ISSUE 3 • DECEMBER 2025
2025-2026
www.snowmobilemt.org

Montana SNOWMOBILE NEWS

Protecting Access. Supporting Riders. Strengthening Communities.

Montana SNOWMOBILE Association MSA

THIS ISSUE

MSA Directory - 2
President's Message - 3
Updates & Contributions - 4-5
Events & Banquet 6-7
On Our Radar - 8
Avalanche Safety - 9
Trans-Montana 10-11
Snowmobile Program- 12
Vice-President's Message - 13
Trail Setup - 14
Snow Dance - 15

MSA "Best Of" Awards

Nomination Entries Due This Month!

Snowmobiling clubs thrive thanks to the dedication and passion of our hardworking volunteers. We deeply appreciate their invaluable contributions—they are truly the backbone of our sport.

We encourage clubs & members to submit nominations for this year's annual awards. To nominate an individual, visit snowmobilemt.org to complete the easy online submission form, or simply email pastpresident@snowmobilemt.org.

We're honored to celebrate the people who keep Montana snowmobiling strong—and we hope to see you in Helena this February for the Annual Awards Banquet, hosted by the Helena Snowdrifters!

Visit www.snowmobilemt.org and submit your nominations no later than December 31.

- **Snowmobiler of the Year**
- **Snowmobile Family of the Year**
- **Snowmobile Club of the Year**
- **Youth Snowmobiler of the Year**
- **Groomer of the Year**
- **Dealer of the Year**

Montana SNOWMOBILE Association

Montana Snowmobile Association
P.O. Box 56
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Website: www.snowmobilemt.org
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45 Fire Lane, Anaconda, MT 59711
406-563-7789

Beaverhead Sno-Riders (5)
PO Box 867, Dillon, MT 59725
406-925-0501

Big Hole Snowmobile Club (5)
PO Box 141, Wisdom, MT 59761
406-370-2587

Big Sky Snowriders (10)
PO Box 365, Livingston, MT 59047
406-220-0803

Bitterroot Ridge Runners (3)
PO Box 265, Hamilton, MT 59840
406-363-3433 www.bitterrootrr.org

Cabinet Ridge Riders (2)
PO Box 1577, Trout Creek, MT 59874
406-827-3226

Flathead Snowmobile Association (1)
PO Box 5041, Kalispell, MT 59903
406-871-4606
www.flatheadsnowmobiler.com

Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association (10)
PO Box 3164, Bozeman, MT 59772
406-600-6063 www.gvsa.net

Great Falls Snowmobile Club (7)
PO Box 70, Black Eagle, MT 59414
406-899-5126
www.great-falls-snowmobile.org

Helena Snowdrifters (8)
PO Box 5505, Helena, MT 59624
406-202-2044 www.helenasnowdrifters.org

Jackpine Savages Snowmobile Club (5)
PO Box 65, Wise River, MT 59762
406-267-3389

Lincoln County Sno-Kat Club (1)
PO Box 1180, Libby, MT 59923
406-827-0524

Little Belt Snowmobile Club (9)
PO Box 213, Hobson, MT 59452
406-366-8924

Meagher County Little Belters (7)
PO Box 315, White Sulphur Springs, MT 59645
406-547-3966 www.mclittlebelters.org

Mining City Trail Riders, Inc (5)
P.O. Box 4885, Butte, MT 59702
406-782-4613

Missoula Snowgoers (3)
PO Box 2441, Missoula, MT 59806
406-241-6814 www.missoulasnowgoers.org

Montana Nightriders (2)
PO Box 420242, Haugan, MT 59842
406-544-5416 www.montananightriders.com

Ponderosa Snow Warriors* (8)
PO Box 933, Lincoln, MT 59639
406-475-5786

Scenic Montana Trails (4)
PO Box 174, Seeley Lake, MT 59868
406-677-7777 www.driftriders.org

Summit Snowgoers (6)
PO Box 301 Cut Bank, MT 59427
406-229-0665

Sweet Grass County Recreation Association (10)
PO Box 922, Big Timber, MT 59011
406-459-6769

Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club (1)
PO Box 404, Eureka, MT 59917
406-297-3377

Troy Snowmobile Club (1)
PO Box 1002, Troy, MT 59935
406-295-4322 www.troysnowmobileclub.org

Upper Yellowstone Snowmobile Club (10)
PO Box 1111 Cooke City, MT 59020
406-223-5428 www.ridecookcity.com

Vigilante Snowmobilers (5)
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

( ) Corresponding District
† Community grooming operation. No membership

2024-2025 MSA Snowmobile Club of the Year

DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES

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DISTRICT 12 13 – VACANT

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

While the snow has been slow to arrive, our clubs are gearing up for what we hope will be a fantastic winter season! Preparations are well underway—warming shelters are being set up, wood-chopping days are happening, counters are being placed, and members are double-checking their trail passes. Don't forget to get your membership dues paid and support both your local club and your state association. Your involvement keeps our trails open and our community strong.

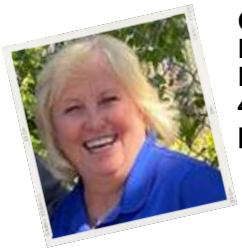
One thing we have seen plenty of already is Winter Wonderland license plates—and we love it! It was especially exciting to see so many at the Montana Snow Show in Kalispell. We'll be sharing an article soon on the work that went into making this specialty plate a reality. If you haven't gotten yours yet, don't wait—the fees go directly into the Legal Defense Fund, available to all clubs when legal challenges arise.

Our next MSA Board Meeting is scheduled for December 6 in Helena, and we're expecting a couple of great speakers you won't want to miss. We encourage every club to send a representative—your participation matters! District Representatives should be there for sure. All members are welcome to attend and stay informed on current issues and opportunities.

It's also nomination season for our annual awards! You can submit your nominations now for recognition at our banquet on February 7, 2026, in Helena. The deadline will sneak up fast, so be sure to get yours in early.

Another exciting event on the horizon is the ACSA Mountain Riding Summit in West Yellowstone, February 18–22, 2026. This year's focus is on youth, and we're thrilled to be welcoming young riders from across the country, along with many of our own. Word has it there may even be some vintage sleds making an appearance! Plans include group rides for all skill levels, riding clinics, avalanche refreshers, auctions, sledding, and—of course—s'mores and hot chocolate. Keep an eye on the MSA Facebook page for updates.

Here's to a safe, snowy, and adventure-filled season ahead! Let's ride! ❄



Connie Walter
President
Montana Snowmobile Association
406-590-0386
president@snowmobilemt.org

Get Your Montana Trail Pass & Let the Adventure Unfold!

Ready for your first ride of the season? Sledders must purchase a Trail Pass to legally ride on any of Montana's 4,000+ miles of groomed snowmobile trails. Resident passes are valid for two seasons and cost $20. Trail Passes apply to all "mechanized equipment" including snowmobiles, motorized snow bikes, and fat-tire pedal bikes. Non-resident passes valid for one season.

Apply online through the online licensing system at fwp.mt.gov or purchase your pass through a participating vendor.

CLUB NEWS

Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association

District 10 | Bozeman, MT
www.gvsa.net

The Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association has been busy this summer preparing for another great snow season! After last winter, our groomers' tracks decided they'd had enough, so the first part of our summer was spent rebuilding and making sure everything was bolted, tuned, and ready to roll when the snow flies. Thanks to several dedicated groomer workdays, we not only got the groomer back in shape but also tackled some much-needed upkeep and maintenance on the groomer shed.

Trail work was another big focus. We held two separate trail clearing days on Buck Ridge and Taylor's Fork Trails, removing limbs, rocks, and stumps to ensure smoother grooming and safer riding this winter.

We kicked off the season with our October meeting and kickoff party—tacos were the star of the night! Members also got the scoop on our upcoming events for the season.

Our first big event is the Annual Christmas Banquet on December 5th, a fun-filled evening featuring live and silent auctions, gun and kids raffles, great food, and even better company. Funds raised help keep our groomer running strong all winter long.

Next up is our Annual Poker Run on Buck Ridge Trail on January 31st. During our January meeting, we'll host an avalanche refresher with the Avalanche Center to help everyone stay safe in the backcountry. Then, mark your calendars for our Annual East-West Ride on February 21st and 22nd, where we'll follow the historic Big Sky Trail for two days of adventure.

We invite everyone to join us for one of our winter events or at our monthly club meetings, held on the second Wednesday of each month at the grooming shed.

Keep your eyes on the mountains—and keep praying for snow!

Meagher County Little Belters

District 7 | White Sulphur Springs
www.mclittlebelters.org

The Meagher County Little Belters have had a busy and exciting summer! Our 4th Annual Summer Fun Run was a huge success — we had an amazing turnout and an even better time. Riders from all over the state joined us in the beautiful Castle Mountains for a full day of fun and community.

A huge thank you goes out to the Checkerboard Bar for once again providing a fantastic location and delicious food for everyone to enjoy after the ride. Thanks to the generosity of our local businesses and donors, we had a little bit of everything — and everyone walked away with great door prizes!

The funds raised from this event help cover our club's yearly costs and allow us to give back to the community. Over the past year, we've proudly donated to five organizations across White Sulphur Springs and Meagher County.

Looking ahead, mark your calendars for our Winter Fun Run on February 15, 2026, taking place at Kings Hill. Event details will be posted soon on our Facebook page and website.

Our club is also proud to be part of the Kings Hill Grooming Board, working alongside the Great Falls club to get the groomer and trails ready for the upcoming winter season. A huge thank you to all the men and women who volunteer their time and effort — without you, we wouldn't have the incredible groomed trail system we all enjoy.

We can't wait to see everyone at the Winter Fun Run — and until then, keep those snow dances coming!

Special Contribution

Rev It Up Girls Montana

We are a group of women based in Montana who are passionate about the backcountry and empowering each other through snowmobiling and all things motorized. Whether you're seeking like-minded friends or looking for ways to get your partner into snowmobiling, this is the club for you! Originally started in Star Valley, Wyoming, the Montana chapter is now entering its 3rd exciting season. We're thrilled to continue building our community here in Big Sky Country. We invite you to become a part of our vibrant community! Connect with other women who share your love for snowmobiles and the great outdoors. Share your experiences, ask questions, and be inspired.

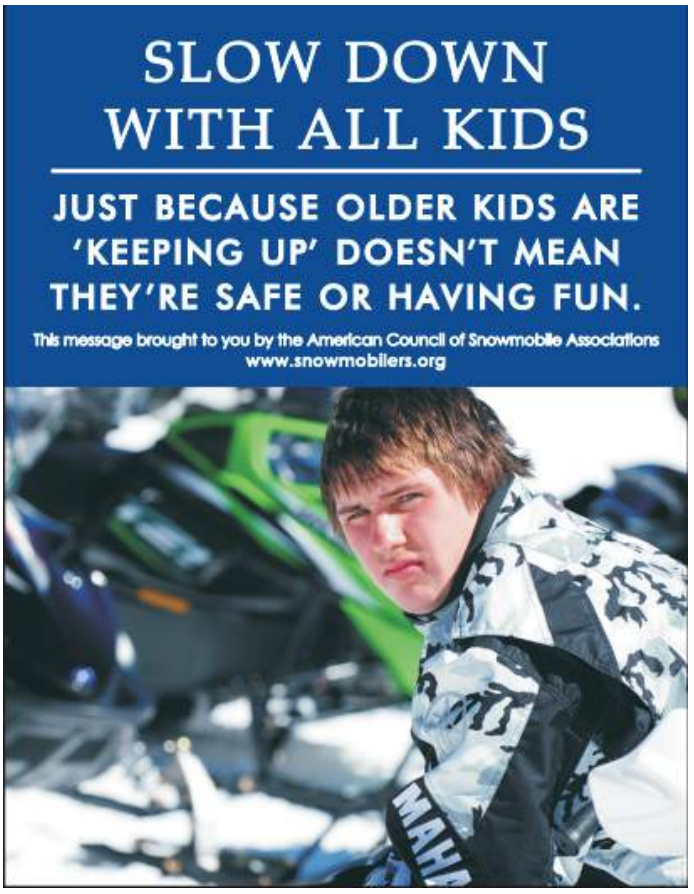
Mark your calendars! We have some exciting events planned for the upcoming season.

We look forward to riding with you this season! Stay tuned for more information on each of these events. Let's make this the best season yet!

Be sure to check out our Facebook page: Rev It Up Girls Montana

- **Montana Meet & Greet: December 13th**
- **Montana Ride: January 17th**
- **Island Park Joint Club Ride: February 20th-22nd - Join the Wyoming and Montana clubs for a fun-filled adventure!**
- **Montana Ride: March 28th**

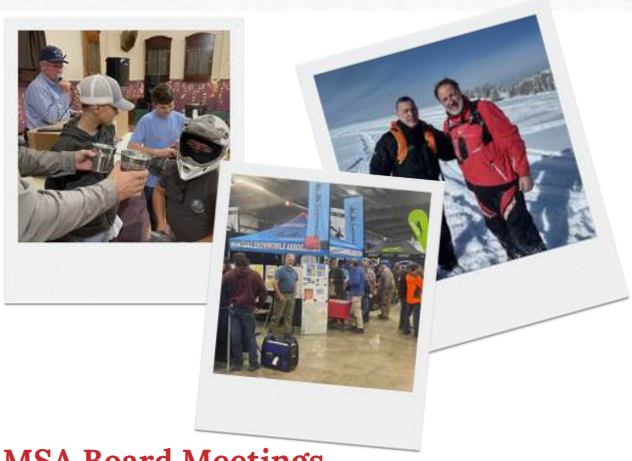
More details to follow soon on the Rev It Up Girls Facebook Page!



EVENTS

December 1, 2026 - Trail Grooming Can Begin!
December 5, 2025 - Pray for Snow Party, Flathead Snowmobile Assoc, Whitefish
December 6, 2025 - MSA Board Meeting, Montana-Wild, Helena
December 13, 2025 - Christmas Convoy, East Helena
December 31, 2025 - Annual MSA Awards Nominations Due
January 10 - 17, 2026 - International Snowmobile Safety Week
January 17, 2026 - Lochsa Loop Ride, Missoula Snowgoers, Lolo Hot Springs
January 17 & 18 , 2026 - Winter Fest, Montana Night Riders
January 21, 2025 - Banquet Tickets Deadline (Early-bird savings ends)
January 30, 2025 - Ray Peterson Annual Fun Run, Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club, Eureka
January 31, 2026 - Annual MNR Poker Ride, Montana Night Riders
January 31, 2026 - Snowball Banquet - Scenic Montana Trails, Seeley Lake
February 1, 2026 - 2nd Annual Dave Konopatzke Vintage Ride & Family Day, Columbia Falls
February 4, 2026 - Trans-Montana Charity Ride Starts
February 6, 2026 - MSA Board Meeting, Helena
February 7, 2026 - Take a Friend Snowmobiling Kickoff Week
February 7, 2026 - Garnet Ghost Town Ride, Scenic Montana Trails
February 7, 2026 - MSA Annual Awards Banquet & Charity Auction, Helena
February 7, 2026 - MSA Annual Group Ride, Helena
February 14, 2026 - Fun Run, Missoula Snowgoers - Lolo Hot Springs
February 14, 15, 2026 - President's Weekend Poker Run, UYSC - Cooke City
February 20, 2026 - BINGO Fundraiser, Helena Snowdrifters, Helena
February 18 - 22, 2026 - ACSA Meet & Ride Mountain Ride Summit, West Yellowstone
February 28 - March 1, 2026 - Lincoln Vintage Rendezvous - Ponderosa Snow Warriors, Lincoln
March 13 & 14, 2026 - Hog Roast Fundraiser, UYSC, Cooke City
March 14, 2026 - St Patty's Vintage Ride, Anaconda Snowmobile Club, Anaconda
June 3 - 6, 2026 - International Snowmobile Congress, Omaha

Send Us Your Events!
Email: news@snowmobilemt.org



MSA Board Meetings

~~September 20, 2025 (Past event)~~
December 6, 2025 - Helena
February 6, 2026 - Helena
June 24, 2026 - Helena

IMPORTANT

All MSA members welcome! Join us in person or by Zoom. Helena Wild - 10:00am

December Agenda

- Welcome new President & Vice-President
- Kicking off the first meeting under our new leadership
- Grant Programs
- Trails Riding Group - Sled Event Donations
- Guest Speakers - Avalanche

Feb 18-22, 2026

ACSA Mountain Riding Summit

Building Tomorrow's Riders

Highlights

- Group Rides - by skill level
- Youth Rides – no age restrictions
- Avalanche Clinic Demos
- Riding Clinic Demos
- Youth Round Table Discussions
- Broom Ball Competition
- (Possible) Freestyle Riders
- Pizza Party
- Sledding Hill
- Kids & Adults Bingo
- Hannah's Chicken Auction

Montana SNOWMOBILE Association

Holiday Inn
West Yellowstone
Enjoy 2 or 3 days of riding

Book your hotel reservations now and bring the family!

CALLING ALL LITTLE SHREDDERS!
The ACSA Riding Summit is taking over West Yellowstone — and this year the KIDS are the MAIN EVENT! Watch Facebook for more details.

Annual Montana Snowmobile Association Awards Banquet with the Trans-Montana Charity Auction

Montana SNOWMOBILE Association

Banquet

Join us as we recognize this years Best Of...

Saturday, February 7, 2026
Delta Colonial Hotel, Helena
Hosted by the Helena Snowdrifters
Everyone Welcome!

Tickets: $40
Youth Tickets (13–18): $20
Kids Tickets (12 & under): $5

Early birds save $10 until Jan. 21st
+ $10 per ticket at the door!

No-Host Cocktail Hour: 5:00pm | Western Dinner Buffet: 6:00pm
Charity Auction: 7:00pm | 50/50 Raffle & More!

MSA Group Ride - Saturday morning, hosted by the Helena Snowdrifters

Hotel Rates: Ask for Montana Snowmobile Association group rate.
Book early for best availability - Delta Colonial Hotel.
Trailer parking available!

HELENA SNOWDRIFTERS
Helena, Montana

www.snowmobilemt.org | www.helenasnowdrifters.org

ON OUR RADAR

MSA Watch Items & Travel Plans

MSA remains actively engaged in travel plans and land use decisions that impact snowmobiling across the state. Listed below are key areas where MSA has provided feedback or continues to monitor developments:

- **Wilderness Study**
- **Economic Impact Study (Winter)**
- **Island Park & West Yellowstone Madison-Gallatin Monument Plan**
- **Clearwater Blackfoot**
- **Lincoln Prosperity Project**
- **Kootenai Forest**
- **Montana Headwaters Legacy Act**
- **Lolo Travel Plan**
- **30 by 30 Initiative**
- **Avalanche Center Budget Reduction**
- **Roadless Rule**

We encourage all members to stay informed and engaged in these discussions. Your voices play a vital role in shaping the future of snowmobiling in Montana.

Roadless Rule Update

TRENDING TOPIC

On June 23, 2025, U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke L. Rollins announced the intent to rescind the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This rule established prohibitions on road construction, road reconstruction, and timber harvests on nearly 60 million acres of national forests and grasslands.

MSA supports rescinding the Roadless Rule. Over the years, it has allowed the Forest Service to restrict access, close roads, and potentially impact snowmobile trails. While the initial comment period has closed, additional opportunities for public input are expected as the process moves forward. Please watch our social media channels and news updates for the latest information and ways you can help ensure continued access to our public lands.

AVALANCHE SAFETY

WHAT'S YOUR PLAN THIS SEASON?

Dave Zinn, Avalanche Forecaster,
Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center

Where are my gloves? What do I need for a day in the backcountry? Shoot! I almost forgot my boots in that flailing, lost feeling while trying to pack for the season's first day of skiing or riding. February and March's automatic actions seem impossibly time-consuming and challenging in the first days of winter.

Like packing for those first winter days, our avalanche skills atrophy during the summer months. Pre-season beacon drills go a long way toward brushing the dust off, but planning to take an avalanche course to learn the basics or enhance your avalanche skills is even better. An abundance of incredible commercial providers offer a series of recreational and professional track avalanche classes locally and throughout the state. Providers offer both motorized and non-motorized programs focusing on critical skills for safe travel in and around avalanche terrain, including interpreting regional avalanche forecasts, developing appropriate travel plans based on that forecast, identifying terrain where avalanches may occur using maps and in the field, evaluating snowpack stability, and enacting an avalanche rescue should an accident occur.

The non-profit partner of the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center, the Friends of the Avalanche Center (the Friends) offers over one hundred free and low-cost avalanche classes each winter to thousands of participants. Unlike local commercial providers, the Friends do not offer courses with recreational or professional level certifications, focusing instead on reaching as many people as possible with awareness level education, including the Avalanche Fundamentals Class, Companion Rescue, 1-Hour Know Before You Go, and school outreach. These courses will help you understand the basics (which may be enough for you) and serve as a steppingstone for more in-depth courses.

The Avalanche Fundamentals program is an excellent starting point, offering both classroom and in-the-field learning. The classroom days feature discussions about avalanche terrain, mountain weather and snowpack, backcountry decision-making, and avalanche rescue. During the accompanying field day on snowmobiles or skis, participants get hands-on practice. For several of the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center forecasters, including me, Avalanche Fundamentals was our first formal avalanche training!

If you invested time and energy leveling up your avalanche education last season and are taking this season off before reengaging next year, refresh your skills with informal practice sessions. Beacon drills are low-hanging fruit. Gather backcountry partners and bury a beacon or two in the snow or leaf piles, and refamiliarize yourself with your rescue equipment. Every avalanche professional in the region is doing the same thing. Regardless of how many times you have practiced in the past, ensuring seamless use and deployment of your gear saves lives when seconds matter.

In the same way that we need to relearn how to pack for a day in the mountains each season, brush the dust off your avalanche skills, and find a way to level up this season. A quick trip to the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center education pages will connect you to online learning resources, recreational and professional level certification courses, and abundant free and low-cost avalanche training from the Friends of the Avalanche Center.

Visit www.mtavalanche.com/workshops/calendar for more information and to register for programs.

Building Mountain Skills, One Trans-Montana Rider at a Time

Mark Smolen
Trans-Montana Co-Chair | leader@trans-montana.org

I'm not sure where the time goes some days, but here we are doing our snow-dances and praying for snow! The peaks around my area in the Flathead have been white and then melt and then white again a couple times!

Trans-Montana is all set, the route, the riders (thank you all for getting signed up early!), the banquet, hotels, hats and shirts are all in!

So I thought I'd tell you all about something that happens every year on the TMR. Every day during the ride, our safety officers (Wally and Colin) do a safety briefing. This includes meeting the local club riders who go with us each day, hearing about the terrain we can expect including any areas to be careful in, etc. Then we move onto the avalanche briefing where we talk about the local avi report, build our own report if the area we are in doesn't have an avi report (we sort of take the average of the neighboring areas to get a read on the conditions), and finally discuss what all that means to us as riders.

The last step is doing a beacon check. Very often we get new riders who just got a beacon (for the ride) and really haven't had time to learn about it and use it–it's okay, at least you have it! Our beacon check consists of three parts. 1.) A battery check, 2.) Go into Search Mode check, and 3.) a proximity check where one person is transmitting and each person's unit is counting down the distance to the transmitter as Wally walks around to each person. It verifies that your beacon would truly work in a search.

As I said, we often get a few riders that struggle with going into search mode because they've not taken the time to familiarize themselves with their new gear. In an emergency, it's very important that everyone in the area go into search mode so that we can look for the person that is buried, not others who can't figure out how to go into search mode. So each day we keep track of how long it takes to get into search for the entire group. The first day or two it usually takes a minute, sometimes longer. By the last day, we are usually under ten seconds.

One year, a rider at the end of the week told me this. "I thought you guys were being severe the first day doing the beacon check. But at the end of the week I realized that you actually taught us something and built 40 really good and safe riders."

If you don't do a check each day before you ride, consider doing so. I'm proud of what we've built with Trans-Montana and thank Wally and Colin for their support. But most of all, I'm proud that TMR has instilled some new skills to our riders all while having fun together!

TRANS-MONTANA CHARITY RIDE

What is Trans-Montana?

Trans-Montana is the Montana Snowmobile Association's (MSA) charity of choice — an annual snowmobile ride across Big Sky Country that combines adventure with purpose.

This unforgettable multi-day ride takes participants on a journey through Montana's breathtaking winter landscapes, as riders "Ride the Rockies" to raise awareness and funds for NAMI Montana (National Alliance on Mental Illness). Proudly sponsored by the Montana Snowmobile Association, Trans-Montana brings together snowmobile enthusiasts from across the region to support mental health initiatives while celebrating the spirit of Montana's snowmobiling community.

About the Ride

Local snowmobile clubs along the route proudly host the Trans-Montana Snowmobile Ride, paving the way for unforgettable group adventures with plenty of time to explore and play.

Here's how it works — riders "pay to play" by donating to the cause. Suggested donation $50 per rider, per day. This multi-day ride coincides with the MSA Annual Awards Banquet and the Trans-Montana Live & Silent Charity Auction.

Everyone is welcome to join in the fun! We encourage club members and vendors to donate to the charity, contribute auction items, or simply come enjoy the camaraderie at the banquet.

Learn more at www.trans-montana.org.

Chairman: Mark Smolen
(406) 407-0301
leader@trans-montana.org

Co-Chair: Wally Deschene
leader@trans-montana.org

Trans-Montana Ride Schedule

TMR Day 1 – Wednesday, February 4
• Ride the Bitterroots/Sapphire Mountains with the Bitterroot Ridgerunners

TMR Day 2 – Thursday, February 5
• Ride Lolo with the Missoula Trail Riders

TMR Day 3 – Friday, February 6
• Ride Seeley Lake with Scenic Montana Trails

TMR Day 4 – Saturday, February 7 (MSA Ride)
• Ride the Helena Area with the Helena Snowdrifters
• Attend the MSA/Trans-Montana Banquet

TMR Day 5 – Monday, February 9
• Ride the Butte/Anaconda Area with the Mining City Trail Riders and Jackpine Savages

TMR Day 6 – Tuesday, February 10
• Ride the West Yellowstone Area with MSA Past-President and International Snowmobile Hall of Fame inductee, Jason Howell

Note: Schedule subject to change based on weather and snow conditions.

Celebrating 30 Years of Dedication!

For three decades, the Trans-Montana Ride has thrived thanks to the countless volunteers who stepped up year after year to blend charity with the thrill of snowmobiling. Organizing this event has always been a true labor of love—full of planning, coordination, and hard work that begins the moment one ride ends and the next begins.

To everyone who has played a part over the past 30 years, thank you for building and sustaining this incredible tradition. And a special thanks to Mark Smolen and Wally Deschene for leading the effort over the past seven seasons and continuing the spirit of service that makes the Trans-Montana Ride unforgettable.

MONTANA SNOWMOBILE PROGRAM UPDATE

With the weather this fall, I hope all of you are having a good hunting season. I hear that the projected La Nina system should provide cold weather and lots of snow. I guess we shall see.

I want to inform you that Anaconda has received the new groomer purchase with your snowmobile related fees. It is a Pisten Bully 100 with less than 500 hours. All the grooming tractors now exceed $300,000. They are a huge investment for the program. I appreciate all those who volunteer and help keep the equipment maintained and running. The grooming program would not exist without you. Please thank your local operators for keeping the groomers on the trail.

This past legislative session created a new bill SB165. This bill will provide additional grooming funding to those clubs that have snowmobile rental companies in their areas. The bill collects $5 from each rental and the revenues will return to the club where it was collected. This first season will be to collect revenues and the following season we will see that funding in additional grooming on the ground. I really hope we can make some big improvements in the trails for all to enjoy.

Please have a safe holiday season! See you on the trails.
Sincerely, Seth

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

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Paulsen's POWERSPORTS
200 57th Street North
Great Falls, MT 59405
406-761-0303

Did You Know?

The average age of a snowmobiler is 54 years old.

VICE-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Here is to hoping that you had a great Thanksgiving with your family and friends! I am thankful that I get to be a part of this great snowmobiling community. Unfortunately, as of this writing..we are not seeing much snow...that's going to change..and hopefully by the time you are reading this...it's getting deeper by the hour!

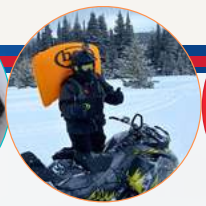
December brings us Christmas, of course, and more family gathering. Here's to hoping you get to shove those kids down a sledding hill or take them for a ride on a snowmobile. Christmas is a great time to update some gear, including safety gear. It would also be a great time to give an avalanche awareness class to a family member or even a riding buddy...you see where I am going here.

December is also a great time to go to your local club meetings, the groomer work days, and generally just get involved. I know you might get tired of that push, from me, but it's so important to our sport for us to be involved.

I will take this time to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and the hope that you had a great 2025 and that 2026 will be the best yet. I will also reiterate that the Montana Snowmobile Association is here to help your club and yourself to the best of our ability. We are happy to answer any questions or help you find the answers if we can't. We are a team in all of these fun adventures!

Keep the tips up, track down (unless you intended to fly upside down) and pray the powder to be handle bar deep!

Rowdy Yates
VP, Montana Snowmobile Association
406-223-5428 | vp@snowmobilemt.org



Got Your Avy Gear ?

Beacon, Probe, Shovel... do you know the importance of these three things? We could toss an avy bag into the mix, but that's a whole separate can of worms.

🔥 **1) Beacon / Transceiver -** Used to search for a victim of an avalanche or any other snow burial. It's also what allows you to be found if you're the unlucky one under the snow. This is a must-have for EVERYONE traveling in avalanche terrain and, more specifically, backcountry winter terrain. Non-negotiable. No excuses.

You need to be able to find your crew just like they need to be able to find you. Practice and actually understand how your beacon works. Seconds matter when you're searching for a buried partner.

Brands vary in ease of use, but the critical part is simple: keep it updated, keep fresh batteries in it, and keep it ON. Seconds matter... again.

💥 **2) Probe -** A probe is a foldable stick/prod/tool used to physically locate a buried person once you've pinpointed their beacon signal. Avalanche victims can be buried many feet deep. A probe is just as important as your beacon because the two are used together.

You do not have time to dig blindly across an entire debris field. Your probe needs to be quickly accessible, and you need to know how to deploy it fast. There are plenty of brands out there, so do your homework, get a reliable one, and practice with it alongside your beacon.

❄️ **3) Shovel -** Used to dig out a victim of an avalanche or any snow burial. Sure, a shovel seems like a no-brainer, but quality matters more than people think. There are lots of styles and brands... choose wisely.

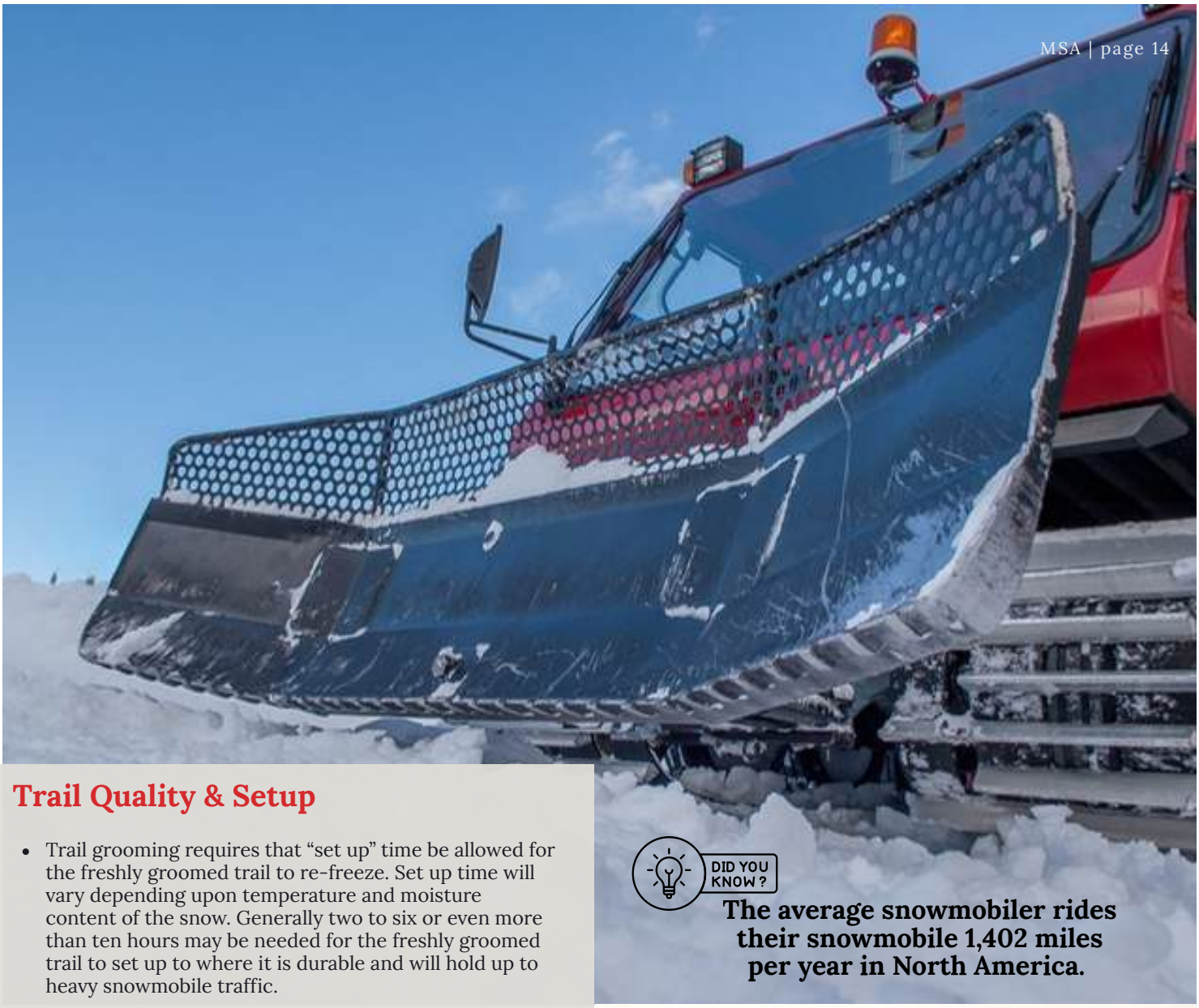
A plastic shovel might get your buddy's sled unstuck but it's useless when digging through avalanche debris, which is often hard-packed or downright icy. A cheap, flimsy shovel will fail you when it's life-or-death. Save yourself the regret and buy a strong one.

These three tools must be part of your gear every single time. No excuses.

Check your beacon batteries every ride. Put your beacon on just like your gloves or helmet. Make sure your probe is in good shape before the season and after any use. Inspect your shovel for wear or cracks. ALWAYS carry a shovel on you, not just on your sled. Take an avalanche awareness course (Avy 1); you'll be surprised by how much you don't know.

Be the person in the group who asks the questions. Be the one who checks that everyone's beacon is on and transmitting. Be the one who stops at beacon check stations. Be the one who reads the avy report and says, "We shouldn't go there today."

It's ok to Be That Person.



Trail Quality & Setup

- Trail grooming requires that “set up” time be allowed for the freshly groomed trail to re-freeze. Set up time will vary depending upon temperature and moisture content of the snow. Generally two to six or even more than ten hours may be needed for the freshly groomed trail to set up to where it is durable and will hold up to heavy snowmobile traffic.

- Try to avoid riding a snowmobile on freshly groomed trails for at least two hours after the groomer passes by choosing an alternate route to help improve the quality and durability of snowmobile trails. And never follow directly behind a groomer because it immediately destroys the trail.

- If you come upon a groomer and you must use that route, try to minimize impacts to the trail: slow down; try to stay off the fresh grooming if the trail is wide enough to safely do so; operate only at the outside edge of the fresh grooming; ride in single file versus having everyone in the group take a different path on the fresh grooming; and don't purposely fishtail or power through the soft snow.

- Understand that aggressive riding styles can impact the quality and smoothness of the trails you ride on. Fast starts and stops, powering through curves, paddle tracks, carbide runners, traction devices, and powerful engines can all combine to destroy the smoothness of a trail. So the next time you hit the brake or throttle, think about how you may have innocently contributed to destroying the trails you would really prefer to be smooth.

DID YOU KNOW?

The average snowmobiler rides their snowmobile 1,402 miles per year in North America.

Do Your Snow Dance!

If you've caught yourself pacing in circles, staring at the sky, or shaking your fist at the weather app—congrats, you're officially doing the Snowmobiler Snow Dance. Some swear it works best with a cup of hot cocoa. Others insist you must wear at least one piece of gear (yes, even your boots count). Whatever your style, keep the good vibes going. Winter will get here... eventually!

The Official, Totally-Scientific Snow Dance
Step 1: Spin in a circle.
Step 2: Check the forecast again.
Step 3: Spin the other way.
Step 4: Pretend you didn't just check the forecast five minutes ago.

Repeat daily until flakes appear.

Whether you dance alone, with friends, or with your whole club—remember: every spin helps! Here's to snow in the mountains and fresh tracks soon!

Industry Facts

In 2025 there were 92,387 snowmobiles sold worldwide; 41,588 were sold in the U.S. and 34,828 were sold in Canada.

There are 1.3 million registered snowmobiles in the US and over 559,300 registered snowmobiles in Canada.

MSA Membership Application

Join online snowmobilemt.org or complete the application below.

Montana SNOWMOBILE Association

Select Membership Type

- ☐ Single/Family Membership - Annual Cost $25
- ☐ Business / Club Membership - Annual Cost $40

If Business or Club Membership

Business / Club Name:

Primary Account Holder:

If Single / Family Membership

Primary Account Holder:

Family Members (If applicable):

Contact Information

Email Address

Phone

Mailing Address

Do You Belong to a Local Snowmobile Club?
List Primary Club:

Mail completed application with payment

Montana Snowmobile Association
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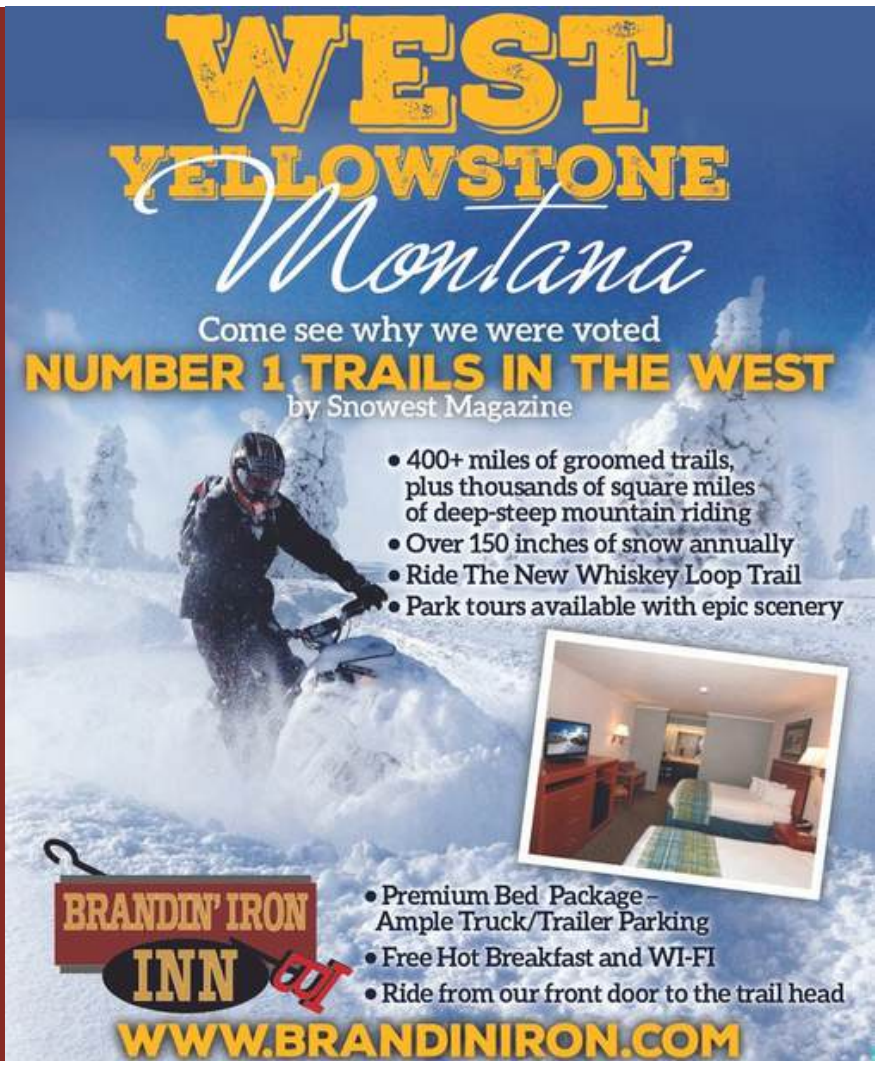
Ask for Montana Snowmobile Association Special Rates and Packages.