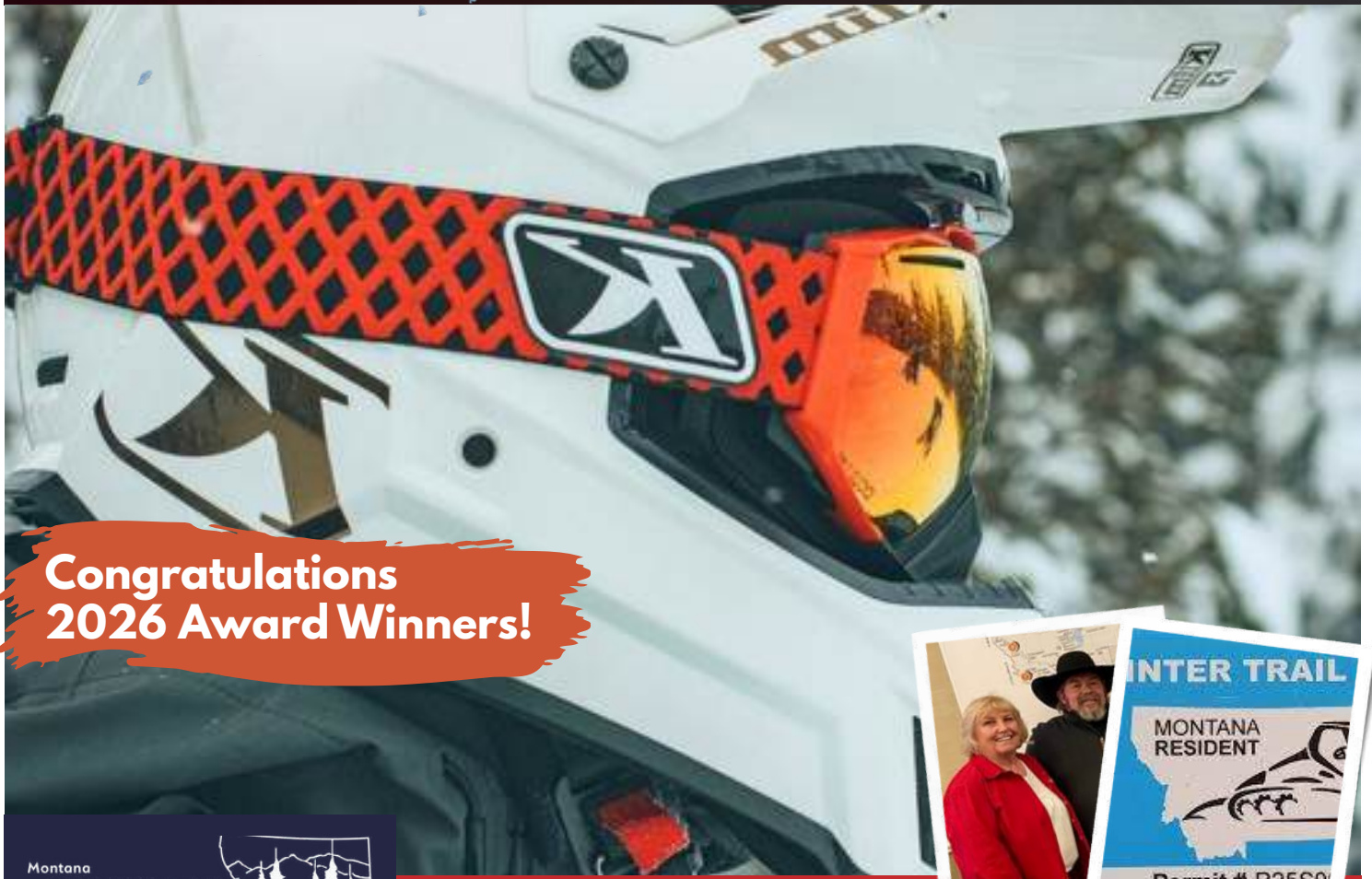


Montana

ISSUE 5 • FEBRUARY 2026
2025-2026 www.snowmobilemt.org

SNOWMOBILE NEWS

Protecting Access. Supporting Riders. Strengthening Communities.



**Congratulations
2026 Award Winners!**



THIS ISSUE

MSA Officers and Clubs - 2
From the President - 3
Events - 4
VPs Corner - 5
Avalanche Safety - 7,8
Awards - 8,9
Our Future Sledders - 10-11
Club News - 12
MT Snowmobile Update - 14
Scholarship - 15

No Trail Pass? No Ride.

Think you don't need a Montana Snowmobile Trail Pass? Think again. Every rider benefits from trail funding, safety improvements, and groomed access—whether you're riding club trails or exploring on your own. Ride legal, support your trails, and help keep Montana snowmobiling strong.

Starting March 1, FWP's new partnership model modernizes licensing and increases local availability, making it easier than ever to get your trail pass. Passes must be purchased online—either directly by you or with assistance from a License Ambassador partner—and will be mailed to you. Be sure to save your receipt, as it serves as proof of purchase if you're riding before your pass arrives.

Resident trail passes are valid for two seasons, while non-resident passes are valid for one season.

Huge thanks to the clubs statewide for leading the charge on trail pass promotion. The collective effort this season has been outstanding and unlike anything we've seen before. When clubs lead, riders follow—and that momentum is exactly what keeps Montana snowmobiling strong, sustainable, and accessible.

Montana

SNOWMOBILE

Association



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

Website: www.snowmobilemt.org
Contact Us: info@snowmobilemt.org

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Anaconda Snowmobile Club (5)
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.bitterrootr.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 www.littlebeltsnowmobile.org

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

*2025-2026 Snowmobile Club of the Year



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DISTRICT 11

Brent Larson
dist-eleven@snowmobilemt.org

DISTRICT 12 13 - VACANT



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



February has been a busy and meaningful month for snowmobiling across the state. While Mother Nature didn't fully cooperate with snowfall, our clubs and volunteers certainly showed up.

This month we were proud to present our annual awards. While a few individuals were recognized, it's important to remember that every award truly belongs to all of our volunteers.

Our association and local clubs exist because of the countless hours donated by members who groom trails, maintain equipment, organize events, and quietly step up whenever help is needed.

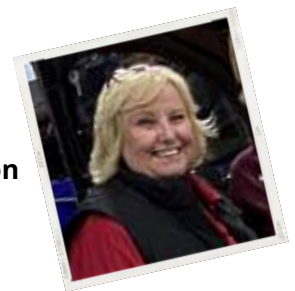
Every volunteer is a winner, and we are grateful for each of you. Even with limited snow, clubs have been hard at work on the trails. Many spent time clearing fallen trees and debris, ensuring trails are safe and ready when conditions improve. These efforts often go unnoticed, but they make a huge difference and reflect the pride our clubs take in their trail systems.

Unfortunately, due to the lack of snow, the charity ride had to be canceled this year. While that was disappointing, the good news is that our Annual Awards Banquet went on as planned and was a great opportunity to gather, reconnect, and celebrate the dedication that keeps our snowmobile community strong.

Looking ahead, we'd like to remind members that a \$1,000 scholarship is available. This scholarship is another way we support our members and their families. The application deadline is March 31, 2026, so please help spread the word to anyone who may be eligible.

Thank you to all our clubs and volunteers for your continued hard work, dedication, and positive spirit—no matter what the snow conditions bring.

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



Next MSA Board Meeting

June 27, 2026 - Helena

All MSA members welcome! Join us in person or by Zoom

Revvng Up Support for Students

Please help spread the word—MSA is proud to sponsor a \$1,000 scholarship this year!

As educational costs continue to rise, we've increased our annual scholarship from \$500 to \$1,000 to better support members of our snowmobiling community.

If you know a deserving individual, please encourage them to apply. See page 15 for full details or visit the MSA website to learn more.



EVENTS

February 1 - Dave Konopatzke Vintage Ride & Family Day (CANCELED)
 February 13- 14,- Cabinet Ridge Riders Fun Run - Trout Creek
 February 14 - 15, 2026 - Whitefish Skijoring 20th Anniversary - Kalispell
 February 14, 2026 - Family Fun Run, Missoula Snowgoers - Lolo Hot Springs
 February 14, 2026 - UYSC Sweetheart Poker Run, Upper Yellowstone Snowmobile Club - Cooke City
 February 18, 2026 - Winter Fun Run - Meagher County Little Belters - Ranch Creek Cabins
February 18 - 22, 2026 - ACSA Mountain Riding Summit - West Yellowstone
 February 20, 2026 - BINGO Fundraiser, Helena Snowdrifters - Helena
 February 28 - March 1, 2026 - Lincoln Vintage Rendezvous, Ponderosa Snow Warriors - Lincoln
 February 28, 2026 - Family Fun Day & Poker Run, Sweet Grass Rec Center - Big Timber
 March 13 & 14, 2026 - Hog Roast Fundraiser, UYSC - Cooke City
 March 14, 2026 - St Patty's Vintage Ride, Anaconda Snowmobile Club - Anaconda
 March 20 - 23, 2026 - World Championship Jackson Hole Snowmobile Hill Climb
 June 3 - 6, 2026 - International Snowmobile Congress - Omaha
 June 27, 2026 - Snowmobile Appropriations Meeting - Helena

The next MSA Board Meeting, Spring 2026 will be held in conjunction with the Groomer Appropriation meeting. Annual club representation is mandatory for this meeting. Per FWP's regulations, clubs not in attendance incur a 15% deduction in groomer appropriation funding.

This is the one time of year all clubs get a chance to get together. We look forward to seeing everyone soon! Spring Meeting: Helena - June 27, 2026

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



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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



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.

VICE-PRESIDENT'S CORNER

WE NEED SNOW.

The end.

That pretty much sums up winter for most of us so far. If things don't change, it's shaping up to be a long, dry summer. Snow has been scarce across much of the state. Sure, there are still places to ride and a few honey holes for the lucky ones, but in many areas it's been warm enough that off-road UTVs are getting more use than sleds.

One silver lining to the lack of snow is that it has allowed clubs hit hard by windstorms to make progress on cleanup. Hundreds, if not thousands, of downed trees are still being cleared from riding areas statewide. Like many others, I want to sincerely thank every volunteer who has gone above and beyond to get this work done. None of this happens without you.

Congratulations to all of this year's award nominees and, of course, the winners. Being nominated by your peers and fellow clubs for a Montana Snowmobile Association year-end award is something to be proud of. You've earned it, and we're proud of you.

Rowdy

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



Help Us Demonstrate the Need for FS Trail Funding

Dear Club Members and Trail Volunteers,

This year, the cuts to the Forest Service (FS) have made trail maintenance more challenging. The recreation and timber FS employees we've relied on in the past to help clear trails are not available, leaving a significant gap in support.

Congress recently released the proposed 2026 FS budget, which includes full funding for FS trail work—putting people back on the payroll and restoring the help we need. While the budget has not yet been passed, we have an opportunity to demonstrate the need for this funding.

One way to show our need is to document the work and resources we invested clearing trails this year. We are asking all clubs and individuals who worked on trails to provide a rough estimate of the following:

1. People hours
2. Equipment costs
3. Fuel expenses
4. Repairs

We will compile these reports into a comprehensive summary to show the scale of our efforts and the importance of FS support.

If you have questions or need guidance, contact Fred Bailey, Connie Walter, or Rowdy.

Thank you for your time and dedication—your contributions are critical to keeping Montana's snowmobile trails open and safe.

Email: president@snowmobilemt.org or complete the form online at www.snowmobilemt.org and click on the 'Resouces' tab.

YOUTH OPERATORS NEED SAFETY TRAINING

KEEP THEM SAFE.
GET THEM TRAINED.

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





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AVALANCHE SAFETY

WATCH OUT BELOW!

Ian Hoyer
Avalanche Forecaster
Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center

When avalanche conditions are dangerous, staying off steep slopes is an important piece of staying safe while riding in the mountains, but it isn't enough.

Avalanches don't require you to be on a steep slope—they only require you to be connected to one.

Steep Slopes Aren't the Whole Story

When avalanche conditions are dangerous, staying off steep slopes is an important piece of staying safe while riding in the mountains, but it isn't enough.

For an avalanche to break, some part of the slope has to be steeper than 30 degrees. However, that doesn't mean you're safe if you just stay off those steep slopes. Avalanches can be triggered from lower-angled (or even flat) slopes and break above you, below you or sometimes hundreds or thousands of feet away.

If you're too close below a steep slope when you trigger an avalanche, that avalanche is going to run downhill and hit you from above. Depending on how big that slope is, the snow could be moving 60-80 mph by the time it hits you. When the snow stops moving, it'll pile up on top of you, burying you deeply near the bottom of the debris. An avalanche airbag pack won't help much, because you won't be tumbled far enough for it to do its job and push you towards the surface.

If all this sounds like crossing beneath steep slopes can be dangerous, that's correct—it is.

A Close Call Near Cooke City

An avalanche earlier this season near Cooke City demonstrates these dangers well. It was first thing in the morning on December 11th. There were feet of fresh snow following the first big storm of the season. There had been Avalanche Warnings issued for the previous two days. Snowfall had stopped the previous afternoon and avalanche danger remained Considerable.

Avoiding the Runout Trap

A group of two riders left town, rode up to Daisy Pass and one of the riders dropped over the back side. He was the first rider to cross the pass this day (and likely the first in several days). His route was not in steep terrain, but it did cross beneath the steep northeast face of Crown Butte. As he descended, he triggered a big avalanche that broke 800 feet uphill of him, 500 feet wide and 4-6 feet deep. He was fully buried beneath 2-3 feet of snow, but luckily was wearing an avalanche transceiver and was located and dug out quickly by well-prepared onlookers. A happy end to the story, but one that wasn't at all assured.

Why This Day Was Different

So, what happened? I have personally dropped over Daisy Pass dozens, if not hundreds, of times. There are many times when it is a totally reasonable route—but not on that day. It just wasn't the day to be crossing underneath steep slopes. When avalanche conditions are dangerous, particularly if there are weak layers buried at the base of the snowpack (as there were on that day), you'll want to avoid all avalanche terrain. That means steep slopes, but also means the runout zones beneath them.

Avoiding the Runout Zone

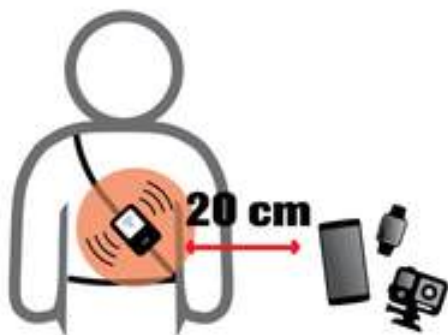
How can you know conditions are dangerous? Reading your local avalanche forecast is the easiest way. The avalanche forecast will tell you when you are likely to trigger avalanches and will also highlight when you're most likely to be able to trigger slides from the below. When these conditions exist, stay far away from steep slopes. If it isn't possible to stay out of the runout zone, choose a different area to ride where there isn't any hazard above you and come back when conditions are less dangerous.

You can find your local forecast at avalanche.org.

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE!

Electronic devices, metal objects, and magnets of any kind will interfere with your transceiver's signal if they are too close.

TRANSMITTING

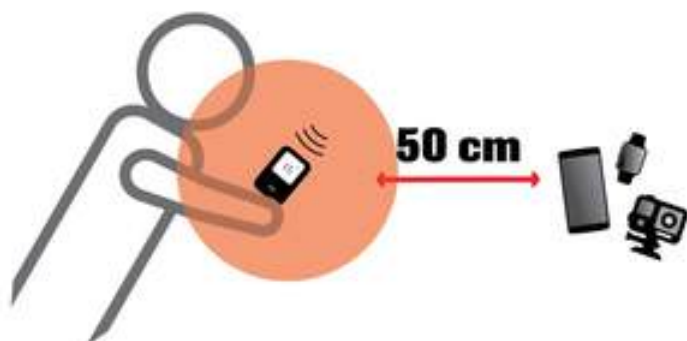


Always wear your transceiver at least **20 cm** away from anything electronic, metallic, or magnetic.

NO:

- Heated jackets
- Foil-lined jackets
- Magnetic jacket closures
- Chest-mounted cameras

SEARCHING



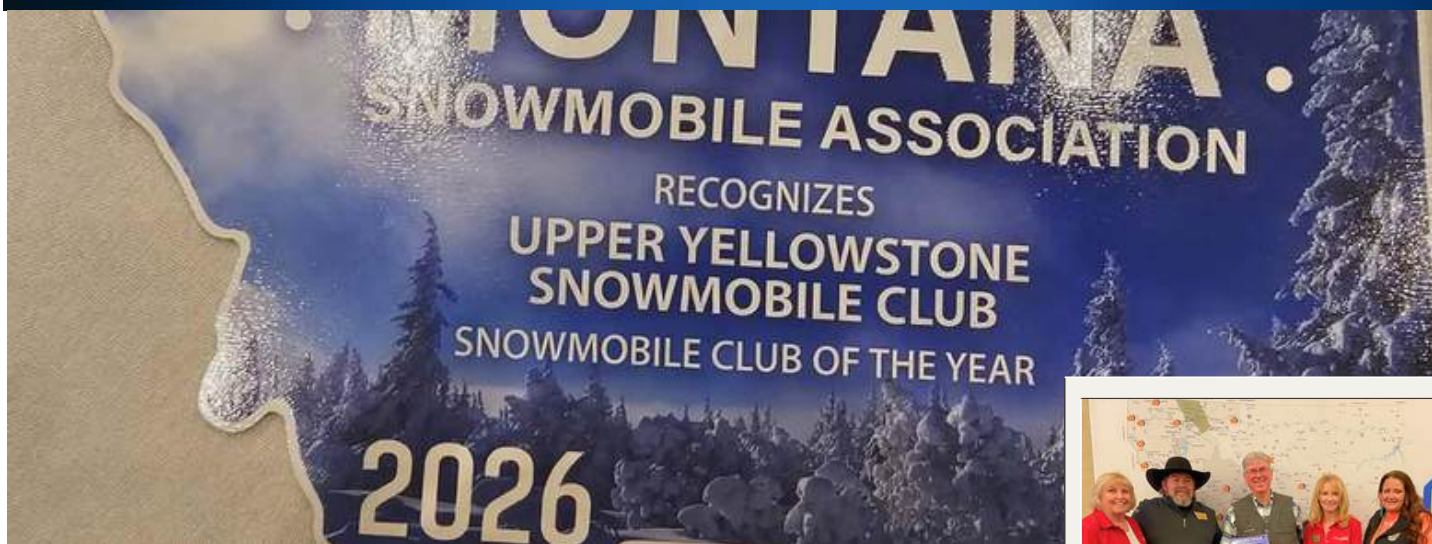
Increase the distance when searching.

Always hold your transceiver at least **50 cm** away from all electronics, metals, and magnets.

CAUTION

- Heated gloves must not be worn during a transceiver search.
- Electronic watches must not be worn on the same arm that holds your transceiver.

Always read and follow the instructions provided by your transceiver manufacturer.



Each year, the Montana Snowmobile Association brings our community together for a special evening that combines our Annual Awards Banquet with the Trans-Montana Charity Auction and Fundraiser. It's a night to celebrate more than great riding—it's about recognizing the people who make snowmobiling in Montana possible.

Snowmobiling doesn't thrive on horsepower alone. It takes countless volunteer hours, dedicated club members, land managers, partners, sponsors, and advocates who give their time, energy, and passion to protect trails, promote safety, and strengthen our sport. Simply put, it takes many people working together behind the scenes to keep our trails open and our community strong.

This event is our opportunity to say thank you. We extend our sincere appreciation to all those who were nominated this year—your contributions, leadership, and support do not go unnoticed and are deeply valued.

We are proud and honored to announce this year's award recipients and to celebrate the individuals who continue to go above and beyond for snowmobiling in Montana.

2025-2026 Season Award Winners - Congratulations!

Snowmobile Dealer of the Year

Elevated Powersports, Billings

Snowmobiler of the Year

Tom Mullins, Ponderosa Snow Warriors, Lincoln

Youth Snowmobiler of the Year

Preston Henderson

Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club, Eureka

Snowmobile Family of the Year

Rick Sommers and Susan Jack, Upper Yellowstone Snowmobile Club, Cooke City

Snowmobile Club of the Year

Upper Yellowstone Snowmobile Club, Cooke City

Snowmobile Groomer of the Year

Mike Joyce, Kings Hill Grooming Association, Great Falls, Meagher County Little Belters





Thanks to all our sponsors!

THANK YOU BANQUET SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS FOR SUPPORTING MONTANA SNOWMOBILERS



Building Tomorrow's Riders. Today.



Sometimes the best stories don't start with a name — they start in a shop, with a kid, a wrench, and an old sled that deserves another chance.

This project grew from a simple belief: old snowmobiles don't belong in a junkyard, and kids learn best by doing.

The shop behind this effort focuses on rescuing sleds that are headed for the dump or no longer wanted by their owners. Some machines are too damaged to ever ride again, but even those sleds still have value. Young riders help tear them down, learning how things work while salvaging usable parts that will live on in future projects and repairs.



Saving sleds isn't just about machines — it's about passing on skills.

When a sled is salvageable, the real work — and fun — begins.

Each kid gets to choose a machine and dive into repairs. They clean gas tanks, rebuild and repair carburetors, and complete full inspections and safety checks. They learn patience, problem-solving, and responsibility — because this isn't just a shop project, it's their sled.



From cleaning carburetors to full safety checks — they do the work.

Once the machines are mechanically sound, some riders take things a step further. By partnering with a local upholsterer, they learn how to recover their own seats, gaining yet another hands-on skill and a sense of pride in the finished product.

Before any sled hits the snow, every rider completes a youth snowmobile safety course with the local club. Only after all of this work is done do they earn the final reward: a new-to-them snowmobile — at a cost of nothing but the time and effort they invested.

The only price tag? Time, effort, and learning.

Several of these young riders are already on their second and even third sled, logging well over 100 hours of shop time. This season, a few of the kids pictured will be heading to West Yellowstone for the ASCA Youth Weekend, riding the sleds they brought back to life. One rider is even bringing a backup machine — because when all you do is jump, you need a dedicated “stunt” sled.

No names. No spotlight. Just kids learning real skills, sleds saved from the junkyard, and a future generation of riders who understand their machines — because they built them.

The people behind this project didn't ask for recognition. They asked for one thing only: teach a kid, save a sled, and keep the tradition alive.

At the end of the day, it's not about who turned the wrenches — it's about who learned to use them.

**Teach a kid. Turn a wrench.
Save a sled.**



Editor's Note:

Wow—just wow. This is what happens when dedicated volunteer's, grit, patience, and a little determination come together. Hats off to everyone who put in the time and effort and these amazing kids!



Club News



District 8

Helena Snowdrifters

The Helena Snowdrifters were proud to host this year's Montana Snowmobile Association Awards Banquet and Charity Auction. Bringing the event together took true teamwork, and the support from club members played a huge role in making the night a success to remember.

While part of the crew was busy pulling together banquet plans, the other half was hard at work clearing trails after recent windstorms—proof that dedication to snowmobiling doesn't pause for events or weather. Although snow was in short supply, the camaraderie, generosity, and community spirit were not. Thank you to everyone who helped make this year's banquet a memorable one and a big thank you for the crews clearing the trails!



All Districts

Wind Catastrophy - Trail Clean Up

Thank you volunteers for all your back breaking hard work clearing our trails!



District 9

Little Belt

New website dubut. www.littlebeltsnowmobile.org
You can now go to our site to do the following:
Renew your membership, link to snow depths & conditions, get trail maps of our coverage area



Montana LAW

In Montana, riders age 16 and under who do not hold a valid driver's license and operate a snowmobile on a multi-purpose municipal roadway—such as those in Lincoln, Seeley Lake, or West Yellowstone—must complete a Montana-approved Snowmobile Safety Course and obtain a Snowmobile Safety Certificate. Riders under 16 are also required to be under the direct supervision of a licensed adult.

Do you need Montana Snowmobile Education? You need education if you do not have a driver's license and will be riding on specially designated roads in Montana. www.snowmobile-ed.com

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. Our voices play a vital role in shaping the future of snowmobiling in Montana.



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Thank You, Helena Dealerships

A big thank you to our Helena-area dealerships for supporting this year's MSA Activity Day—and it was a hit.

We sincerely thank Montana Helena Motorsports (Polaris), Montana Boat Center (Arctic Cat), Helena Cycle Center (Polaris) for their participation and support of the Dealer Crawl. Your hospitality and enthusiasm helped turn a challenging snow year into a fun and memorable experience for our members.



A heartfelt thank you to Extreme Realities Design for creating this year's beautiful MSA Award plaques, and to Pate Auctions for generously donating your time and support. We're also especially grateful to the Helena Snowdrifters for hosting this year's banquet and bringing everyone together for a wonderful evening.

Although this was another challenging no-snow year—with both the Trans-Montana ride and MSA annual group ride canceled—MSA made the most of it by partnering with local dealerships to host the Capitol Club Crawl. Banquet attendees enjoyed a fun-filled day that included a tour of the new Historical Society Museum and a private tour of the State Capitol led by Austin James. Thank you to everyone who helped turn a no-snow year into a memorable celebration!





MONTANA SNOWMOBILE PROGRAM UPDATE

I want to take this time to thank all those who have spent the past month clearing the trails from the downed trees. I know how difficult this work is for all of you. I have heard that we have made great strides in opening most of the 4,000 miles of trails in the state. I do my best to inform the public of the hard work all of you are doing to keep the trails groomed. I also want to ask those of you who do not belong to a club to join one. Help to spread the work out. Any assistance is welcome.

I also do want to remind you that there is an economic impact study that will be released for snowmobiling in Montana shortly. MSA and FWP will share that when it is finished. The last one that was completed was in 2013. I know that the impacts of snowmobiling are enormous especially for smaller communities in Montana. Please continue to support the small-town businesses as you can.

I am hoping that the snow begins to fall here soon. Please be mindful that grooming can not happen without adequate snow conditions. Please be patient with the clubs, they are doing their best. Be safe and come home to your friends and family.

Sincerely,
Seth McArthur
 Montana Snowmobile Program Manager
smcarthur@mt.gov
 406-444-3753

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200 57th Street North
 Great Falls, MT 59405
 406-761-0303

Fun Montana Fact: Montana's own Jason Howell (West Yellowstone) was inducted into the International Snowmobile Hall of Fame in 2022. His father, F. William "Bill" Howell, was inducted in 1991—making them the Hall of Fame's first father-and-son inductees.

“ Did You Know? ”

A man hiking exerts 10 times more pressure per square inch than what a snowmobile does.

Source: snowmobile.org

”

**\$1,000
Scholarship**



Montana Snowmobile Association

SCHOLARSHIP

ENTRY DEADLINE _____

March 31, 2026

The Montana Snowmobile Association is offering a \$1,000 scholarship to either a graduating high school senior or a person enrolled in a college, technical or vocational program. See website for complete details.

APPLY TODAY

www.snowmobileMT.org



MSA Membership Application

Join online snowmobilemt.org or complete the application below.



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
P.O. Box 56 | Black Eagle, MT 59414



Montana Snowmobile Association

www.snowmobilemt.org

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