

# Montana

## SNOWMOBILE NEWS

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2022-2023



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## Developing Responsible Youth Riders

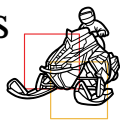
"Snowmobiling is a great activity to do together as a family," says John Zell, MSA Vice President. "It's very important to have all family members, especially kids, well-prepared and knowledgeable about safe snowmobiling. When a new rider, no matter the age, has a great first experience on a snowmobile, they will be fans of the sport for a long time."

**Right ride**—Accidents can happen when children aren't riding a properly-sized snowmobile. Multiple manufacturers produce smaller vehicles with additional safety features including a high visibility whip flag for notification, easy to adjust governor to control the top speed and acceleration of the vehicle, kid-friendly controls, and a removable ignition key.

**Right gear**—Before you let your child get on a snowmobile, make sure they are wearing properly fitting snowmobile gear that have no dangling scarves, laces or straps. It's particularly important that their helmets are properly sized. (Cont. page 03)

# MSA Officers and Clubs

## Association Officers



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

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

Helena Snowdrifters  
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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  
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Missoula, MT 59806  
406-370-8819  
www.missoulasnowgoers.org

Montana Nightriders  
PO Box 420242  
Haugen, 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  
406-930-1396

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  
406-838-2207  
www.ridecooky.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](http://SnowmobileMT.org)

\*2021-2022 MSA Snowmobile Club of the Year



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## —Developing responsible youth riders

(Continued page 1)

A helmet is the most important piece of safety equipment your kids will wear this snowmobiling season, so don't skimp on this necessary item.

**Right education** — Many manufacturers also have safety and training videos online. In Montana, youths under 16, without a driver's license who will be riding on dual-use roads must complete a Montana-approved Snowmobile Safety Course and obtain a Snowmobile Safety Certificate. Riders under the age of 16 are also required to be under the direct supervision of a licensed adult. Visit [snowmobileinfo.org](http://snowmobileinfo.org).

**Right speed**—Take it slow for the first few rides over various conditions for the novice rider to get used to handling a sled. Never override your lights with a new rider (or anytime!), as it is unsafe and not a good lesson to impart.

"When a new rider, no matter the age, has a great first experience on a snowmobile, they will be fans of the sport for a long time," said Zell. Visit the American Council of Snowmobiling Association (ASCA) for more educational materials.



## District Reps Take on "Membership Challenge"



### Are You a MSA Member Yet?

The stakes are high, and the competition is fierce between MSA district representatives! The Montana Snowmobiling Association district reps have been challenged to increase their MSA member participation and signups in their respective territories. The winning Club with the highest percentage of MSA members will be credited with bragging rights, an official plaque, and \$200 to spend on club members.

"This is a big legislative year and strength in numbers is important", says Connie Walter, MSA Treasurer. "We need a good representation to help defend and support our sport." Support your local club and support MSA. Join online today or mail in your form and please make sure you credit your local club. Your district reps are counting on you! (Literally)



# BEAT THE CHILL

*in West Yellowstone*

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(406) 646-7656





# Ridge Riders Rebuild Gem Peak Warming Hut



**Photos and Article Courtesy: The Sanders County Ledger / Annie Wooden**

They say Rome wasn't built in a day. Maybe it would have been, had they had the commitment and drive of the Cabinet Ridge Riders (CRR). More than 40 volunteers with the Trout Creek group have spent nearly 2,000 hours rebuilding the warming hut at Gem Peak near Trout Creek, which was burned by fire in August.

The warming hut was destroyed by fire in the early morning hours of August 25. The Ridge Riders have a special use permit with the U.S. Forest Service for the structure. Cleanup began Labor Day weekend and construction started September 10 with digging and setting forms for the concrete. The Ridge Riders said this week that volunteers have been putting in long days trying to finish up the building. "The structure is up and they're still working on the finishing touches," said CRR Secretary Alexis Dean. "We're not sure if everything will be done before the snow flies, but they're trying their hardest."

The Ridge Riders have made some improvements in the new structure. Dean said the trusses were made by Trout Creek Truss instead of the club making their own, and the building is stick frame on stem walls instead of a pole building on sauna tubes. The front of the building is covered to keep the snow away from the door and the structure features a woodshed on the side with a walk-through man door. Group members met with the U.S. Forest Service to ensure the new structure stays within the current special use permit.

The club has received more than \$23,000 in donations. At a meeting with the Sanders County Commissioners earlier this month, CRR President Dave Anderson said donations were continuing to come in, both in the form of money and materials. Several businesses and individuals from throughout the area have donated materials or construction services. Dean said those include Ace Hardware, Boyce Lumber, Diversified Plastic, Hi-Land Construction, Jackson Contractor Inc., Johnson's Hardware, Naughty Pine, Noxon PTO, Razz Construction, Steve Labelle Body Shop, Thompson River Redi-Mix, Trout Creek Truss, Wayside Bar, Thompson River Lumber, Chef Bob of Trout Creek, Ken Bernardy, Zarach Epperson, Mike Erwin, Bill Nolen and Dustin Nelson.

Ranger Michael Feiger of the Cabinet Ranger District stated earlier this month when meeting with commissioners that investigators were not able to determine the cause of the fire at the warming hut due to the number of accelerants present at the location. Anyone with information about the fire is asked to call the Sanders County Sheriff's Office at (406) 827-3854, or the Cabinet Ranger District at (406) 827-3533.

For more information or to follow progress on the warming hut, visit the Cabinet Ridge Riders on Facebook.





## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Fred Bailey

### **Access Guide for Snowmobiling on Private and Public Land**

The topic of open riding areas has come up time and time again. The American Council of Snowmobile Associations couldn't say it any better... please visit [snowmobilers.org](http://snowmobilers.org) Access Guide for Snowmobiling Resource Manual to access the full document.

Snowmobile clubs, associations, agencies, and other trail providers routinely rely upon a patchwork of public lands, public right-of-way, and private properties to complete their trail networks. This mixed approach to securing trail corridors and riding areas is critical to the continued success of snowmobile trail systems. The complexity of establishing and keeping areas available for snowmobiling access varies by location based upon whether the areas are rural or suburban and by whether routes traverse public open spaces, private developments, or follow road right-of-way. However, the bottom line is that snowmobiling requires formal permission for access to and the continuing use of private and public lands – and without this permission, there are simply no legal places to operate snowmobiles.



During these modern times, a deal based on your word or handshake in many cases is just not enough. Many landowners are reluctant to allow access across their land for fear of lawsuit from an injured recreationalist. Montana is made up of thousands of acres of private land as well as public land, and without access through private land, much of our access to public land would not happen, as well as trail loops and other lower elevation activities. Fortunately, the Legislature recognized this and created a law to protect landowners from this liability. Feel free to share this with your landowner partners and potential future partners.

**Fred**  
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## Montana Code Annotated 2021 TITLE 70. PROPERTY CHAPTER 16. RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS INCIDENTAL TO OWNERSHIP IN REAL PROPERTY

### Part 3. Gratuitous Permittee for Recreation Restriction On Liability Of Landowner -- Definitions

70-16-302. (Temporary) Restriction on liability of landowner -- definitions. (1) A person who uses property, including property owned or leased by a public entity, for recreational purposes, with or without permission, does so without any assurance from the landowner that the property is safe for any purpose if the person does not give a valuable consideration to the landowner in exchange for the recreational use of the property. The landowner owes the person no duty of care with respect to the condition of the property, except that the landowner is liable to the person for any injury to person or property for an act or omission that constitutes willful or wanton misconduct. For purposes of this section, valuable consideration does not include the state land recreational use license fee imposed under 77-1-802 or other funds provided under 77-1-815.

(2) As used in this part, the following definitions apply:

- (a) (i) "Airstrip" means improved or unimproved landing areas on private land used by pilots to land, park, take off, unload, load, and taxi aircraft.
- (ii) The term does not include municipal airports governed under Title 67, chapter 10, part 1.
- (b) "Flying of aircraft" means the operation of aircraft, including but not limited to landing, parking, taking off, unloading, loading, and taxiing of aircraft at an airstrip.

(c) "Landowner" means a person or entity of any nature, whether private, governmental, or quasi-governmental, and includes the landowner's agent, tenant, lessee, occupant, grantee of conservation easement, water users' association, irrigation district, drainage district, and persons or entities in control of the property or with an agreement to use or occupy property.

(d) "Property" means land, roads, airstrips, water, watercourses, and private ways. The term includes any improvements, buildings, structures, machinery, and equipment on property.

(3) The department of fish, wildlife, and parks, when operating under an agreement with a landowner or tenant to provide recreational snowmobiling opportunities, including but not limited to a snowmobile area, subject to the provisions of subsection (1), on the landowner's property and when not also acting as a snowmobile area operator on the property, does not extend any assurance that the property is safe for any purpose, and the department, the landowner, or the landowner's tenant may not be liable to any person for any injury to person or property resulting from any act or omission of the department unless the act or omission constitutes willful or wanton misconduct. (Void on occurrence of contingency--sec. 8, Ch. 596, L. 2003.)

# AVALANCHE SAFETY

## La Nina Brings Deep Snow and Avalanches

By Doug Chabot

Autumn is the time to get your gear together: sleds, tool kit, first aid kit, goggles, probe and shovel, transceivers, etc. after a season of neglect. Getting all my gear together is permission to anticipate a deep winter. This winter is influenced by La Nina and the long-range climate forecast has promising odds of above-average snowfall. Just writing that brings a smile to my face. But more snow brings more avalanches, and avalanches range from harmless to deadly. Some days they are non-existent and other days they run one after another. Lots of snow cuts both ways: it's fun but can be dangerous.

Even more critical than prepping our gear is sharpening our minds to make safe decisions in the backcountry. Good decisions are the only way to lower our risk. The obvious, but not always the simple solution is to avoid times when slopes are dangerous to limit our exposure. Last year there were 4 avalanche fatalities in Montana, all motorized. Everyone must do their part to make that number zero by taking an avalanche class, staying educated, and practicing with our rescue gear. Sledgers that are avalanche aware, well-trained, and practiced, literally save lives every year.

In Montana, there are three avalanche centers, the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center based in Bozeman, the Flathead Avalanche Center in Kalispell, and the West Central Montana Avalanche Center in Missoula. This leaves a lot of the state without avalanche forecasts, but many popular riding areas are covered.

All 3 centers offer daily avalanche, weather and snowpack information which is lifesaving and free. Checking out their reports on snow conditions and hearing about what others have found is the first and easiest step to a great day of riding. It directs our attention to the problems at hand, such as specific areas or aspects to avoid and what to look for as we ride. Avalanche centers also offer free or cheap avalanche courses for everyone, no matter your age, ability or mode of transportation. They also list private avalanche education courses for anyone wanting certification or advanced instruction. Sign up now for classes before they fill up. You can do that on each avalanche center's webpage or check out [avalanche.org](http://avalanche.org) for a 1-stop shop of avalanche information throughout the country.

I cannot emphasize avalanche education enough. A lack of it is a common thread in many accidents: riders didn't know the avalanche danger rating, were unaware they were in avalanche terrain or did not know how to properly use their gear to perform a rescue. Last winter a couple sledgers died outside Cooke City when all three of these factors rang true. Unfortunately, just one of these failures can kill you or your partner. Taking a class will help and attending one with a field component is even better.

All avalanche centers rely on a percentage of private funding sources. Tax dollars can add a large piece of the financial pie but grants and donations make it whole. This year, for the second in a row, the non-profit Avalanche Alliance ([avalanche-alliance.org](http://avalanche-alliance.org)) is holding a raffle to raise money for avalanche centers to specifically help snowmobilers. The Grand Prize is a custom 2022 Ford F-350 Super Duty as well as thousands of dollars in sledding gear for other winners. The Avalanche Alliance is a huge supporter of avalanche education, and your donation might possibly boomerang with a prize.





## Annual Snowmobile Award Nominations

### Deadline Ahead

The great sport of snowmobiling is only possible due to the many great, behind-the-scenes volunteers who work tirelessly to create, maintain, and protect the places where we ride. Every year MSA recognizes volunteers who go above and beyond the call of duty. This year we've included a new nomination category for Youth Snowmobiler of the Year. Submit your nominations for that special person or club who strives to make the sport more enjoyable.

To submit a nomination for the MSA top honors, visit [snowmobilemt.org](http://snowmobilemt.org) to download the application forms. Nominations must be received by MSA no later than **December 31**. See entry form for details.

These prestigious awards will be presented at the MSA Annual Snowmobile Banquet in Helena this February. Event category-winning nominations will go on to further compete at the national level hosted by ASCA.

### Last Season's Award Recipients

#### Snowmobiler of the Year

Jon Kline

#### Snowmobiling Family of the Year

Ron and Peggy Albee

#### Snowmobile Dealer of the Year

Kurt's Polaris, Seeley Lake

#### Groomer(s) of the Year

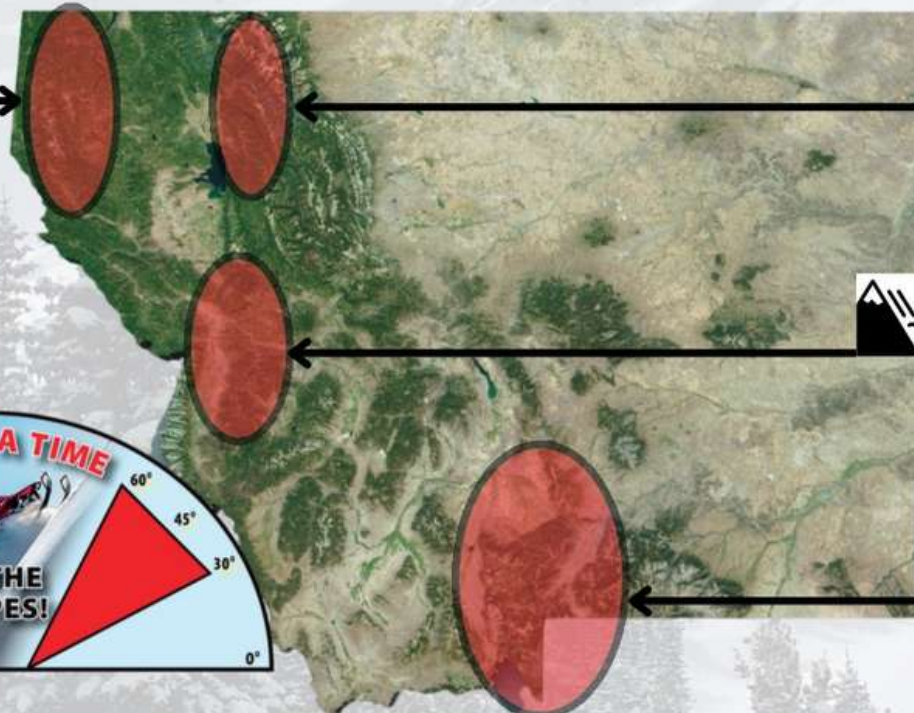
Mike Cuta and Jeff Kinnick

#### Snowmobile Club of the Year

Upper Yellowstone Snowmobile Club



## Get Your Local Avalanche Forecast



[www.mtavalanche.com](http://www.mtavalanche.com) - [www.missoulaavalanche.org](http://www.missoulaavalanche.org) - [www.flatheadavalanche.org](http://www.flatheadavalanche.org)  
[www.idahopanhandleavalanche.org](http://www.idahopanhandleavalanche.org)

## Don't Use Kids as Airbags. Keep Them Safe. Put 'Em On The Back.

This poster is part of a snowmobile safety education tool kit developed by ACSA to bring further awareness of safe snowmobiling practices. Find the most comprehensive collection of online and downloadable snowmobile safety education tools and training materials.



## Know Your Montana Law Operation at Night

MCA 23-2-6

- When operating during the hours between dusk and dawn a snowmobile must use a lighted headlight and taillight.



## Snowmobilers

### Take the Pledge!

- Protect Snowmobiling access so we and future generations can continue to enjoy the riding freedoms we currently have.
- Protect the Landowners that allow trails to cross their property.
- Protect snowmobiling by riding off-trail ONLY where it is legal and allowed.



- **I Pledge** to ride off trail only where I know it's legal and accepted.
- **I Pledge** to check before going off-trail if I don't know.
- **I Pledge** to protect access for future generations by doing the right thing.
- **I Pledge** to protect access by encouraging those I ride with to take the Pledge also.



# PRE-RIDE CHECKLIST



## Fall Preparation

Smart preparation makes for a safe and enjoyable snowmobile ride you should perform a full check of your machine prior to your first outing of the year to ensure everything is in proper working order. A certified mechanic should fix any items you find that might need repair before the season starts.

### Items to Check Include:

- Air Intake: make sure nothing has clogged your intake
- Throttle: squeeze the throttle and make sure it moves freely
- Brake: squeeze the brake lever to ensure it works properly and does not go all the way to the handlebar grip
- Track: ensure proper tension adjustments
- Idler or bogie wheels: check to ensure they turn freely
- Slide rail/hyfax: check for wear
- Skis: check for proper alignment
- Wear bars and carbides on skis: check for wear
- Lights: check bulbs and connections
- Injection oil mix on 2-strokes or oil level on 4-strokes: check level and quality
- Gear oil level: check level and quality
- Spark plugs: check color and condition
- Drive belt: check for wear



## Every Snowmobile Outing

Before you start your snowmobile, check the following:

- Weather forecast: ensure your clothing is appropriate for temperature, wind chill factor, and conditions
- Throttle: it should freely return to the idle or closed position
- Snowmobile: it should be positioned in a clear space free of people or objects
- Fuel and oil levels
- Ski assemblies and rods
- Drive belt
- General mechanical conditions
- Handlebars (they should turn both ways)
- Emergency kit
- Personal items kit
- Safety equipment

## Before You Begin Your Ride, Check the Following:

- Brakes: they should operate freely and smoothly
- Track and skis: ensure they are free and not frozen down
- Headlight and taillight
- Emergency switch
- Idle: (slowly run your machine for at least 60 seconds or more to allow the engine time to warm up)

Source: [saferiderssafetyawareness.org](http://saferiderssafetyawareness.org)

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

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## AROUND THE STATE

**November 19, 2022** - Pray for Snow Banquet, Flathead Snowmobile Club - Kalispell

**December 3, 2022** - Groomer Training - Montana Wild, Helena

**December 3, 2022** - MSA Board Meeting - Helena

**December 31, 2022** - Deadline, MSA Annual Award Nominations (See page 9)

**January 14-22, 2023** - International Snowmobile Safety Week

**February 1-8, 2023** - Trans-Montana Charity Ride

**February 4, 2023** - MSA Annual Club Ride - Helena

**February 4, 2023** - MSA Annual Awards Banquet - Helena

**February 11-20, 2023** - "Take a Friend Snowmobiling" Campaign

**February 18, 2023** - Poker Run, Upper Yellowstone Snowmobile Club, Cooke City

**March 10-11, 2023** - 27th Annual Hog Roast Fundraiser, Upper Yellowstone, Cooke City

## AROUND THE REGION

**November 18-19, 2022** - Idaho Snowmobile Show - Nampa, ID

**March 23-26, 2023** - Jackson Hole Snowmobile Hill Climb - Jackson, WY

## AVALANCHE EDUCATION

Visit [Avalanche.org](http://Avalanche.org) to find an upcoming class!

**Share your Club News and Events!**

**Email:** [news@snowmobilemt.org](mailto:news@snowmobilemt.org)

**Event Deadline:** 15th of the month

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## MONTANA SNOWMOBILE PROGRAM UPDATE



By Seth McArthur

We are almost upon a new season of grooming and all the hard work it entails for the many of you who volunteer to allow grooming to occur in Montana. I have spent this summer working to repair and upgrade grooming equipment for the upcoming season. These upgrades are due to the funding from the Snowmobile Trail Pass revenues. Thank you for your support of the Snowmobile Clubs and their grooming efforts by purchasing the Snowmobile Trail Pass.

If your club needs funding for trail maintenance, there are new grant programs available to help. One of the biggest issues all clubs face is overgrown trails. Grants are available that will allow you to rent equipment and get this taken care of.

If any of you have questions, please call and we can come up with a plan to assist in getting funding for these activities. The grant process does take some effort, but it is worth it when the work is complete. I will do my best to guide you through this process. There are both state and federal funds that can be used.

Please take some time to thank those in your life that have selflessly served in your local snowmobile clubs. The clubs are full of these individuals who are not able to be active anymore. Reach out and say thanks and offer a helping hand if so needed. Join a club and share your talents. Help us all promote safe snowmobiling in Montana.

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



# Save the date

## Groomer Class

Saturday, December 3, 2022

Montana Wild | Helena, MT

Clubs - please watch your email inbox for upcoming details!

This class is for all groomer operators operating state owned groomers.

Groomer manufacturers will also be on-site.



# GET READY FOR THE BIGGEST RIDE OF THE SEASON!



## 2023 Trans-Montana Charity Ride

Once again, the MSA will be holding our annual Trans-Montana Charity Ride this year and you are all invited!

2022 was our largest turnout ever and we had a ball! We also raised \$26,000 for NAMI!!!! Mother nature even cooperated pretty darn well, and we found some really good snow to play in! We also had more women on the ride than ever before, well done ladies! A big thank you to all who participated/donated and all the clubs for hosting us—THANK YOU!

This year, we'll start riding on Feb 2nd in Lincoln (arrive on the 1st), visit Great Falls to ride the Little Belts, move on to Helena (where we will also hold our annual MSA Banquet and Awards dinner), then Butte, Ennis (to ride West Fork), and finally onto West Yellowstone.



Last year, we had folks attend all the way from Minnesota, Nebraska, Colorado, Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, and of course, Montana. I can't tell you how much that means and how happy we were to see that. It was a great group and we all bonded immediately—DUH! It's snowmobiling! But I also want to invite all the snowbikers and more couples and women! We have terrain for everyone—we can and do break into groups so that everyone can have fun.

If you're just up for a trail ride, that's great, we'll have a guide for that. If you want steep and deep, we have you covered. If you're like me, you want off-trail, but not too hard...we got it. So please don't think this is a bunch of nutty, crazed kooks out to test the limits. The "nutty, crazed kooks" part might fit tho. 😁

So please join us Feb 2-7th on the Trans-Montana! And don't forget we have prizes and awards!!!

**Mark Smolen**  
**Trans-Montana Charity Ride Co-Chair**  
[www.trans-montana.org](http://www.trans-montana.org)



# Become a MSA Member

## Montana Snowmobile Association **Account** **Registration**

### Have you visited the new MSA Website?

Manage your membership online. If you sent in your membership, but we don't have an email for you, please use the "Contact Us" tool to send us your email address. We'll get your account loaded into our membership system so you can manage your own membership details. This will help with your renewals, and keep your address updated.



## Montana Snowmobile Association Membership Application 2022/23



Join online [snowmobilemt.org](https://snowmobilemt.org) or complete the application below.

### Membership Type

 New

 Club /Business: \$40

 *Renewal*
 Individual/Family: \$25

\_\_\_\_\_ **Number of Family Members**

**Do you belong to a local Snowmobile Club?**

List Club: \_\_\_\_\_

**Full Name:**

---

Family Members:

---

Business / Club Name:

---

**Mailing Address:**

---



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**Email:**

**Phone:**

---

**Newsletter Preference:**

Send via Email     Mail Print Copy

Mail completed application with payment

Montana Snowmobile Association | P.O. Box 56 | Black Eagle, MT 59414



**Montana Snowmobile Association**

snowmobilemt.org  
P.O. Box 56  
Black Eagle, MT 59414

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