for your generosity of time and cash donations. Well done and thank you!

And to the landowners who allow the volunteers to cross your properties to build a connected snowmobile trail system—without you approving the access, trails could never be fully connected from community to community—thank you for being so helpful and understanding!

And to our corporate members who donate time and money to assist the CCSO in delivering the safety and environmental messages all across Canada. These cash donations also allow the CCSO to work closely with our members to adopt a unified look and approach in so many of the business practices that it takes for a national body to operate in today’s fast-paced business world—thank you for being there.

CCSO spring board meeting

The CCSO held the spring board meeting in Quebec City and the main topic on the agenda was the review and input to the CCSO strategic plan and budget for 2012-2013. Congratulations to the newly elected president Steven McLelan and re-elected vice-president Mario Côté. The board offered overwhelming support for all the executive and in particular

Continued from left

thanked Kevin Sweetland for his work and efforts in his many executive positions and now as both the past president and the nominations chair for the coming year.

Welcome to our newest corporate members: Victory Resources and Sierra Iron Ore corporations join forces with the CCSO to sponsor the Zero Alcohol and Make the Smart Choice campaigns all across Canada.

Clean Snowmobile Challenge was a great success

Clarkson University of Potsdam, New York, captured first place in the 2012 SAE Clean Snowmobile Challenge, which closed March 10 at Michigan Technological University.

Kettering University of Flint, Michigan, placed second, with the University of Wisconsin-Platteville earning third place in the internal-combustion category.

The University of Alaska-Fairbanks won the zero emissions category.

The Clean Snowmobile Challenge is a collegiate design competition of the Society of Automotive Engineers. Engineering students from participating schools re-engi-
The three Rs of volunteering

BY DENNIS BURNS

Many clubs are struggling to get enough volunteers these days to keep the trails open or to fill positions on the executive. But that being said, a great example of how to get ‘er done is the Os- goode Carleton Snowmobile Trail Club, which is located just south of the city of Ottawa, Ontario. In a recent visit to the clubhouse, club president George Darouze introduced me to the many volunteers on his executive. An outstanding 24 people raised their hands—they work as part of his team to make the trails a success and 21 of them were elected to executive positions. Wow—unbelievable job by all.

So we asked George to share some of his leadership secrets with us. The first thing he said is that people will volunteer, but they need to know what is expected and what the time commitment will be. No one wants to commit for life or for every weekend. George created job descriptions and asked everyone filling the positions to both review and agree to what the job would be. If they agreed then this is what the club would expect of them and both sides would then understand what was needed and how to work together. At the club meeting each provides a report of activities to date and members can make suggestions or comments on work or repairs required. Club meetings typically get a turnout of 30 to 40 members and all are very active.

The second issue was how the club would communicate with the membership and snowmobilers at large. George again had a solution—email—but first he needed to create a database of email addresses so that it would be quick and easy to alert members. George spent his off-time building a file with more than 700 addresses so that his riding season was easier to manage—he even has a database of his sponsors and business owners in the area.

Here is one of his emails:

Hello sledders! Mother Nature has blessed us with more snow. Yay! The groomers are out and our fantastic operators are continuing to make our trails great. This week’s events: Tonight is wing night at the clubhouse. Come out and meet some new people and enjoy our warm clubhouse atmosphere. Wing night starts at 7:30 p.m.

The club also knew that they needed to have a place to meet so did they have a solution? You know it. The clubhouse started with two shipping containers. Then they needed to expand so they separated the two containers and added a raised wall and roof between; then they cut out two of the container sides and presto—a 40-by-40 clubhouse on a donated private section of land. Next they needed a way to keep the pop and food from freezing. Again, the club members had the idea...

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Reflections of a club president

BY GUS WRUCK, Eastman SnoPals

Early exposure to snowmobiling

I first purchased a used Massey-Ferguson Ski-Whiz in the early 1970s. This was followed soon afterward by an older Alouette. My first impressions of snowmobiling were that the snow cover presented an excellent means of accessing areas of the country that were not ordinarily available during any other time of the year. In addition, snowmobiling provided an excellent wintertime activity to do things outside with the family.

As time passed my career took me to other areas of the world, which included nearly seven years living and working in southern Africa. During my time in Africa I returned for a short time and lived in Lac du Bonnet and during this time my wife and I purchased a cottage lot in Lac du Bonnet. On returning to Canada permanently, I began a career with government and I was living in Winnipeg.

Recent snowmobiling exposure

After several years back in Canada, the urge to go snowmobiling returned. Having spent several years in Africa without snow, and a trip to Florida in December of 1997, the decision was made. I purchased a new Ski-Doo Grand Touring snowmobile in early 1998. This machine has served me well. Soon afterwards, my wife got one as well. We stored the snowmobiles in a small shed we built on our lot in Lac du Bonnet. This lot was to be the site of our future retirement home that was eventually built in 2004. It was also very convenient to the trails in that we only had to open the shed door and go to the trails since they...

Continued on page 27 sidebar
REFLECTIONS OF A CLUB PRESIDENT

Continued from page 26

were only two kilometres away. During our rides on the trail systems of eastern Manitoba, it became evident to me that our area was truly a wonderful place for riding. I began to look forward to winter as a time for enjoyable rides and exploring the countryside. This included riding on the trails of several clubs. As a result it was possible to see differences in the way the trails were maintained by the various clubs. I had no idea who the people were that maintained the trails nor did I care very much.

I did make a personal resolution that when I had more time, I would get involved with a club. I could see that some clubs were quite dedicated to their trail systems while others were less so. In 2004 it became time to build our retirement nest. The house was nearly completed in early 2005 except for landscaping and painting. In June of 2005, we moved into the house and I commuted to my work in the city. My actual retirement was not to occur until August of 2006.

Eastman SnoPals involvement

In October of 2005, a short article appeared in the local newspaper about the desperate state of the Eastman SnoPals. They could not elect a president as no one was willing to serve. I decided to go to a meeting planned in Seven Sisters to try to address this issue as noted in the newspaper. I went to a meeting completely unassuming and expecting nothing except the opportunity to learn something about the club, what it was doing and how it operated. After an hour or more of fruitless discussion and without resolution, I indicated to one of the members that if nominated I would consider serving as president. The meeting moved pretty quickly from there on. I was nominated, accepted and the meeting was adjourned.

I was quickly informed about the Eastman SnoPals. This club was formed as an amalgamation of three smaller clubs in 1996. These clubs covered the area of Pinawa, Agassiz Forest, Lac du Bonnet, Elma and Whitemouth. Most of the members of the club are retired or are near retirement. This means that the energy that was once there for manual labour such as trail brushing and clearing is no longer there.

In 2009, the club applied for and received a grant from the National Trails Coalition for $15,000 for brushing along the trails with the most infill. This was well appreciated by most members of the club as well as the trail users. Much of this money was used for contractor work with mechanical brushers.

The total trail system covers an area of about 287 kilometres of trails. Because of the large size of the system and because of traditions that existed before amalgamation, the club operates in three areas almost as separate sub-clubs. This poses some problems as each group comes with their own demands, which may not be in the best interests of the club as a whole. Currently, the club operates with three groomers, which further encourages the separate sections to operate independently.

As president, I had no idea of what to expect but I was soon to learn. Clubs are expected to be all things for all people. We have short distances of trails that cross private lands and while most landowners are cooperative and sign landowner use agreements, some are more reluctant and even hostile. I have had to investigate and report on three snowmobile accidents on our system. Soon after becoming president, I assumed the role of treasurer. Every year we have to make plans for trail improvements. Every fall the trails are expected to be cleared and brushed, as well as signed and groomed, before they can be declared open for the season. The brusher bars added to the Pinawa and Lac du Bonnet groomers have been a good investment.

The major problems of maintaining groomed trails are almost always related to mechanical issues with grooming equipment and operator proficiency. I soon learned that the two Massey-Ferguson tractors we used were problematic. Continued on page 28
Kudos to BRP for a great demo

BY JOE THIEVIN

On a bright sunny day, I had the good fortune of attending the BRP VIP Ride Demo Event. The event was held January 18 to 22 at Seddons Corner. There was a full line-up of sleds from the comfy-couch Grand Touring SE to the race-ready MXZ X-RS with rMotion suspension. Each rider was given the opportunity to choose from one of the 12 sleds for each of the four ride segments. During the two-hour ride, the group logged about 60 kilometres.

Given my preference for ditch banging, I grabbed the MXZ X-RS 800 E-TEC with the rMotion. The boys in the trailer did an amazing job of setting up the sled. The sled was very light and nimble and it was very easy to corner through some choppy bumps. I think what I found most impressive was how the sled would come off a crossing or small bump and stay planted.

There was no kick or bottom. Staff indicated that the oil consumption is “best of the fleet” but the fuel consumption not as good as the 600 E-TEC. If I had to find something I didn’t like with the sled, it would be that the power was a tad soft around the 100 km/h mark and there is a lack of wind protection. Overall, this sled is very impressive.

My second choice was the MXZ X 600 E-TEC. While this sled does mirror the race-bred 800, there are some differences. The most noticeable difference is the power. The 600 E-TEC has a softer feel in terms of power and clutching. The sled handles well through the corner chatter; however, the setup was not what the rMotion delivered. The rear skid had a tendency to dance a bit when compared to the rMotion. Both the 800

Continued on sidebar ▶