



[Home](#)
[About MnUSA](#)
[Join Us](#)
[Clubs](#)
[Events](#)
[News](#)
[Trails](#)
[Funding & Maintaining Trails](#)
[Out-of-State Snowmobiles](#)
[Snowmobile Stud Laws](#)
[Trail Pass Assists Clubs](#)
[Thanks to Landowners](#)
[Business Members](#)
[Legislation](#)
[Safety](#)
[Resources](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Trail Reports](#)
[Minnesota Snowmobiling](#)
[MnUSA Store](#)
[06/2017 - June](#)
[05/2017 - May](#)
[MnUSA 2018 Winter Rendezvous](#)
[MnUSA 2017 Summer Event](#)

Thanks to Landowners

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As the snowmobile clubs across the state begin their work to get the trails ready for the upcoming snow season, MnUSA would like to express their praise and appreciation for the private landowners that allow the snowmobile trails to cross their property. Without this generosity, the 22,000 mile trail system in Minnesota would not exist. Approximately half of the trails exist on private property. Please respect the private landowners and stay on the trail!

The following article appeared in Snowmobile Magazine and says it all.

Thanks to Landowners By John Pruzak

They are the totally forgotten saviors of our sport, generous folks who may or may not understand snowmobiling, but people who care enough about others and their hobbies to allow our sport to exist.

I'm talking about private land owners - nameless, faceless people to most of us, owners of farms and homes, estates and businesses whose property many of us cross every time we go out snowmobiling.

The on-going battle over access to public lands has stolen a lot of headlines. Yes, we must defend our rights to ride in national parks, national forests and state and locally owned lands. Yes, they are owed by the people, for the people and of the people, and we shouldn't be excluded because some folks with bad science and outlandish statistics have political clout.

That issue is particularly important in Western states. Did you know that 91 percent of all snowmobile trails in the West are on public lands? It's true.

At the same time, however, we must never lose sight of the private land owners who make our sport possible across the country. In the Northeast, 70 percent of all trails are on privately owned lands, and 72 percent of Midwestern trails are on private lands.

So if you ride 150 miles on a Saturday in the Northeast or Midwest, you are likely spending 105 miles on somebody else's property. There are likely hundreds of people who signed leases to allow access to their land so you and your friends can snowmobile on a given day.

Why do they do it? It's not for the money. If they get paid for access to their property, land owners must then assume the risk for anything that happens on their property. If they sign over access to a strip of that property to a snowmobile club, however, the club accepts the risk and buys the insurance.

The land owners also don't do it for the notoriety. Do you know who lives in the yellow house with the white picket fence who you go blitzing by at 50 mph? Of course not. You're only on that person's land for 10 seconds, then you're on to somebody else's property. And then somebody else's. And that's part of the challenge that our sport faces.

The common snowmobiler doesn't know any of these people, and some snowmobilers don't even respect these people. You've seen it: hardcore sledheads who think they're real tough guys when they launch over a snowbank, smack onto somebody's driveway and then spin their studded track as they accelerate toward the snowbank on the other side. You've also seen the tracks of senseless snowmobilers who leave the trail in search of powder, carving a path past the "Stay On Trail" sign, across somebody's

front yard or farm field. Or the people with loud pipes who roar through residential areas with their sleds screaming out a nasty song.

Obviously these people are in the minority. The vast majority of snowmobilers have common sense and respect other people's property. But sometimes, even these people surprise me - some people, when they put on a helmet, their calm persona disappears. Suddenly, they're not Dr. Jones the friendly pharmacist - they're Ricky Racer, faster than their buddies and always willing to prove it.

But remember, if that one person who owns the yellow house with the picket fence decided that he's had enough of the hot rodders, sky pilots and powder chasers, he could deny access to his land. And if there's no viable alternative around his property, that could shut down a huge section of trail.

So on behalf of all snowmobilers, I would like to give a very heartfelt "Thank You!" to the land owners. And I ask you to extend a "Thank You" yourself, by following the rules, respecting their property rights and doing the right thing this winter. Our sport depends upon it.

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