



Increasing Snowmobile Access & Reducing Conflict

Presented by

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International Snowmobile Congress, June 7, 2012

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Access is ALL about **RELATIONSHIPS**



Relationship Building Must Be Top Priority

It doesn't 'just happen'

- ▣ Requires a lot of work,
- ▣ Patience
- ▣ Persistence
- ▣ Understanding others' needs
- ▣ Honesty
- ▣ Follow-through

**You must be CREDIBLE to
be a good partner**



Challenges to Snowmobile Access – Private or Public Lands

- All recreation has potential for environmental or social impacts = admit it & manage it
- Landowners need assurance rec. use won't impact ecology of their property or their primary uses
- Trespass = frequent landowner complaint against snowmobiles (on their own land, as well as their neighbors), so must help control it
- Snowmobilers must consistently present image of being **'responsible recreationists'**



3 Most Common Objections to Snowmobiles

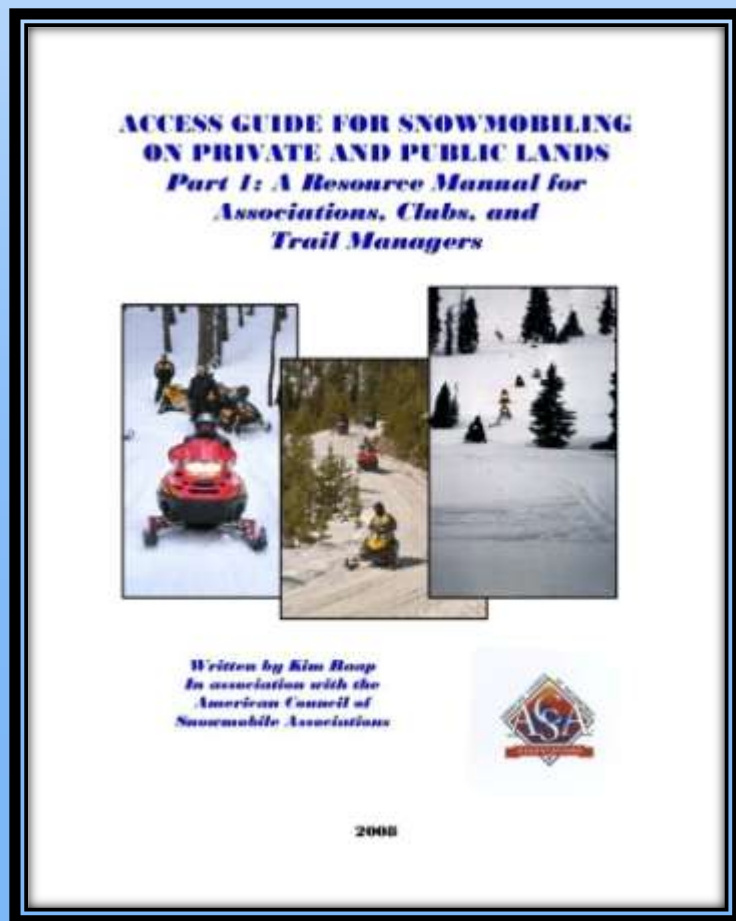
- ▣ **SIGHT:** some are bothered by mere sight of sleds; will never win this, but glad to see 'snow camo'
- ▣ **SOUND:** snowmobile sound levels have decreased 94% compared to early models = must strictly enforce sound laws
- ▣ **SMELL:** EPA rules have reduced snowmobile fleet emissions by over 50% since 2002; 4-stroke & direct/semi-direct injection technology dramatically changed snowmobiles = must promote this



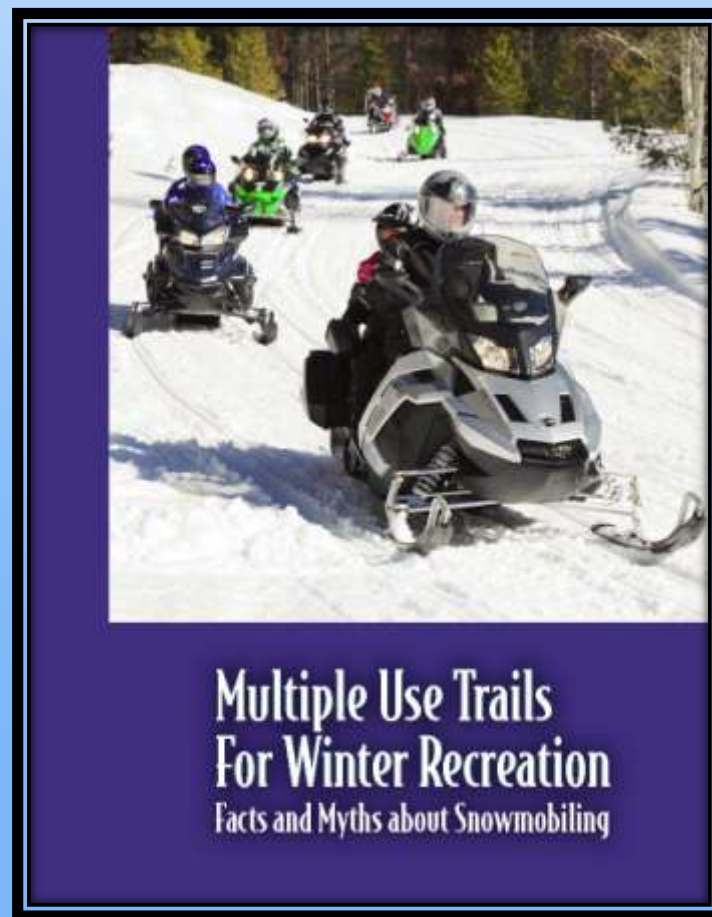
Tools for Snowmobile Access

available on-line from ACSA at: snowmobilers.org

2008 Access Guide



2009 'Facts Book'



6 Issues Facing Private Lands Access

1. Conflicts with landowner's use of their property
2. Changing business demands or interests of owners, including changing economic needs
3. Environmental impacts to their lands – perceived or real
4. Potential off-season impacts from non-permitted uses (trespass: ATVs, hunting, etc.)
5. Administrative headaches of dealing with trail
6. Liability and legal risks



Addressing Private Lands Access Issues

- **THEIR USE:** *must* assure them that trail can co-exist, *and you'd better follow through on promises*
 - May require rerouting from your desired route due to timber sales, crop rotation, etc.
 - May require delaying use until after hunting season
 - May require following only the outside fringes of their lands or routing away from buildings
 - May require building fences
 - May require planting trees to provide screening
 - May require curfew to prohibit late night traffic
 - Must be flexible and consider all their requests

Addressing Private Lands Access Issues

- **Changing Business & Economic Needs:**
requires *extreme flexibility & understanding* of their market-driven changes; must be *patient*
 - Must assess whether their market changes are short- or long-term: if short, trail may survive with re-routes; if long, may be best to cut your losses
 - Economic = they need cash in response to change (property tax from suburbia creep, death, divorce, aging, etc.); toughest issue since requires lots of \$\$

Addressing Private Lands Access Issues

- **Environmental Impacts:** all landowners – even mining companies – care deeply about the health of their lands
 - Always follow ‘best management practices’ and be good stewards of their lands
 - Be sensitive of impacts to vegetation, removal of trees, rutting or causing drainage problems on trails, the spread of noxious weeds, etc.
 - Be sensitive to land’s non-winter appearance

Addressing Private Lands Access Issues

- **Off-Season Impacts:** since snowmobiling is often 'off-season' of owner's primary use, it may co-exist while use in other seasons can't
 - *Must* make extra efforts to prevent unauthorized uses, even if they are outside snow season
 - May need to post signs and install gates
 - Often requires extra efforts to educate the public
 - *Must* give this top attention = helping in summer can pay huge dividends, while ignoring means loss

Addressing Private Lands Access Issues

- **Administrative Headaches:** while paper trails are important, refrain from being too bureaucratic = can be a quick turn-off
 - Communicate clearly and concisely
 - Be consistent with all landowners in your policies
 - Minimize contacts so you don't waste their time
 - Do not continually ask for trail reroutes year after year (do it right the first time) – BUT be as accommodating as possible (and graceful) whenever they request reroutes

Addressing Private Lands Access Issues

- **Liability and Legal Risks:**
largest issue influencing cooperation from private landowners, but often easiest
 - Every state has legislation that offers landowners protection from liability = 'Recreational Use Statutes' (see *Access Guide*)
 - Provides protection for recreation access when fee is not charged
 - Nothing totally prevents lawsuits, so still requires responsible management of trail use to minimize risks



Types of Private Landowner Permission

- **Verbal Permission:** a 'gentleman's agreement' or handshake; while this has been used for decades, it's the most risky & should be avoided for public trails
- **Revocable Permit:** temporary use permit that can be cancelled at the will of owner on short notice; better than Verbal, but not secure
- **Written Lease:** the most common; can be for one year or multiple years; spells out conditions of use, time periods, etc. & may include an 'incentive payment'; it is more secure than Permit, but can still be canceled on short notice but process is spelled out up-front

Best Types for Long-Term Private Access

- ▣ **Right-of-Way Easement:** typically provides either permanent access or access for long periods of time across specific portions of properties; sometimes referred to as 'covenants' which attach conditions to property deeds; owners often receive 'one-time' payments when easement is granted
- ▣ **Conservation Easement:** typically granted through, and managed by, a non-profit organization called a Land Trust; may be established through purchase or donation; landowner agrees to give up certain rights *in perpetuity*

Landowner Motivations and Incentives that Affect Success of Long-Term Private Access

1. **Favorable risk management** & their protection from liability = proper trail management *must* help them minimize their risk
2. **Community goodwill** = more a factor in rural versus urban areas, or when snowmobilers know landowner
3. **Political support** for their activities = can be most important for corporate landowners
4. **Money**: incentive payments or tax relief/benefits
5. **Desire responsible & responsive management** of the permitted activity (snowmobiling) = *you must always promptly do as you say you will do: **BE CREDIBLE!***

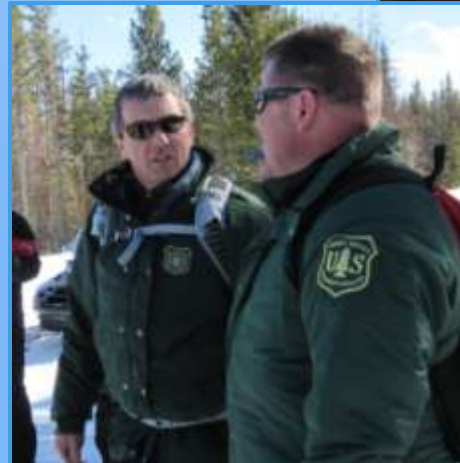
Public Lands Access: Have to Work Agency Process

- All public land use decisions are made through a **public participation process**
- **Learn** your local public lands process (federal, state, local) and work it!
- Establish positive partnerships with agencies
- **Be patient and persistent** – public land use decisions can take years versus months



Working with Public Land Managers

- The U.S. Forest Service is, by far, the largest public provider of snowmobile trails in the U.S.
- The Chief, and every widely varied personality beneath him (as well as all other public employees), are all human-beings regardless if you agree or disagree with their policies; as you work with them on issues, **ALWAYS:**
 - **Be respectful**
 - **Be honest**
 - **Be credible**



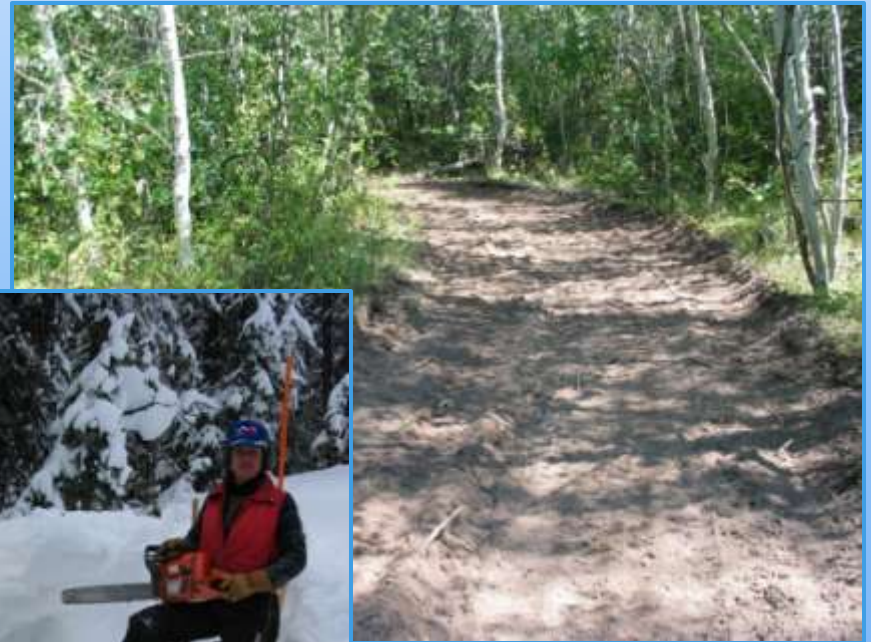
NEPA is Your Friend – Use It!

- The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and similar state/provincial laws all guarantee that there is a public process
- It establishes ‘rules of the game’ & guarantees you a place in the process
- **Work the Process!**



Any 'Major Federal Action' significantly affecting the quality of the human environment Requires NEPA

- Federal jurisdiction (lands, programs, etc.)
- Federal money involved
- Federal employees involved



Levels of NEPA Analysis

- ▣ **Categorical Exclusion (CE):** lowest level of analysis & quickest time frame; very little analysis or documentation since action is routine (maintenance) or tiers to previous decision
- ▣ **Environmental Assessment (EA):** mid level of analysis; takes months to a year to complete
- ▣ **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS):** highest level of analysis; is extremely detailed and often takes years to complete

Public Land Use Planning

- ▣ **Programmatic analysis** = planning area wide (entire forest, park or BLM unit)
- ▣ **Site-specific analysis** = a specific trail, parking lot, geographic sub-unit, etc.
- ▣ **Tiering** = site-specific refers back to programmatic umbrella; this can also cause things to pop up in unexpected places – so you need to pay attention

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS):

Recreation management tool based upon 7
'settings' which ask *“what is the degree of”*

- ▣ Access
- ▣ Remoteness
- ▣ Naturalness
- ▣ Site Management
- ▣ Visitor Management
- ▣ Social Encounters
- ▣ Visitor Impacts



6 ROS Classes: each have specific Management Objectives

ROS Classes are like land use zoning:

1. Primitive
2. Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized
3. Semi-Primitive Motorized
4. Roaded Natural
5. Rural
6. Urban

Snowmobiling can potentially occur in 2 thru 6

Snowmobile Use in SPNM (#2) ROS

- Snowmobiling may be allowed in Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS areas by having a 'winter ROS' with M & a 'summer ROS' with only NM use
- Huron-Manistee NF in MI is an example of the conflict this can generate

Forest fight

A federal lawsuit has forced the U.S. Forest Service to consider barring snowmobiling and firearms hunting in 6.5% of the Huron-Manistee National Forests.



ROS is used to develop Management Areas (Zones)

- MA 1 – Natural Processes Dominate
- MA 2 – Special Areas & Unique Landscapes
- MA 3 – Natural Landscapes/Limited Management
- MA 4 – High-Use Recreation Emphasis
- MA 5 – Active Management (commodities)
- MA 6 – Grasslands
- MA 7 – Public & Private Lands Intermix
- MA 8 – Highly Developed Areas

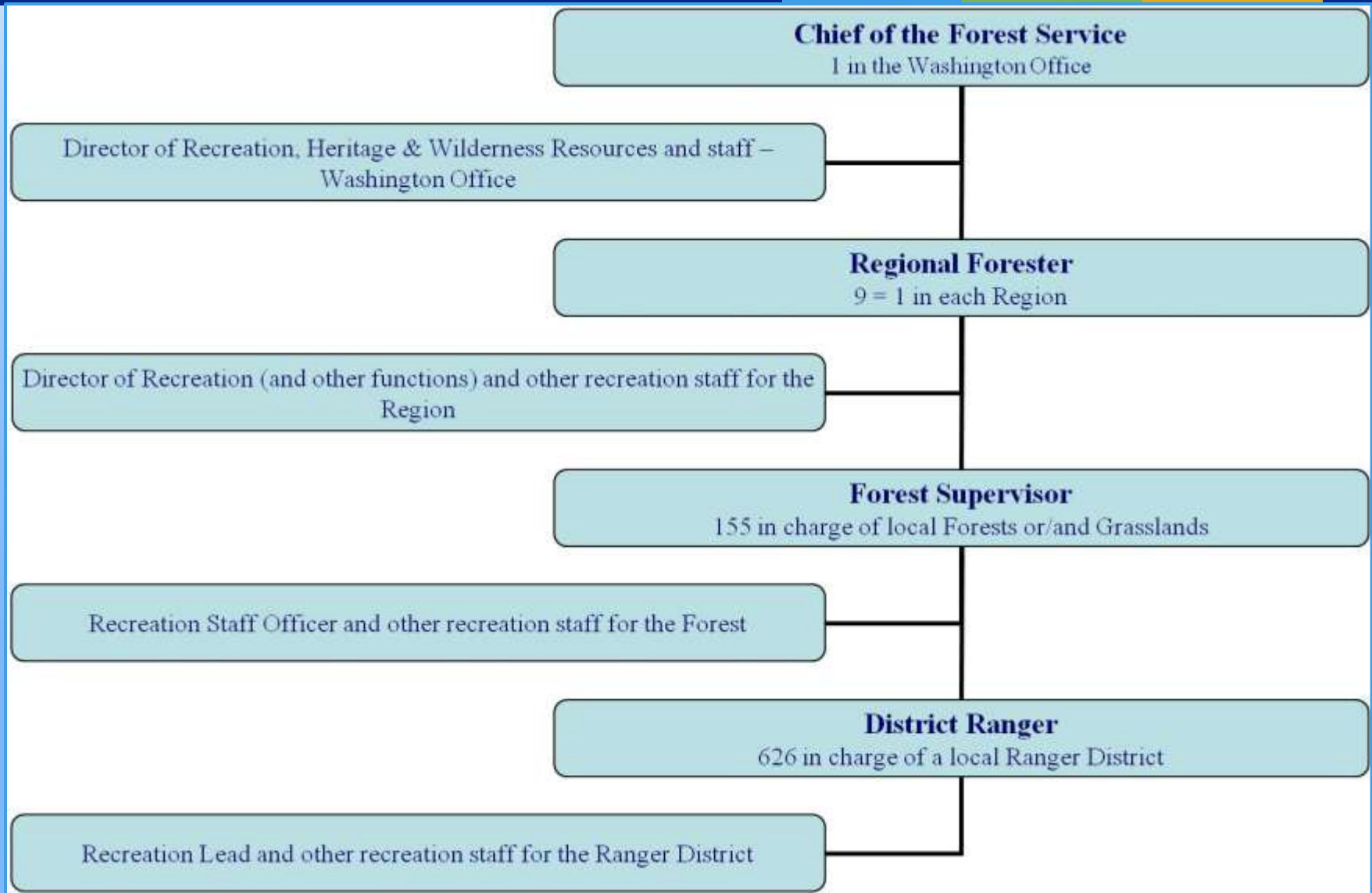
Snowmobiling cannot occur in MA 1, may occur on designated routes through some MA 2 & MA 3NM, and generally can be open in rest of MA 3 through MA 8

Work with Land Managers

- Cultivating your agency relationships *will* strengthen your access = **Get them out on a sled!**
- Know who the decision makers are & work food chain

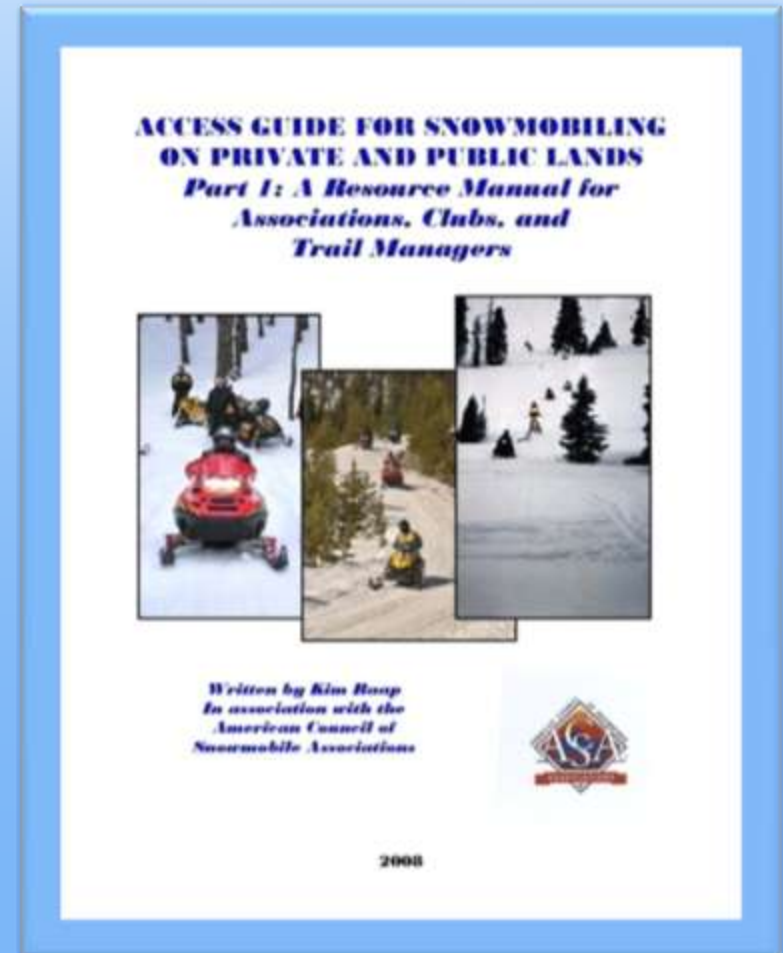


‘Line Officers’ make all decisions (*right side*)
District Ranger makes the most: *must* work with bottom tier effectively to have access



How Do We Increase Access & Reduce Conflict?

- Your best tool is the **Access Guide for Snowmobiling on Private and Public Lands**
- This manual has *lots* of information about: process, laws, research data on impacts, plus Chapter 3 - **Tools for Improving and Retaining Access**



TOOLS: Trail System Layout & Design

- ▣ Avoid sensitive areas
- ▣ Route behind hills or trees to provide screening
- ▣ Route away from buildings as much as possible
- ▣ Use fencing
- ▣ Use curves & weaving trails to keep speeds down
- ▣ Avoid or minimize ground disturbance



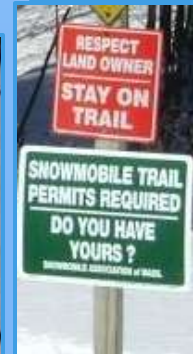
TOOLS: Trailheads & Parking Areas

- **The root cause of most ‘conflict’ is poor parking**
- Separate motorized (M) & non-motorized (NM) parking if possible
- If M & NM must share parking: zone areas, provide separate routes & locate NM closest to snow so they don't have to go thru all the trucks & sleds unloading



TOOLS: Signing

- Signing **must** identify on-the-ground expectations of all users
- Make extra efforts to sign sensitive & conflict areas
- Identify multiple use areas & expectations



TOOLS: Sound Laws

- Excessive sound levels from modified sleds are often a large obstacle to gaining or retaining snowmobile access
- The SAE J-2567 stationary sound test should be adopted to help strictly enforce local sound laws



TOOLS: Local Ordinances/Regulations

- ▣ Speed limits
- ▣ Curfews
- ▣ Age limits
- ▣ Closures to use in sensitive areas
- ▣ Limited access rules for routes to reach services
- ▣ Minimum snow depth for operation



TOOLS: Law Enforcement & Education

- Enforcement is critical for trespass laws & other area closures or restrictions
- Agencies & landowners need to have an image of snowmobilers behaving responsibly
- Alcohol, speed, noise & careless operation all affect access & conflict



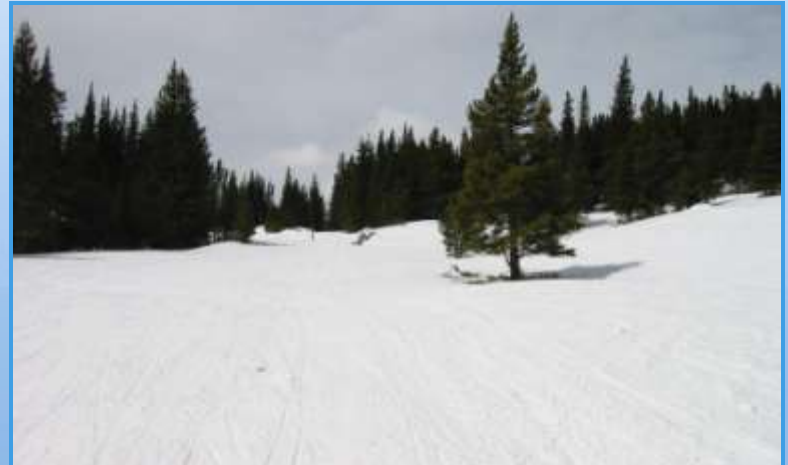
TOOLS: Landowner Recognition Programs

Never take support for granted
or let it go unnoticed;
recognize landowners with:

- Simple 'thank you' notes
- Appreciation dinner or picnic
- Small holiday gifts
- Appreciation certificates or plaques
- VIP rides or outings



TOOLS: Monitoring = Document winter/summer 'Impacts' with Photos



TOOLS: Use Existing Research on Impacts

- Fight Myths with Facts (ACSA 'Blue Book')
- The Access Guide's Appendix 8 has over 60 pages of info from Research Studies Related to Snowmobiling & OHV Impacts
- While many studies date back to the 1970's and 1980's, results are still valid



TOOLS: Partner for New Research

Wildlife Monitoring in YNP



Wolverine Research

Trails Work Consulting

TOOLS: Promote Ethics & Safety

Materials from ACSA, ISMA, IASA, CCSO, Tread Lightly!



TOOLS: Embrace Multiple Use

- Most of the 137,000 miles of U.S. snowmobile trails are open to multiple use
- Use to generate goodwill while maintaining control
- Hybrid users = ultimate multi-use



Relationship Building – First & Foremost

- Invest the time to reap the benefits
- Use the Access Guide and it's tools to help you learn
- Questions: contact Kim Raap at Trailswork@aol.com or 605-371-9799

