

# Montana

# SNOWMOBILE NEWS

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2023-2024



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See You Next  
Season!

Thank you 

## Honoring the Backbone of the Sport

In a season devoid of snow, the snowmobiling community stands as a testament to resilience, thanks to the steadfast dedication of its volunteers. Despite the absence of our usual playground, these unsung heroes tirelessly work to strengthen the sport's foundation.

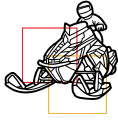
Yet, it's the collective efforts of club members that truly uphold the community. Their willingness to volunteer time and energy in organizing events or supporting fundraisers speaks volumes about the resilience inherent in snowmobiling.

In this challenging season marked by uncertainty, let's extend our heartfelt gratitude to these dedicated volunteers. To the club presidents, board members, groomers, snowmobile dealers and club members – thank you for your unwavering commitment. Your tireless efforts ensure that the spirit of snowmobiling perseveres, transcending the limitations of weather. Together, we eagerly anticipate the upcoming season and express our heartfelt gratitude for exemplifying the true essence of the snowmobiling community.

P.S. As we gear up for the challenges of the 2024-2025 season, let's tackle them together. Join MSA in expanding our community. Renew your membership and extend a warm invitation to a friend to join us. Remember, strength lies in numbers, and together, we can continue to grow and thrive.

# MSA Officers and Clubs

## Association Officers



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406-370-2587

Big Sky Snowriders  
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Livingston, MT 59047  
406-220-0803

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Trout Creek, MT 59874  
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Flathead Snowmobile Association  
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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  
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Hobson, MT 59452  
406-366-8924

Meagher County Little Belters  
PO Box 315  
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406-547-3966

Mining City Trail Riders, Inc  
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Butte, MT 59702  
406-782-4613

Missoula Snowgoers  
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Missoula, MT 59806  
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www.missoulasnowgoers.org

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

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

Scenic Montana Trails 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  
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Big Timber, MT 59011  
406-459-6769

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

Troy Snowmobile Club  
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Troy, MT 59935  
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www.troynsnowmobileclub.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**

**\*2023-2024 MSA Snowmobile Club of the Year**



## Montana Snowmobile Association Districts

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**Seth McArthur**  
Montana Fish, Wildlife,  
and Parks  
Snowmobile Program  
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



What a crazy year it has been. We've had to stay constantly vigilant, defending our right to recreate on OUR public lands against land management agencies aiming to push us out. Moreover, we've been fighting back against non-motorized and green groups who oppose our form of recreation. However, when Mother Nature throws us a curveball and hides winter from us, there just isn't much we can do.

This lack of snow has underscored the importance of snowmobiling to the economy. Unfortunately, many businesses such as restaurants, motels, dealers, and yes, bars, suffered from a severely reduced number of customers. Several dealers have reported a higher number of defaulted snowchecked machines than ever seen before.

Amidst all these challenges, there were moments of brightness that reminded me why I am proud to be part of the snowmobiling family. Many clubs and associations continued their fundraising efforts for various charities. Despite the cancellation of the week-long snowmobile ride across Montana, MSA went ahead with their Trans-Montana and MSA riding banquet. Remarkably, many of the 50 riders who signed up with their pledges still donated their money, raising over \$33,000 for NAMI, setting a new record. This is just one of many heartwarming examples that occurred across the snowbelt.

So let's take pride in being part of such a caring, warm group of people.

Fred  
President

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



## Winter Up Montana!



MSA Specialty License Plates

When your vehicle comes up for a license plate renewal, please consider getting the Winter Wonderland plate and supporting MSA!





## ELECTRIC UTILITIES SUPPORT CLUB TRAINING!

By Mark Smollen

For the last few years the Flathead Snowmobile Association and the Bitterroot Ridge Runners (BRR) have been providing their area with specialized Avalanche and Safety Training program scholarships funded via their local electric utilities.

In the Flathead, the Friends of the FSA (a 501c3) applies for and administers a grant and payments to those that take motorized avalanche safety training classes. They apply for the sum total of all tuition in all motorized classes. In the last three years, over \$10,000 has been paid out to students reimbursing them for the cost of all motorized avalanche safety training ranging from Intro to Motorized Avalanche Safety all the way through Level 1 and Level 2 training. One cool note: a few people received the reimbursement and gave it back to the FFSA to pay it forward—thank you to them for making more training possible!

In the Bitterroot, the BRR has received two grants to do a variety of training. Last year, they received a \$2500 grant to fund 13 members getting Level 1 Avalanche Training. This year, they received a \$1200 grant in which 13 members received backcountry first aid and CPR training. Way to go BRR!

Other Co-ops and utilities in the state (Beartooth, Sun River, Hill County Electric, Vigilante and Yellowstone Valley) also offer similar programs! We encourage your club to seek them out! We also encourage you to write a letter to your utility if they don't offer a similar program—in some cases, it might not be possible, but most co-ops should be allowed.



Tips: Contact the administrator of the plan and find out how often they review applications and if there are sessions that are less busy than others—apply in the slower times to maximize your chances of funding. Also make yourself aware of the timeframe the money must be used in—give yourself time to use the money (usually, it's 3-6 month time period). Work with your local Avalanche Center (if you have one) to get the cost of the classes and how many openings there will be. You can also work with a trainer to create and schedule your own training class and have that underwritten by a similar program. You might not get all the openings funded. Seek out other sources like FWP's Snowmobile Program—Seth McArthur may have training funds available to supplement your needs.

None of this would be possible without the support of each Co-op and its customers who round up their bill to the nearest dollar each month. For that, we want to say a big thank you! We'd also like to encourage everyone to take part in their local utilities' RoundUp program like this. You round up your bill to the nearest dollar, usually costing you less than \$10 a year—those few cents all add up and quite possibly, you might just save a life. Again, thank you Flathead and Ravalli Electric Co-ops!!!



## MONTANA SNOWMOBILE PROGRAM UPDATE

By Seth McArthur

This past season was definitely one that I have not experienced in my ten plus years in Montana. I know grooming was really hit and miss for the clubs. I want to thank the Clubs and all the volunteers for their work in promoting snowmobiling. It is my pleasure to work with you all as we do what we love for motorized recreation. It was a tough year and I hope things return to normal snowpack next year.

There are a number of forest plans and other travel planning processes going on. Please make an effort to attend these meetings and express your thoughts and opinions. We all need to play an active role in this process to protect access and the ability to use motorized equipment on the forest.

Please be safe this summer season and cherish your time with friends and family. You can contact me with any questions or comments at [smcarthur@mt.gov](mailto:smcarthur@mt.gov) or 406-444-3753.

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

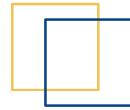


### Did You Know?

Mountain riding is a fast -growing activity for North American snowmobilers. With spectacular mountain terrains comes the added safety concern of avalanches. You can minimize your risk by taking an avalanche awareness course and carrying the proper equipment. If you don't live in the mountains, but plan to ride there occasionally, you should prepare yourself before leaving.

There are over 3,000 snowmobile clubs worldwide. Snowmobile clubs are non -profit and volunteer driven; they are grassroots groups based in local communities. In addition, there are 25 state associations in the U.S. and 13 provincial and territorial snowmobile organizations in Canada





Once again, a big congratulations to this year's MSA award recipients.

**Snowmobiler of the Year**

Wally Deschene, Bitterroot Ridge Runners

**Snowmobile Club of the Year**

Jackpine Savages

**Groomer of the Year**

Mike Joyce, Great Falls

**Dealer of the Year**

Helena Cycle Center, Helena

**Snowmobile Family of the Year**

Otto and Karla Johnson, Helena

**Youth Snowmobiler**

Hunter Howell, West Yellowstone



## New Economic Impact Study Currently in Progress

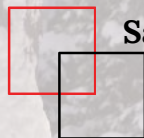
The new Montana Recreational Snowmobiling Economic Impact Study is now underway in collaboration with the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research. This study encompasses two main areas of impact: summer and winter programs, focusing on ATV, UTV, and snowmobiling activities.

The findings from this study are crucial for securing funding and grants to support motorized activities and future projects that impact motorized recreation



### February Print Issue. A Double Edition Apology

Our apologies for the February print issue. The printer experienced a technical issue with the printing of the middle pages. The printer fixed the error immediately and reproduced the full edition, so you received two editions.



### Save the Dates

### UPCOMING EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

**April 23-26 - DC Fly-In**

**June 13-15 - 56th International Snowmobile Congress - Green Bay, WI**

**June 29 - Annual Snowmobile Appropriations Meeting, Helena**

**June 29 - MSA Board Meeting, Helena**

Send updates to [news@snowmobilemt.org](mailto:news@snowmobilemt.org).







# THANK YOU BUSINESS MEMBERS!



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## **Polaris**

Montana High Country

## **Power**

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Food Roundup

## **White Sulphur Springs**

Menard Construction

## **Whitefish**

Axiom Precision

Dalen Dental Clinic

Great Northern Power Guides

TMS Equipment Services, LLC

## **Whitehall**

A L L Transportation

## **Wilsall**

OP Rental

Rev It Up Girls

## **Wyndmere, ND**

Thompson Customizing, Inc.



**Business Members:**  
Thank you for being an active supporter.



# TRANS-MONTANA CHARITY FUNDRAISER

## Snowmobilers Shine

### Breaking Records and Supporting Mental Health in a Year Without Riding

While 2024 was a pretty strange year for the Trans Montana Charity Ride (i.e. we didn't ride!), it just goes to show you what sort of people snowmobilers (and their supporters) are!

Are you ready for this? **We raised over \$33,000!**

Yep, we did it again! We set a new record for money raised by Trans-Montana Riders. And we didn't even get to go riding! Well done everyone!

First I want to thank the Mining City Trailriders and the Jackpine Savages clubs...you all went above and beyond with the banquet in Butte. What a great night! Thank you also to the Copper King Resort who offset some of the costs allowing us to put that money to work for the people of Montana!

On that note, let's not forget why we do this. There are people all around us dealing with mental illness issues. The work we are doing is placing new teen suicide prevention programs into our schools and supporting our veterans who are struggling. Please remember, there is no shame in reaching out if you are struggling. We are here for you if you need to talk or need help getting through a tough time. [NAMI](#) is also there for you and can get you connected with the right resource.

Thank you to all the riders, sponsors, donors, organizers and supporters of the Trans Montana Charity Ride. Hopefully we'll have the right conditions next year for an even better ride and more fun. But we won't stop or rest on our laurels—the need is real and our work never stops.

Mark Smollen  
Trans-Montana Chair



#### ABOUT NAMI

NAMI Montana is the Montana chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots organization for people with mental illnesses and their families. Founded in 1979, NAMI has affiliates in every state and in more than 1,100 local communities across the country.

NAMI Montana supports, educates, and advocates for Montanans with severe mental illnesses and their families. NAMI Montana has over 400 members and growing. Our affiliates are located in Billings, Bozeman, Bitterroot, Great Falls, Havre, Helena, Kalispell, Lewistown, and Missoula.



# AVALANCHE SAFETY

## Watching for Red Flags

Ian Hoyer

Avalanche Forecaster, Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center



Reading the daily avalanche forecast is the best way to prepare yourself for the snow conditions you'll encounter when you head into the mountains. Check out the map at [avalanche.org](http://avalanche.org) to find your local forecast. Avalanche forecasters work hard to collect weather and snowpack information and distill it into an easy-to-read forecast that will identify the day's potential avalanche hazards. Take advantage of that resource and set yourself up for success.

Once you're out there, you also need to stay alert and watch for warning signs that the snow is ready to avalanche. Make a plan before you head out, but be ready to back off if needed. Listen to what the mountains are telling you. Watching for "Red Flags" is one tool that can help.

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Remember that not seeing these "red flag" signs of instability doesn't mean the snowpack is safe. But if you watch for these signs and back off if you see them, you'll avoid many of the most clearly unstable situations.

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### - Recent Avalanches

Seeing avalanches that broke within the past 48 hours is the clearest sign that triggering another slide is possible. If avalanches are breaking on their own, or you see someone trigger an avalanche, the odds point towards more of the same. If you see recent avalanches, avoid steep slopes for the day.

### - Collapsing or Cracking

If you feel the snowpack collapse under you, hear a "whumpfung" sound, or see cracks shooting out far into front of you - this is a sign that the snowpack is very unstable. You almost just made an avalanche, but weren't on a steep enough slope for it to slide downhill. If you see these signs of instability, stay off slopes steeper than 30 degrees. If you don't, you're likely going to trigger a slide.

### - Heavy Snowfall

New snow adds weight to the snowpack. The more weight that's added and the faster it's added, the more likely the snowpack will reach its breaking point. Be alert whenever it snows, but a foot of new snow in the past 24 hours definitely means you are likely going to trigger slides.

### - Wind Blown Snow

Wind drifting can load a slope really quickly often depositing snow 3 to 5 times faster than snow falling from the sky. Blowing snow and fresh drifts are indications of wind loading and increased avalanche concerns on wind loaded slopes.

### - Rapid Melting

Water in the snowpack, whether from melting on sunny days or rain, makes for unstable conditions. Not all warmups cause avalanches, but be very suspicious anytime the snowpack is wet. If you're sinking in past your ankles in wet snow, it's time to avoid steep slopes or find a shadier slope.



# 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](http://www.snowmobilemt.org).

Join online [snowmobilemt.org](http://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\***

**Do You Belong to a Local Snowmobile Club?** List Club(s):

### Newsletter Preference\*

- Send via Email  Mail Print Copy



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