

Montana SNOWMOBILE NEWS



**Become a Member.
JOIN MSA Today!**

See page 11



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MSA Banquet RSVP



Fun Facts About Snowmobiling

As we finally begin the 2023-24 snowmobiling season, we thought you may be interested in the following facts while you are preparing to go ride this season:

- Snowmobilers come in all ages. The average snowmobiler, however, is 54 years old.
- The average snowmobiler last season rode 1,154 miles (a 4% increase in ridership compared to 2022.) The number of miles ridden on average, is dependent on snow cover, so we will see if Mother Nature brings us more days of snow for riding this season.
- Many snowmobilers belong to a club and participate in many of their club's events. Clubs hold great riding events, great parties, and are made up of wonderful people that become great friends. Join a club and have a great time!!!

The winter outlook is finally looking good for snowmobiling, and we are looking forward to a great season!

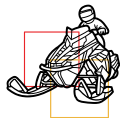
Did You Know...

Numerous studies have concluded that wildlife species are disturbed more by cross-country skiers and people on foot than by snowmobiles. Source: www.snowmobilers.org



MSA Officers and Clubs

Association Officers



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Beaverhead Sno-Riders
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Dillon, MT 59725
406-925-0501

Big Hole Snowmobile Club
PO Box 141
Wisdom, MT 59761
406-370-2587

Big Sky Snowriders
PO Box 365
Livingston, MT 59047
406-220-0803

Bitterroot Ridge Runners
PO Box 265
Hamilton, MT 59840
406-363-3433
www.bitterrootrr.org

Cabinet Ridge Riders*
PO Box 1577
Trout Creek, MT 59874
406-827-3226

Flathead Snowmobile Association
PO Box 5041
Kalispell, MT 59903
406-871-4606
www.flatheadsnowmobiler.com

Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association
PO Box 3164
Bozeman, MT 59772
406-600-6063

Great Falls Snowmobile Club
PO Box 70
Black Eagle, MT 59414
406-899-5126
www.great-falls-snowmobile.org

Helena Snowdrifters
PO Box 5505
Helena, MT 59624
406-202-2044
www.helenasnowdrifters.org

Jackpine Savages Snowmobile Club
PO Box 65
Wise River, MT 59762
406-267-3389

Lincoln County Sno-Kat Club
PO Box 1180
Libby, MT 59923
406-827-0524

Little Belt Snowmobile Club
PO Box 213
Hobson, MT 59452
406-366-8924

Meagher County Little Belters
PO Box 315
White Sulphur Springs, MT 59645
406-547-3966

Mining City Trail Riders, Inc
P.O. Box 4885
Butte, MT 59702
406-782-4613

Missoula Snowgoers
PO Box 2441
Missoula, MT 59806
406-370-8819
www.missoulasnowgoers.org

Montana Nightriders
PO Box 420242
Haugan, MT 59842
406-544-5416
www.montananightriders.com

Ponderosa Snow Warriors
PO Box 933
Lincoln, MT 59639
406-475-5786

Seeley Lake Driftriders
PO Box 174
Seeley Lake, MT 59868
406-677-7777
www.driftriders.org

Summit Snowgoers
PO Box 301
Cut Bank, MT 59427
406-229-0665

Sweet Grass County Recreation Association
PO Box 922
Big Timber, MT 59011
406-459-6769

Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club
PO Box 404
Eureka, MT 59917
406-297-3377

Troy Snowmobile Club
PO Box 1002
Troy, MT 59935
406-295-4322
www.troysnowmobileclub.org

Upper Yellowstone Snowmobile Club
PO Box 1111
Cooke City, MT 59020
406-223-5428
www.ridecookecity.com

Vigilante Snowmobilers
PO Box 145
Virginia City, MT 59755
406-581-1776

West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce
PO Box 458
West Yellowstone, MT 59758
406-646-7701
www.destinationyellowstone.com

SnowmobileMT.org

***2022-2023 MSA Snowmobile Club of the Year**



Montana Snowmobile Association Districts

DISTRICT 1
Rick David
dist-one@snowmobilemt.org

DISTRICT 2
Mark Sverdsten
dist-two@snowmobilemt.org

DISTRICT 3
VACANT

DISTRICT 4
John Zell
dist-four@snowmobilemt.org

DISTRICT 5
Rex Caraker
dist-five@snowmobilemt.org

DISTRICT 6
Gary Blond
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DISTRICT 7
Cliff Walter
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DISTRICT 8
Kevin Horne
dist-eight@snowmobilemt.org

DISTRICT 9
Ron Albee
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DISTRICT 10
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DISTRICT 11
Brent Larsen
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DISTRICT 12
VACANT

DISTRICT 13
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Fred Bailey



What a crazy year, without snow it's hard to find much to talk about. In all my years in Montana I have never seen a year like this so I want to talk about our organization - MSA.

With over 500 members in our database we have power to make things happen or to make an impact when we don't like something. Kerry White, Executive Director of CBU has said to me several times that MSA is one of the most powerful motorized groups in Montana due to our large membership. This is the reason we put a lot of effort into recruiting members, numbers do count, as a member of MSA your voice has more power.

As most organizations do we have a similar structure, Officers, Directors, and with 26 clubs we also have the same structure for each club. Those of us that took these positions not for power, but we want to help lead MSA in the right direction, keep public lands open, maintain a strong grooming program, and working with our politicians keeping them informed of our needs as well as our value, and we can't do it without you. Snowmobiling brings in 100 million dollars each year to the Montana economy.

To use our power to the fullest we need all of you, every member to voice your opinions, your comments, and keep your eyes open to watch for things we need to defend against.

Thank you for your dedication and hard work.

Fred Bailey
Montana Snowmobile Association
406-431-9402
president@snowmobilemt.org

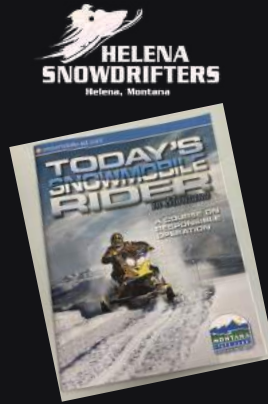


••••• **Winter Up Montana!**
MSA Specialty License Plates •••••

Reminder: Send us your updates, good deeds and events for the MSA Newsletter.
Email: news@snowmobilemt.org

Helena Snowdrifters

The Helena Snowdrifters successfully hosted their inaugural Snowmobile Safety Certification Class of the season, catering to youths aged 16 and under. A special thanks goes out to Mike Clark, Fred Bailey, Jim Pollard, and the folks at Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks for their support. Seven youths were certified during the class. Not bad for a season that hadn't seen any snow yet!



It's important to note that in Montana, individuals below the age of 16 without a valid driver's license, riding on multi-purpose municipal roadways like those in Lincoln, Seeley, or West Yellowstone, must complete a state-approved Snowmobile Safety Course and acquire a Snowmobile Safety Certificate. #SnowmobileKidsSafety



Safety Education Materials: Printable Posters

Available for download. Visit www.snowmobilers.org

KIDS NEED SLEDS THAT FIT
IF IT'S TOO BIG FOR THEM TO CONTROL, DON'T PUT 'EM ON IT

This message brought to you by the American Council of Snowmobile Associations
www.snowmobilers.org



DANGERS LURK IN THE NIGHT
SLOW DOWN. PAY ATTENTION.



DON'T BECOME A STATISTIC
YOU DRINK. YOU RIDE. YOU LOSE.



KIDS NEED HELMETS THAT FIT
KEEP THEM SAFE. MAKE IT FUN.





\$500 Scholarship

Montana Snowmobile Association

SCHOLARSHIP

The Montana Snowmobile Association is offering a \$500 scholarship to either a graduating high school senior or a person enrolled in a college, technical or vocational program. Must be a MSA member.

ENTRY DEADLINE _____ SUBMIT _____

March 31, 2024 Video Upload or Written Essay



APPLY TODAY

 www.snowmobileMT.org



MAKING THE NEWS...



CLEARWATER FOREST PLAN UPDATEand more.

The Clearwater NF released its Record of Decision (ROD) in late November. The Great Burn Recommended Wilderness Area (RWA) was reduced by 30,000 acres and two of the three historic snowmobile areas were reopened to snowmobiling.

This decision is still subject to an objection process and potential litigation by the wilderness advocates.

So, what is driving the Forest Service in Region One to soften its previous stand to expand and manage RWA's as wilderness? The 2012 planning rules specifying management of RWA's and lack of political appetite for new wilderness are certainly in play. I would like to believe the efforts by the Idaho State Snowmobile Association (ISSA) and Backcountry Sled Patriots (BSP) played a significant part with our unified messaging separating facts from ideology. The other thing that changed was big time engagement by a multitude of back country snowmobilers.

I can go to a FS planning meeting and make the best presentation ever but that doesn't carry much weight if the folks who we represent do not actively participate in the process.

The Clearwater NF hosted two informational meetings in Missoula during the forest planning process. Turnout by back country snowmobilers at both meetings was phenomenal. That provided credibility, not only to support our position, but also to the FS decision process.

Another thing I feel helped our cause was the outcome of a meeting Sandra Mitchell (public lands director, ISSA) and I had with the Undersecretary of Department of Agriculture in 2018 re: RWA management. He was shocked to find out Region One was managing RWA's as wilderness even after the 2012 planning rules were in effect. That led to additional constructive dialogue with the Chief Foresters' office.

The courage of the Forest Supervisor, Cheryl Probert, to weigh common sense over following a politically safe existing ideological path certainly was a catalyst to producing the ROD. I think (hope) she may have "plowed some new ground" re: future forest planning outcomes in Region One.

This is not the time to rest on our laurels.

The Lolo National Forest is in the early stages of its forest plan review. We had good snowmobiler representation at the very first Ranger meeting but after that things went south. Only a couple of snowmobile advocates have shown up at the subsequent meetings that probably included well over fifty wilderness advocates.

I'll be the first to acknowledge some (most) of these meetings can be pretty dry to say the least. You can't expect the FS to give consideration to your cause if you don't show up to support it. In all fairness to the "no shows", the Lolo NF is conducting collaborative meetings in a different format from the Clearwater NF. These meetings have been scheduled during working hours or during the evening for a short time duration as opposed to week end all day long meetings at the Clearwater. The format clearly favors the Wilderness advocates who have paid staffers to attend these meetings. On the plus side the FS offers video conferencing at all the principal meetings so you don't have to show up in person for a short meeting, especially if you live out of town. I have not seen any snowmobiler advocates take advantage of this offering. See the Lolo Forest Plan Review website for info how to log on. It is easy to rationalize passing on participating in the Lolo NF planning if it is not in your "back yard".

Backcountry Sled Patriots and other like-minded groups such as CBU work for the greater good of all snowmobilers. You can do your part and support that cause. Video conferencing is a great tool to get involved without having to travel. We post the meeting schedules on our website, www.sledpatriots.com, and on our Facebook page. Why get engaged? The outcome in a current forest plan has strong potential to influence future forest plans...which just might happen in "your back yard".

After the Clearwater NF ROD release YOU CAN BE SURE THE WILDERNESS FOLKS WILL DOUBLE DOWN ON THEIR EFFORTS TO TRY PREVENT ANY FUTURE EXPANDED SNOWMOBILE ACCESS.

We were listened to in the Clearwater NF and can be heard in the Lolo NF plan if we stay strong and unified...and show up!

AWARENESS IS THE GREATEST AGENT FOR CHANGE.

Stan Spencer

President

Backcountry Sled Patriots

So, you're a mountain rider and don't need trails? **RIGHT...**

Facts Are:

- Groomed trails provide quick access to higher elevation and better snow.
- When you have sled issues, trails provide safest return to your vehicle.
- Injured? Yep, it's the trail they drag you out on.

Support groomers, trails and snowmobiling by joining a club where you ride.



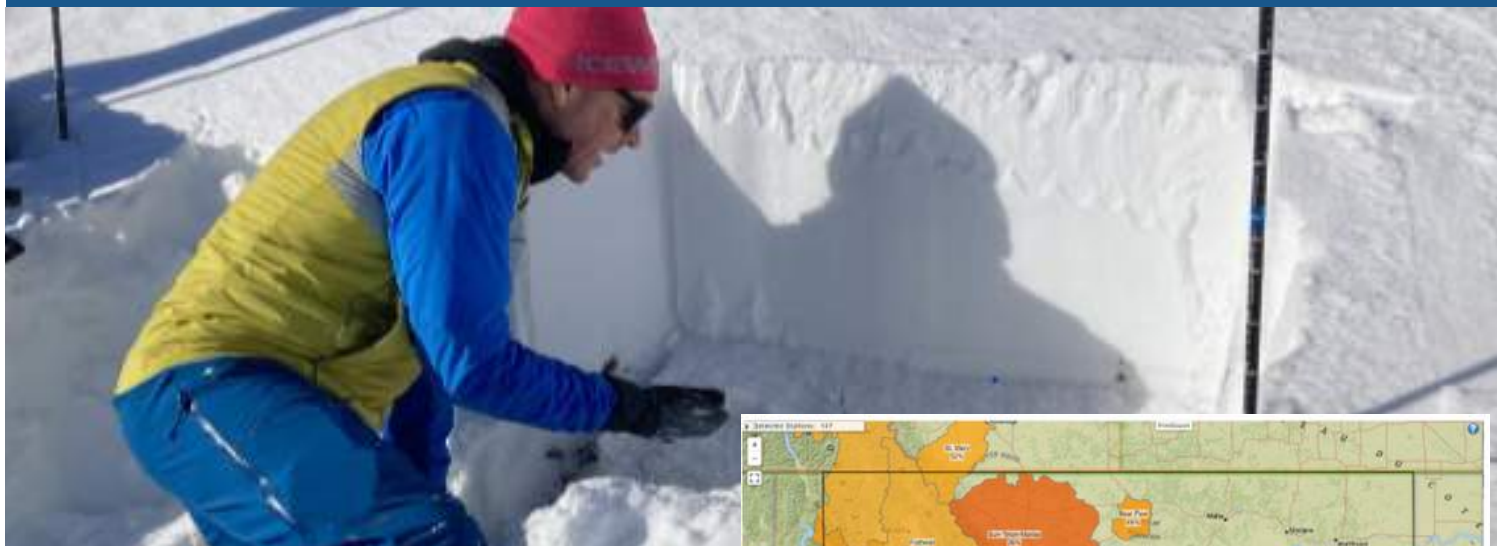
Make it Snow!

Learning to Perform a Snow Dance: Step-by-Step Guide

If you're interested in learning how to perform a snow dance, here is a step-by-step guide:

1. Find a quiet, secluded spot outdoors. This could be a field, a forest, or anywhere else that feels peaceful and free from distractions.
2. Gather a few items that have special meaning to you. These could be photos, flowers, stones, feathers, or anything else that you find meaningful.
3. Begin by taking a few deep breaths and focusing your energy on your intentions. You may want to close your eyes and visualize the outcome you desire.
4. Start to move your body in whatever way feels right. This could be swaying, jumping, spinning, or any other type of movement that feels natural.
5. As you move, chant a simple phrase or song that resonates with you. This could be something you make up on the spot, or something traditional from your culture.
6. When you feel complete, take a few moments to reflect on the experience. Offer gratitude for the opportunity to partake in the ritual.

AVALANCHE SAFETY



GNFAC Forecaster Doug Chabot investigates the weak snowpack. Photo: GNFAC

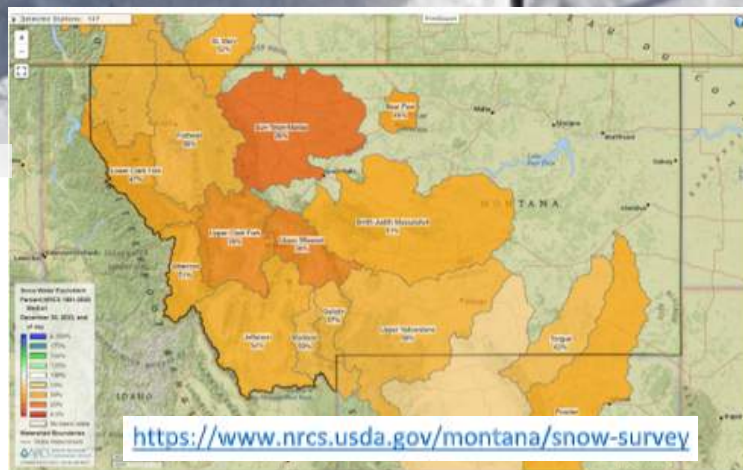
A Snowpack Rife with Weakness: The Slow Start to Winter Creates a Dangerous Foundation

Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center
Dave Zinn

The 23-24 winter season is beginning with well below-average snowfall in Montana. The lack of snow has snowsports enthusiasts frothing at the mouth for the taste of deep powder riding. This enthusiasm will get us into trouble when it snows if we fail to remember that avalanche conditions become more dangerous during and immediately after storms. This year, the thin layer of snow on the ground is greatly weakened from weeks of mostly sunny weather in November and December. Our best tool for staying safe during dangerous avalanche conditions is the accurate identification of slopes steep enough to slide.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service Montana Snow Survey reports that as of December 30, 2023, the annual snowpack ranges from a meager 26% to 62% of average. A safe generalization in avalanche forecasting is that thin, early-season snowpacks in the Rocky Mountains transform into piles of weak facets with the consistency of granular sugar. This occurs because warmer temperatures at the ground drive water vapor up through the snowpack, creating large angular ice crystals that bond poorly to one another.

This pattern of weakening has been prevalent across the region of Southwest Montana and eastern Idaho covered by the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center. From Island Park, Idaho, to the Bridger Range and Cooke City in Montana, our field days reveal a snowpack rife with weakness. If you ride elsewhere in Montana, refer to your local avalanche forecast or assume things are similar.

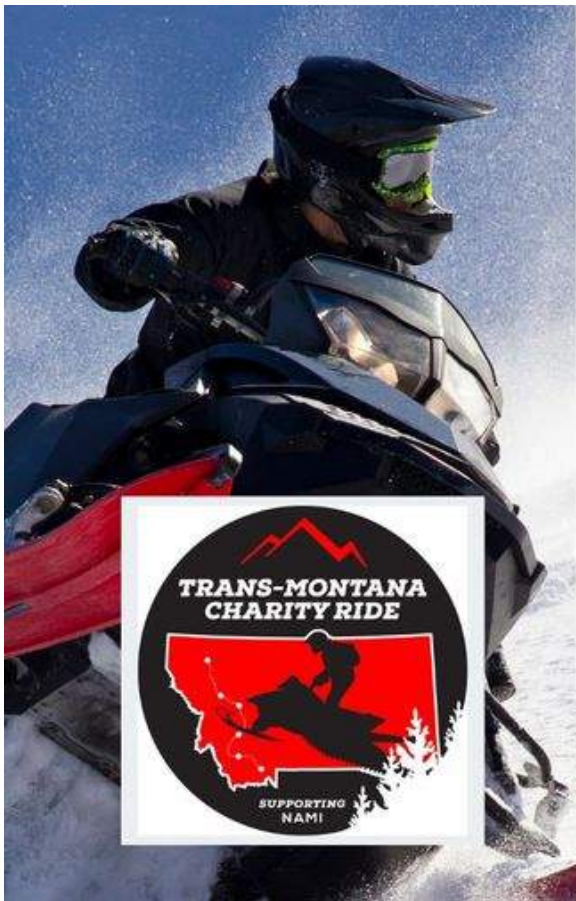


When it snows, the granular facets become a persistent weak layer upon which avalanches will occur. Instability due to persistent weak layers is slow to improve. It can result in slides that break deeply and widely across slopes and be triggered remotely from long distances away or flat meadows below steep terrain. Thus, the celebration of improved riding conditions should come with added caution and conservative decision-making.

Having the fundamental skill of identifying avalanche terrain can help keep us safe. Avalanche terrain is commonly defined as any slope steeper than 30 degrees. Add a slope angle measuring tool called an inclinometer and a digital map with slope angle overlays to your standard avalanche kit, including a transceiver, probe, and shovel. Backcountry travelers can also look for physical clues such as steep slopes cleared of large trees and trees with broken branches on the uphill side. These can help us determine how far avalanches run downhill.

When snow falls this winter, we must all be on top of our avalanche game. The season will be characterized by weakness within the snowpack and dangerous avalanche conditions during and after snowstorms. Continue to hope for snow this winter, and when it comes, keep the excitement high by making safe decisions relative to the increases in avalanche danger.

Follow the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center at www.mtavalanche.com or your local avalanche center at www.avalanche.org to track the avalanche conditions as the season progresses.



Montana
SNOWMOBILE
Association



BANQUET AND AWARDS DINNER
FEBRUARY 2-3, 2024

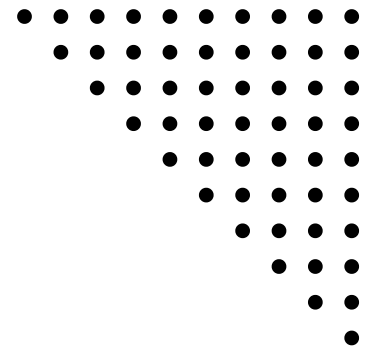
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www.snowmobilemt.org

RSVP



Support a great cause.

Annual MSA Awards Banquet and Club Ride Featuring the Trans-Montana Auction in support of NAMI Montana

Welcome Reception - Friday, February 2

- CANCELLED

MSA Club Ride - Saturday, February 3 (WATCH FOR UPDATES! We Need Snow)

Annual Club Ride. Everyone Welcome!

- Ride the Butte/Wise River area guided by the Jackpine Savages and the Mining City Trail Riders
- Choose from three guided rides. Rider sign up Feb 2.

MSA Banquet and Charity Auction - Saturday, February 3

Join us for an evening of fun starting at 5:30 p.m. with cocktail hour followed by dinner, awards and charity auction to support NAMI Montana.

- Banquet Tickets: \$40 in advance / \$50 at the door
- Deadline for Advance Ticket Rates: January 25
 - Dinner buffet, Rib & Chop House, Copper King Convention Center
- Charity auction (Drop off auction items Feb 2 at the welcome reception.)

Reserve your hotel room early. Ask for the MSA rate.

Dinner reservations - RSVP online today. See website for details.

Banquet and Riding Convention Club Hosts:

Jackpine Savages (Wise River) and the Mining City Trailriders (Butte)

MSA Ride

Join the fun and sign up for MSA's annual guided club ride. Choose from one of three unique riding areas hosted by the Mining City Trailriders and Jackpine Savages. Everyone welcome.

Auction Fundraiser

Donation items are appreciated and can be dropped off prior to the awards banquet.

**Door Prizes. Raffle,
and More!**



Banquet RSVP
www.snowmobileMT.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

AROUND THE STATE

January 31 - February 7, 2024 - Trans-Montana Charity Ride (Cancelled/Lack of Snow)
 February 1- 19, 2024 - Take a Friend Snowmobiling Campaign
 February 2, 2024 - MSA Riding Convention Welcome Reception & Guest Speaker - Butte
 February 3, 2024 - MSA Awards Banquet and Riding Convention - Butte
 February 3, 2024 - SMT Annual Snowball Dinner, Seeley Lake
 February 3, 2024 - Garnet Ghost Town Vintage Ride, Garnet
 February 8-11, 2024 - Octane & Grit Backcountry Ladies Ride, Cooke City
 February 18, 2024 - Almost World Famous Family Ride - Lolo Hot Springs
 February 22-25, 2024 - ASCA Mountain Riding Summit, West Yellowstone
 February 28, 2024 - Grant Deadline - Off-Highway Vehicle Program
 March 2 - BBQ Potluck - Warming Hut - Missoula Snowgoers
 March 8-9, 2024 - Upper Yellowstone 28th Annual Fundraiser, Cooke City
 March 9, SMT Fun Run (Poker Run), Scenic Mountain Trails, Seeley Lake

Avalanche Awareness - Check Avalance.org for upcoming events.

Watch the MSA online Events Calendar as we add more events! Send updates to news@snowmobilemt.org.

Winter up Montana! MSA Specialty License Plates



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MONTANA SNOWMOBILE PROGRAM UPDATE

By Seth McArthur

Snowmobiling is off to a poor start this year. At this time, I have heard from most areas that grooming has yet to begin. There are some storms in the forecast, and I hope they materialize. As grooming begins, please consider assisting a club in your area with the hard work that is required to keep the trails groomed and open. If your areas do not receive snow, please try to find ways to support your local businesses. They especially need our support this year.

I plan to spend some time this year promoting snowmobiling and what it means to Montana's communities each winter. I hope to see many of you this winter as I am about. I am lucky to have the opportunity to work with all of you and share in your successes and frustrations. The snowmobiling community is the best! You are all some of the most charitable and giving people there are. Thanks for your work in your local communities.

Please find an avalanche class or refresher course to take this January. Your life or those you ride with may depend on it. There are many classes being offered all over the state by snowmobile clubs and avalanche centers. Make the effort to practice using your transceivers as a group. Most of the people we lost in avalanches last year had avalanche gear on, but those they rode with did not know how to use it. Make sure you know the avalanche conditions where you are riding. These can change daily.

Please be safe this winter season and cherish your time with friends and family. You can contact me with any questions or comments at smcarthur@mt.gov or 406-444-3753.

Montana Snowmobile Program Manager
Montana FWP | 406-444-3753



Montana Trail Pass

Montana Trail Pass Snowmobiles operating on public land must be registered and display decals placed in a conspicuous space on the left side of the cowling. Registration is different for Montana residents and nonresidents. Montana FWP maintains a complete site with all the rules and regulations.
<https://ols.fwp.mt.gov/>

Montana Conservation License

Anyone recreating on Montana State lands (State Forest) must purchase a Conservation License for all persons 12 or older. Each person must have their own License. This is the same license that you purchase with your Fishing/Hunting Tags. Be aware that it expires at the end of February.
 Visit: <https://fwp.mt.gov/>

Join MSA - Why Become a Member?

Join our growing community to make something happen in yours

You already know MSA is the state organization uniting the local snowmobile communities to promote safe and responsible snowmobiling. Are you aware of the many reasons why you should become a member of MSA? MSA employs a lobbyist to represent our interest during the legislative session held every two years. MSA helps fight for public land access and helps clubs financially in their pursuit of keeping riding access.

MSA works closely with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks along with local clubs to develop and maintain a quality snowmobile trail system for all riders. But did you also know, these two parties help administer grooming funds, support costly repairs, administer grooming program insurance coverage for your local club as well as provide the required resource-environmental damage insurance, for three hosted events, per club?

MSA gives back to the communities of Montana in any way possible and sponsors an annual scholarship program.

To support MSA, we need your support. Help us defend your riding areas. If you are a member - THANK YOU! If you're not, we invite you to join online or by mailing in your Club, family, or business membership application today. **Visit:** www.snowmobilemt.org.

Join online snowmobilemt.org or complete the application below.

Membership

Montana Snowmobile Association

Membership Application

- Type*** New *Renewal*
- Level*** Club/Business: \$40 Individual/Family: \$25



Past Member? You have an online account. Just retrieve your password, if needed.

Business/Club Name
For Club/Business Membership Level

Full Name*

Family Members*

Mailing Address*

Phone*

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- Send via Email Mail Print Copy



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