

Go SNOWMOBILING ONTARIO!

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Go SNOWMOBILING ONTARIO!

Volume
12#1



Awarded to OFSC TOP Trails by the Government of Ontario.



OFSC LOGO Mission is to:
Provide leadership to member organizations in our commitment to enable exceptional snowmobile trails and rider experiences throughout the province.

OFSC Vision is that:
Snowmobiling is recognized and celebrated as Ontario's premier winter recreation and tourism experience.

The OFSC GO Snowmobiling Ontario Campaign

The OFSC GO Snowmobiling Ontario Magazine is the voice for uniting snowmobile clubs, industry stakeholders and snowbelt communities to promote the recreational lifestyle, experience and fun that OFSC trail riding offers Ontarians every winter. Our goal is to grow snowmobiling by attracting new participants, persuading former riders to return, encouraging casual snowmobilers and families to ride more — and by urging everyone to do their sledding right here in Ontario!

Keep Receiving This Magazine!

To keep your name on the mailing list for the OFSC Go Snowmobiling Ontario Magazine, you must sign up for OFSC member benefits when you buy your 2019 Seasonal or Classic trail permit. If you don't sign up, you won't get your mags!



Canadian Council of
Snowmobile Organizations

WARNING: Some of the action shown in this magazine is potentially dangerous. Almost all riders photographed are professionals, racers or experienced experts. It is strongly recommended readers do not attempt to duplicate stunts beyond their capabilities. Always wear a helmet, boots and safety equipment.

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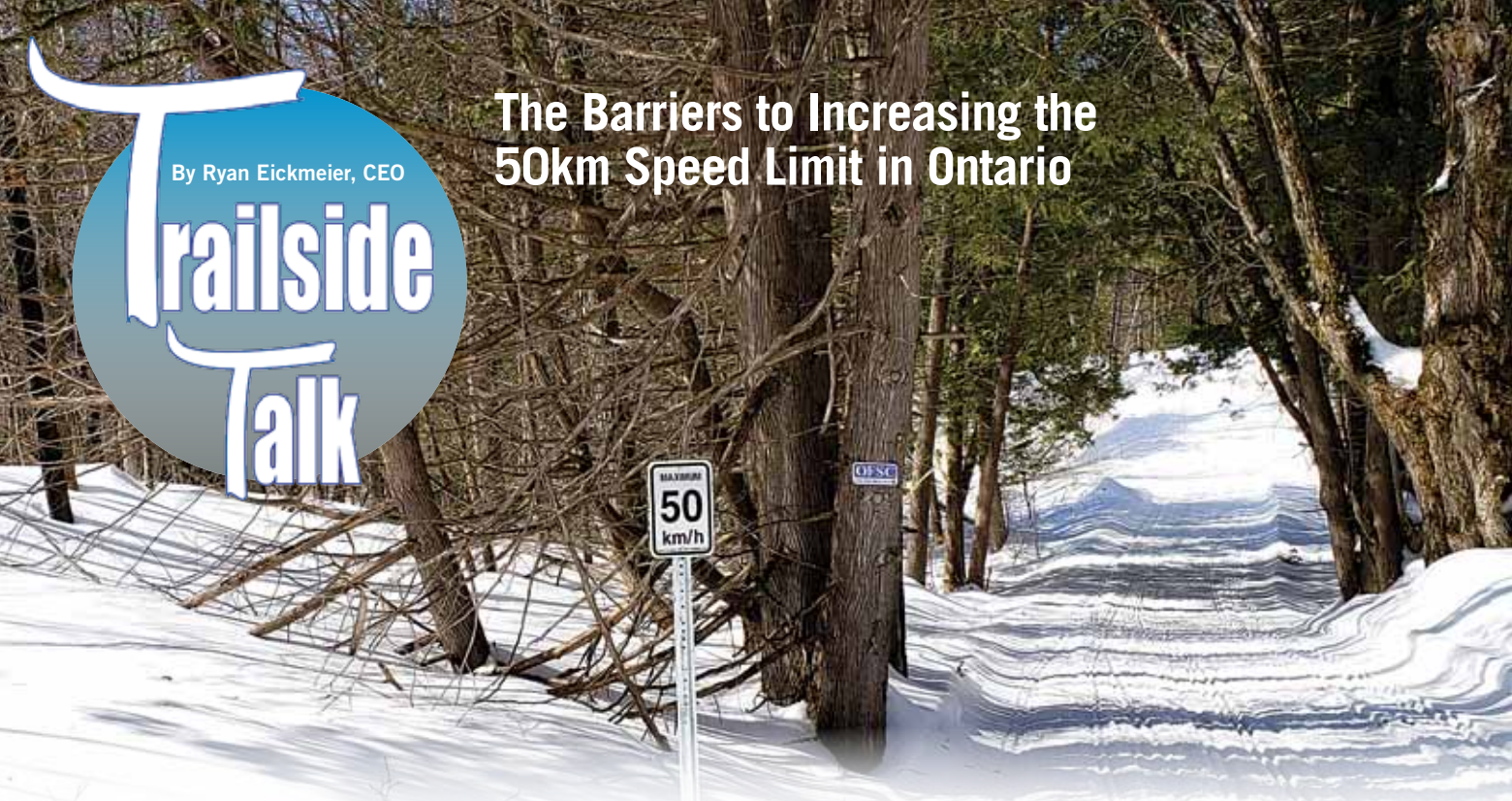


Photo courtesy of Kevin Mertens

Trailside Talk

By Ryan Eickmeier, CEO

The Barriers to Increasing the 50km Speed Limit in Ontario

There has been much discussion over the years about increasing the speed limit on OFSC prescribed trails, particularly as technology has evolved and sleds have become faster. The purpose of this article is not to pick sides or advocate for one approach over another, it is simply to lay out the facts and realities as we know them for all snowmobiles to consider.

Through legislation, the Province of Ontario has mandated snowmobile trail speed limits as detailed in section 14. (1)(b)(ii) of the Motorized Snow Vehicles Act as 50 kilometres per hour. The legislation also details speed limits for snowmobile operation in public parks or on roadways open to motor vehicle traffic.

Not All Snowmobilers Are Equally Skilled

There is a common misconception that the legislated speed of 50 km/h is a recommended speed when in fact, 50 km/h is actually the maximum permitted speed. How close to this maximum speed a snowmobile operator should travel is a personal decision dependent on several factors including: operator experience, cognitive skills, fatigue, trail conditions, terrain, weather, visibility, traffic, equipment and familiarity with the location. In many areas and situations, the maximum legislated limit may be too fast for the safe operation of a snowmobile.

Could Wide-Open Northern Trails Accommodate a Speed Limit Increase?

One of the primary arguments for an increased speed limit is that many riding areas, particularly flat, wide-open trails in the North, provide ample space to ride faster. Although such trails leave the perception of a safer snowmobiling

environment, this perception doesn't take into account factors which may fall outside of a snowmobiler's control. Research conducted by the Ontario Provincial Police in 2017 revealed that over a 10-year period, speed was a factor in 46% of snowmobile fatalities across Ontario. For non-fatal accidents, the percentage attributed to excessive speed is even larger.

A few questions to consider: What happens when a snowmobiler suddenly encounters unforeseen wildlife, pedestrians, a fallen tree, motor vehicles or an abandoned snowmobile? Would you have sufficient time to take corrective action to avoid a collision? Consider that at 50 km/h, experts have discovered that the typical snowmobile operator will travel approximately 17 metres as they perceive the potential hazard, formulate a plan and commence the corresponding action. That isn't 17 metres to safely stop the snowmobile, that's 17 metres to start a defensive action whereas a full, controlled stop requires approximately 30 metres. As you contemplate higher speed limits, consider the distance between your snowmobile and the trees bordering the trails you ride most often on? In a perfect controlled world, a wide-open trail could conceivably accommodate a faster speed limit, but snowmobilers do not operate in anything close to those utopian conditions.

OFSC Prescribed Trails Are Not Engineered Highways

Much of the allure of snowmobiling is attributed to the fact that it is a recreational activity, occurring in an unpredictable, wilderness environment. It is this non-engineered natural setting which attracts snowmobilers and provides an escape from the structure and demands of their everyday life. Creating a snowmobile trail which would safely accommodate higher maximum speed limits for all snowmobilers would require significant change to the current trail networks. Safety experts will argue that such speeds would require flat, straight, wide trails with significant trail signage, an engineered environment similar to that of highways designed for motor vehicles. Such a trail environment is neither sustainable for Clubs nor is it desirable to many snowmobilers. With safe snowmobiling impacted by so many different factors, how can anyone assess the "right" speed limit, and who is willing to accept responsibility should they get it wrong? The implications of getting it wrong are indeed significant.

Other Jurisdictions Have Done It. Why Can't Ontario?

Many have pointed towards other Canadian Provinces, some of which have higher or no speed limits, as examples in which Ontario could replicate. However, comparing Ontario to other Canadian or American jurisdictions for that matter is not an apples-to-apples comparison. First and foremost, legal and

insurance systems differ (sometimes significantly), and as such, we are held to different standards and expectations in Ontario. In raising the speed limit, the risk premium on snowmobiling would undoubtedly increase, potentially meaning higher insurance costs for both the provincial trail network and your personal sleds; as a 'special risk' insurance market today, the scope of these potential increases would of course be based on the on-trail outcomes.

The Balance Test: Safety vs. Fun

Safety and fun do not have to be mutually exclusive outcomes and we can have the best of both worlds. Ultimately, it is fair to say that all snowmobilers, regardless of their position on the speed limit debate, want to be able to enjoy the thrill of the ride and return home safe. While some snowmobilers do indeed argue for higher speeds limits, others will counter that argument with the belief that many are already driving too fast for the conditions. Creating a culture whereby snowmobilers accept accountability for their actions and operate at a safe speed suitable

for their riding conditions is seemingly the way to achieve the proper balance between safety and fun.

So, that is the scenic route around saying that the current speed limit is unlikely to change in Ontario in the foreseeable future. Across 30,000+ KMs of trails in Ontario, there is indeed something for every rider within the current 50KM/H speed limit. The health and safety of over 100,000 riders of varying experience and skillsets seemingly outweighs the benefit of increasing the speed limit. GSOM

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1. No permits are available to purchase at any retail outlet at any time.
2. No permits can be purchased directly from a club at any time.
3. All Seasonal, Multi-Day and Permit Upgrades are now online only all season long.
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Photo credit: Levi Lavalle for Ontario Tourism

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* Regular Seasonal Permit Fee \$270

A \$7.50 processing fee applies for each full season permit purchased.

Fees go up at 12am EST on November 2, 2019. Your transaction must be completed and checked out prior to this time.

Ontario law requires a 2020 Snowmobile Trail Permit to access OFSC Prescribed Trails.

www.ofsc.on.ca

voltage

Show Time!

There's no better way to get ready for snow-mobile season by attending a snowmobile show here in Ontario or the US. Find our booth at the show and stop by and say hi!

- **HAY DAYS – SEPTEMBER 7 & 8 NORTH**
Branch, Minnesota
www.haydays53.com
- **BIG EAST POWERSPORTS SHOW –**
SEPTEMBER 27-29, 2019
NY State Fairgrounds Expo Center.
www.bigeastpowersportsshow.com
- **TORONTO SNOWMOBILE, ATV & POWER-**
SPORTS SHOW – OCTOBER 25-27, 2019
Toronto International Centre. www.torontosnowmobileatvshow.com
- **NOVI – NOVEMBER 1-3, 2019**
Suburban Collection Showplace Michigan
www.snowmobileusa.com
- **ANNUAL SLEDARAMA SNOWMOBILE**
SHOW & SWAP MEET SHOW – SUNDAY,
NOV. 17, Peterborough Memorial Centre
& Morrow Building. www.sledarama.ca



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Big Commitment Resulting in Big Change

By Paul Murray, OFSC President

In our first issue last season, I shared with you a rather direct and to the point email we received from Mike Boysen, a snowmobiler from central Ontario. In Mike’s email, he expressed frustration that the OFSC appeared to be “dodging dealing with thorny issues or simple requests for basic information.” This resonated with me and has been a key focal point for the entire organization over the last year.

If you follow the OFSC online through social media, you will have witnessed our commitment to addressing issues head on and providing facts and information regardless of how sensitive the topic was. In a very short time, a shift took place and many of you took the opportunity to show your support for our volunteers and staff. Most notably, you voiced your appreciation of the transparency, directness and turnaround from the issues we faced in the past few years.

Let’s revisit some of the key issues raised by Mike and see how we did:

1. OFSC ONLINE

The new system was launched to simplify the buying process where possible and to mitigate the technological challenges faced in 2017. Although we did experience a slight interruption on October 31st the permit system was back online within one hour of the first report that there was an issue. Technology and systems (no matter how good) are always at risk of unexpected errors and some potential down time but kudos to everyone involved for promptly addressing the issue and keeping snowmobilers updated.

The Interactive Trail Guide was a significant point of contention in 2017 when the new technology was introduced, and we made some adjustments to the technology used and the app was not available for the season. You asked

BY THE NUMBERS

ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY (for more, see article on page XX)

- Ontario Snowmobiling generates up to \$3.3 Billion in economic activity
- 6,436 full-time jobs
- \$216M in total taxes full Economic Impact Study available at ofsc.on.ca

and we listened. The Go Snowmobiling Ontario App hit Google and Apple stores on December 17th and was tracked as the top paid app in close competition to our friends in Quebec. The positive feedback was overwhelming. Your suggestions to make the app even better this season have been prioritized and we’ll announce the launch for this season in the coming weeks. If you didn’t get the app last year, you’re missing out and it is the best \$4 you’ll spend to plan your routes, find your friends and experience all that Ontario snowmobiling has to offer.

Transparent and open communications remain one of my top priorities as president.

2. WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO?

The OFSC’s key goal is to optimize permit dollars to deliver trails, specifically where the snow is. By the numbers in 2019 we purchased 19 new pieces of grooming equipment, trails were available from early December to late April as the districts groomed 20% more last winter. The inter district cooperation was demonstrated as we were able to move equipment where it was required throughout the season. This demonstrates our entire team focused on ensuring trails were available and of consistent quality where the snow was, and everyone worked together to make it happen. To put this in graphic terms, while we experienced a 6% decrease in permit revenue snowmobilers were not affected by a lack of funding to open, groom and maintain consistent trail quality where trails were available to ride.

3. TRY OUR TRAILS

Despite our efforts to communicate the change of dates for Try Our Trails a couple of years ago, Mike challenged us for not effectively getting the message out to snowmobilers in a timely manner. So, this year, I want to ensure that snowmobilers

have as much notice as possible that there will be no Try Our Trails program for the 2020 season. The board undertakes each year an in-depth analysis of all permit types, trends and fees in relation to our increasing operational costs to maintain the more than 30,000 kilometers of snowmobile trails. With a 6% decrease in overall permit revenue, the board came to the decision to press pause on the no cost weekend and revisit Try Our Trails again next year. We will ensure you are informed of any future changes to the Try Our Trails program. I encourage all snowmobilers to take advantage of the lowest full season permit fees during the month of October. For those seeking a more flexible option, the multi-day permit provides snowmobilers with an option to test drive the trails at a reasonable cost with an option to upgrade to a full season permit with a credit from their multi-day purchase.

4. BETTER GROOMING

In this issue, our Fleet & Trails team highlight some of the significant changes that took place last year with our Grooming Fleet, so I won’t go into all the details here. We have been updating you about our shift to a provincial fleet over the past couple of years and while it may sound simple, it has required a complete overhaul of the way the fleet was managed from procurement to refurbishment. Last season, many of you will have witnessed our entire team working together to ensure regions with a lot of snow and high demand for riders were able to continually groom without almost any interruption. You can expect to see more of this in the upcoming season as well as significant changes to our fleet acquisition and overall management program.

Mike’s email last year identified many of the issues we have faced as an organization and the one that struck the biggest chord for me was his sentiment that the OFSC was “dodging dealing with thorny issues or simple requests for basic communication.” After my conversation with Mike, I challenged our entire team to focus on addressing the issues (new technology, better grooming...etc). To accomplish this, we absolutely had to become more transparent in our communications to rebuild trust and



confidence, but more importantly, to have open channels of communication where we can listen to your needs and build plans to deliver positive results. The OFSC communications and social media team made sure questions and complaints were responded to quickly and clearly and they are to be congratulated for their efforts. I am confident we did indeed deliver and will continue to challenge our entire organization to do so this season and into the future.

Within our organization, I challenged all our member organizations and volunteers to put our differences aside and come together as one. We Are As One was widely embraced and is very much the reason we were able to deliver.

This year, I’d like to expand We Are As One to each one of you because some of the issues we continue to face can only be resolved if we all commit to a few simple things:

- Buy permits to support the trails we get to ride each winter, and not riding with those who choose to freeload and break the law.
- Respect our generous landowners by only riding on marked trails, not trespassing.
- Using the OEM installed exhausts on OFSC trails to remain legal and do not disturb our neighbours, landowners or wildlife.
- Connect with your local club volunteer and experience all Ontario snowmobiling has to offer. Who knows, maybe you’ll end up in my chair one day!

With the significant improvements we have accomplished over the past year, we need to continue working as one, to promote legal snowmobiling, to stop trespassing and riders without permits on our provincial trail system. The responsibility for enforcement begins with each one of us who buy a permit to ride legally on OFSC prescribed trails.

You have asked me and the OFSC Board to be better and do better on behalf of you, our permit buyers.

So... I’d like to finish with a simple and important ask to you. Now it’s your turn to help yourselves and our organization by refusing to ride with anyone who puts our favorite past time in jeopardy by breaking the law. Whether it be friends, family or strangers, we need to send a clear message that this is no longer acceptable snowmobiler behaviour and will not be tolerated within our community. Our future depends on it.

Please continue challenging us to do and be better and I hope you’ll embrace We Are as One as part of your Ontario Snowmobiling experience this winter, you won’t regret it!

CONNECT WITH A SNOWMOBILE CLUB IN YOUR COMMUNITY

One of the best ways to get the most out of Ontario Snowmobiling is to attend one of hundreds of snowmobile events hosted by an OFSC Snowmobile Club. From fundraisers, group rides, campfires, poker runs and so much more, you will fully experience the grassroots of our organization. Be part of the Ontario snowmobiling community and connect with your local club today!

District 1 – Upper Canada Snowmobile Region (Kingston, Ottawa, Cornwall)

- Athens & District
- BEAST
- Carleton Regional Snowmobile Club
- Eastern Ontario Snowmobile Club
- Elizabethtown Snowmobile Club
- Glengarry Snowmobile Club
- Grenville Snowmobile Assn.
- Kemptville Snowmobile Klub
- Lennox & Addington Ridge Runners
- Nation Valley Snowmobile Association
- Osgoode Carleton Snowmobile Assoc.
- Rideau Ridge Riders
- Rideau Snowmobile Club
- Riverside Snowmobile Club
- Seaway Valley Snowmobile Association
- West Carleton Snow Trails Snowmobile Association

District 2 - (Kawarthas, Bancroft, Mazinaw)

- Buckhorn District Snowmobile Club
- Havelock Snowmobile Club
- Mazinaw Powerline Snowmobile Club
- Old Hastings Snow Riders Snowmobile Club
- Paudash Snowmobile Club
- Stoney Lake Sno Riders Snowmobile Club
- Twin Mountain Snowmobile Club

District 3 - (Port Perry, Rice Lake, Sharbot Lake)

- Cartwright Dyno’s Snowmobile Club
- Centre Hastings
- Ganaraska Snowmobile Club
- Great Pine Ridge Snowmobile Association
- Long Sault Ridge Runners Snowmobile Club
- Percy Boom River Rats Snowmobile Club
- Port Perry Snowmobile Club
- Prince Edward Trail Riders Snowmobile Club
- Rice Lake Snowmobile Club

District 4 - (Newmarket, Orangeville, Sutton)

- Alliston & District Snowmobile Club
- Dufferin Drift Busters Snowmobile Club
- Georgina Trail Riders
- Heart of Ontario Snowmobile Club
- Hillsburgh Snow Roamers
- Orangeville & District Snowmobile Club

District 5 - (Southwestern Ontario)

- Bridgeport Snowmobile Club
- Burford Area Snowmobile Club

District 5 - (Southwestern Ontario) Con’t

- Drumbo Snowmobile Club Inc.
- Elgin Trail Riders Snowmobile Club
- Ellice Swampers Snowmobile Club
- Elmira Snowmobile Club
- Glencoe & District S/A
- New Dundee Snowmobile Club
- Nith Valley Sno Surfers Snowmobile Club
- North East Hope SA
- Pineridge Snowmobile Club
- Plattsville Snowmobile Club
- Poplar Ridge Riders
- Science Hill Drifters Snowmobile Club
- Southern Sno Riders
- St. Clements Snowmobile Club
- Strathroy Sno-Blizzards Snowmobile Club
- Thamesford Snowmobile Club
- Warwick Snowmobile Club
- Waterloo Rod & Gun Snowmobile Club
- Wellesley Sno Sports
- Westwood Hills

District 6 – Snow Country Snowmobile Region (Haliburton, Bancroft, Ottawa Valley)

- Bonn-Trae Snowmobile Club
- Calabogie & District Snowmobile Club
- Eganville Sno-Drifters Snowmobile Club
- Griffith Matawatchan Sno-Dusters
- Haliburton County Snowmobile Association
- Keetna Snowmobile & Recreation
- Maple Leaf Snow Skimmers Snowmobile Club
- Missing Link Snowmobile Club
- North Renfrew Snowmobile Association
- Opeongo Snowbirds Snowmobile Club
- Peterson Pathfinders Snowmobile Club
- Snow Road Snowmobile Club
- Timberline Snowmobile Club
- White Water Sno Goers

District 7 – (Muskoka Lakes Region)

- Algonquin Snowmobile Club
- Baxter Snow Riders Corp.
- Du-Ya-Wanna Trail Riders
- Happy Wanderers
- Highland Rovers Snowmobile Club
- Hill & Gully Riders
- Muskoka Lakes Snow Trails
- Muskoka Sno-Bombers Inc.
- SMART Snowmobile Association
- SnowCrest Riders
- Tall Pines Snowmobile Club

CONNECT WITH A SNOWMOBILE CLUB *(Continued)*

District 8 – Mid Ontario Snowmobile Trails (Barrie, Midland, Orillia)

- Barrie Snowmobile Club
- Bonsecour Track & Trail Association
- Blue Mountain Snowdrifters
- Carden Sno Drifters
- Georgian Bay Snow Riders Snowmobile Club
- Kawartha Lakes Snowmobile Club
- Orillia District Snowmobile Club
- Osprey Snowhawks Snowmobile Club
- Sno Voyageur Club
- Wasaga Snowmobile Club

District 9 – Midwestern Ontario (Grey Bruce, Perth, Huron, Wellington)

- Arthur Snowblazers Inc.
- Bluewater Town & Country Snowmobile Club
- Brussels & Walton Trailblazers
- Central Peninsula Sno-Drifters
- Chesley Easy Riders
- Durham & District Trailblazers
- Fergus Elora Belwood Snowmobile Club
- Grey Bruce East Snowmobile Club
- Grey Bruce West-Sauble Sno-Riders
- Hanover Snowmobile Club
- Klondyke Trail Groomers Inc.
- Lake Conestoga Snowmobilers
- Maitland Valley Snowmobile Club
- Meaford & District Ridge Runners
- Milverton & District Snowmobile Club
- Mount Forest Drifters Snowmobile Club
- North Huron Trails Association
- Owen Sound Eastside Snowmobile Club
- Palmerston & District
- Saugeen Snowmobile Club
- Southampton Snowmobile Club
- Stoney Keppel Riders
- Teeswater Knight Riders Inc.
- Tobermory Snowmobile Club
- Warton Trail Blazers
- Wingham & District

District 10 – Parry Sound Snowmobile District (Muskoka/Parry Sound – Georgian Bay Region)

- Carling Trail Blazers
- Cramadog Snowriders
- Dun-Ahmic Snow Riders
- Magnetawan Ridge Runners Snowmobile Club
- North East Georgian Bay Snowmobile Club
- Parry Sound Snowmobile District
- Six Star Snow Riders
- South Sequin Snowmobile Club
- West Muskoka Trail Riders Snowmobile Club

District 11 – Near North Trail Association (North Bay, Mattawa, Burk's Falls)

- Almaguin District Snowmobile Club
- Argyle Riders Snowmobile Club
- Bonfield Snowmobile Club
- French River Snowmobile Association
- Mattawa Ridge Runners Snowmobile Club
- Near North Snowdrifters Inc
- Nipissing/Veuve River
- North Bay Snowmobile Club
- South Shore/Restoule Snowmobile Club
- West Nipissing Snowmobile Club

District 12 – Sudbury Trail Plan (Sudbury, Espanola, Manitoulin)

- Broder-Dill Snowmobile Association
- Capreol Ridge Riders Snowmobile Club
- Coniston Wahnapiatae Drift Busters
- Espanola District Snowmobile Club
- Manitoulin Snow Dusters Snowmobile Club
- Nickel Belt Snow Spirits
- Northbound Sno-Drifters Inc.
- Onaping Falls Snowmobile Club
- Valley Trailmasters Snowmobile Club
- Walden Sno Runners Snowmobile Club

District 13 – Algoma Sno-Plan Affiliation (Algoma)

- Blind River Sno-Riders Snowmobile Club
- Bruce Mines Sno-Glyders Snowmobile Club
- Chapleau Arctic Watershed Snowmobile Club
- Club Alouette Dubreuilville Inc
- Echo Bay Snow Falcons
- Elliot Lake Snowbirds Snowmobile Club
- Iron Bridge Nighthawks Snowmobile Club
- Marathon Sno-Kickers Snowmobile Club
- Sault Trail Blazers Snowmobile Club
- Spanish River Snowmobile Club
- St. Joseph Island Voyageurs Snowmobile Club
- Wawa Sno Riders Snowmobile Club

voltage

Now You Know!

Just in case you haven't been following us online, there's some things you should know:

- **Try Our Trails** will not be offered for the 2020 Snowmobile Season.
- **Printing and distribution** of the provincial trail guide has been discontinued but district trail guides will be available at the Toronto show and through your local district or tourism office. We are putting these resources towards our online ITG and App.
- **The 2019-20 Go Snowmobiling Ontario** App will be available in Google and Apple stores by December; check your inbox or sign up for our newsletter online to be the first to know when it is available. For only \$3.99/season, you'll have real-time access to the latest trail availability information, offline functionality, location sharing and much more! Access to the free online version of the Interactive Trail Guide will be available at ofsc.on.ca.
- **This year there will only be** 2 print issues of the Go Snowmobiling Ontario Magazine and 1 digital issue available online at the beginning of February.
- **Online Driver Training** – We are working closely with the Ministry of Transportation on the development of a new online driver training program. This program will complement the current in-class training and is scheduled to be available for the 2019-20 snowmobile season. Its intent is to reach more future riders in a more efficient and effective way while providing the information necessary to operating a snowmobile safely.
- **Inspection Exemption** – The OFSC worked closely with the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario to exempt pickup trucks and trailer used exclusively for personal use from the requirement to have an annual inspection. This change to Regulation 611 is consistent with other personal use

exemptions provided under the Highway Traffic Act and is intended to reduce the burden and level the playing field by treating all personal use pickup trucks and personal use pickup-trailer combinations equally.

- **Service Plates** – The OFSC took part in an announcement with Transportation Minister Jeff Yurek this past spring expanding the use of service plates, enabling easier transportation of snowmobiles across the province. By cutting through the red tape, snowmobile dealers can now make multiple deliveries using the same plate. This regulation change ensures plate owners remain compliant with Ontario laws and maintain road safety while providing clarity regarding the use of plates and enforcement activity.

- **Economic Impact Study** – The Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC) has released a new economic impact study based on the 2018-19 snowmobile season. The study found that the economic impact of snowmobiling has the potential to generate between \$1.6 and \$3.3 billion in total economic activity in any given season, dependent on factors such as weather. (see full article on page XX)

Visit ofsc.on.ca for full stories and the latest news updates! GSOM



Photo courtesy of Yves Ouellet

CONNECT WITH A SNOWMOBILE CLUB *(Continued)*

District 14 – Timiskaming Abitibi Trail Association (New Liskeard, Kirkland Lake, Timmins)

- A-14 Task Force Snowmobile Club
- 101 Snowmobile Trailmakers Club
- Elk Lake Trail Blazers
- Gogama Snowmobile Club
- Golden Corridor Snow Drifters Snowmobile Club
- Jackpine Snowmobile Club
- Timmins Snowmobile Club
- Tri Town Sno Travellers Inc

District 15 – Northern Corridor Du Nord (Cochrane, Kapuskasing, Hearts)

- Arctic Riders Snowmobile Club
- Club Voyageur de Hearst
- Greenstone Snowmobile Club
- Hornepayne Snowmobile Club
- Kap Sno-Rovers Snowmobile Club
- Les Grondeur Snowmobile Club
- Mattice Sno Devils Snowmobile Club
- Moonbeam Snowmobile Club
- Polar Bear Riders Snowmobile Club

District 17 – North Western Ontario Snowmobile Trails (Thunder Bay, Dryden, Kenora)

- Atikokan Sno-Ho Snowmobile Club
- Dryden Power Toboggan Club
- Emo Borderland Snowmobile Club
- Ignace Otters Snowmobile Club
- Ojibway Power Togoggan Association
- Red Lake District Trail Masters
- Sunset Trail Riders Snowmobile Club
- Thunder Bay Adventure Trails

BY THE NUMBERS

2018-19 SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

- First trails available December 7th in District 2
- Trail Availability peaked with close to **83%** of trails available between March 1st to 8th
- More than **83,000** grooming hours (for more about grooming, see article on pg 12)
- Visitor permit sales increased by **70%** over the prior season



GO SNOWMOBILING ONTARIO MAGAZINE IS CHANGING!

Welcome to your first issue of Go Snowmobiling Ontario Magazine for the 2020 season! In addition to the many positive organizational changes covered in this issue, we wanted to let you know that we're also making changes with the magazine format and shifting away from what you've been used to in the past. Our first issue will focus on a recap of last season's success and highlights of the work going on behind the scenes in advance of the upcoming season.

Our new addition "Trailside Talk" will address current hot topics from forums, social media or the industry in general. This will be a recurring column in the magazine to ensure we're addressing issues that are of concern to you, our riders.

Our second and third issue will introduce our new initiatives for the upcoming season including the introduction of our new Go Snowmobiling Ontario Promoter program. At the time of preparing this issue, our team is carefully reviewing close to 100 applications from sledders who want to share riding stories, photos and even some 'Facebook Live' events for the upcoming season. Who best to tell the story of Ontario snowmobiling? Well, it's you of course! If you missed the application process but have a story idea or something you want to share about your sledding experience, you can email Lisa Stackhouse at lstackhouse@ofsc.on.ca – she's on standby waiting for you!

As we have in the past, issues 2 and 3 will also include valuable tips, attractions and tour information to help you with planning for 2020 Ontario Snowmobiling adventure.

We'd like to thank the entire team of contributors to this issue, all our past contributors and our partners at Supertrax Media for the hard work that goes into delivering each issue of Go Snowmobiling Ontario Magazine! GSOM



WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE PROVINCIAL GROOMING FLEET?

...Or Really, What Does It Even Mean?

BY MIKE FARR & LISA STACKHOUSE



We've spent the last couple of years looking at where your permit dollars go and this year, we want to share the inner workings of our transition to a Provincial Grooming Fleet and what it means for you...

Over the past few years, we've been discussing the shift from club-based grooming to district coordinated grooming and a provincially managed fleet. An extraordinary amount of work has taken place over the last few years and we started to see the positive impact of these efforts last season.

"Expect to see more changes this year and have the confidence in knowing, it's all very good news for snowmobilers!" according to Mike Farr, OFSC Director of Fleet and Trails.

Before we get into what's happening today, let's step back in time to a time when grooming and groomers were managed solely by the clubs and districts didn't have an active role in grooming operational management. During these times, clubs were left to assess their needs for grooming

equipment and approach the OFSC provincially who would help as many clubs as possible to replace or upgrade groomers within a finite budget. Often, clubs would fundraise to support their groomer acquisition and there was a time where volunteers themselves would purchase the equipment with their own money as part of their dedication to organized snowmobiling in Ontario. "Operating under this model of club-based grooming for close to 50 years, provincially we were missing the big picture and over time lacking the information required to ensure our investments were going where they were needed most" according to Farr. "We often got focused on the size of the overall fleet, average age and several other factors that, while important, were bringing us to where we needed to be in the 21st century."

When More on the Snow (MOTS) was voted in by the membership in 2016, one of the key pillars of the strategy was the shift to a Provincially Managed Grooming Program, which included the transition from club-based grooming to districts taking responsibility for grooming operational management. Over the last few years we've been focused on breaking down club barriers and maximizing each groomers impact on the snow. Many snowmobilers have challenged the OFSC on where permit dollars go related to grooming and with the world as it is today, there is a lot of good information being shared online; at the same time, a lot of misinformation as well. For

the last two years, we've provided information on "What Happens To Permit" dollars (see graphic) to dispel the myth that if there is no snow there is no cost. No matter what mother nature brings us each winter, 80% of our annual expenditures are incurred whereas only 20% are dependent upon snow. And thankfully, winter always comes to Ontario and we are now able to ensure groomers are ready and operational wherever the snow falls, providing riders with consistent trail grooming no matter where they ride.

Since MOTS was passed in 2016, 84 new pieces of equipment (including this year's purchases) have been delivered to the snow, a much-needed capital investment in our equipment. However, we're no longer just buying and retiring machines, but rather assessing all the equipment within our fleet, what state it is in, where it is needed most and what we need to effective and efficiently groom up to 30,000 kilometers of trail as and when dictated by Mother Nature.

One of the most notable changes under MOTS was the shift of responsibility for overall grooming operations from individual clubs to the districts. The success of the Provincial Groomer Fleet program is dependent on many working parts with one of the biggest being the districts assuming a leadership role for grooming management and operations. Districts have now assumed the responsibility for assessing their overall grooming needs, route planning that removes the historically challenging 'club boundaries'; and

acting as a champion for their clubs to coordinate requests for provincial assistance when required.

As a snowmobiler, you may have witnessed or experienced the benefit of these changes first hand. While winter didn't deliver in all parts of Ontario, it hit hard and fast in some of our northern districts and unfortunately, some areas experienced mechanical failure or simply not enough equipment to deal with the rapid accumulation of snow in a short time span. The Provincial Fleet Team working closely with volunteers implemented the groomer share program and clubs in the south were quick to help and send equipment where it was needed, on the snow. While a handful of clubs have done this in the past, the provincial team and budget now takes care of the logistics and float costs and in some instances, back up equipment was delivered in less than 48 hours from the time of the reported issue. No matter what we do, mechanical failure is inevitable and unavoidable, and while the Groomer Share Program is still in its infancy, a plan is in place to address these issues in a timely manner.

In our efforts to continue to have open and transparent communication with you, we wanted to let you know what's happening for this season as it pertains to grooming. Over the spring and summer, meetings were held with each district grooming committee, and a needs assessment completed to build a comprehensive plan maximizing every dollar spent on our grooming

fleet. The plan includes:

- 11 new pieces of grooming equipment
- 35 projects seeing groomers refreshed and/or relocated
- Total fleet size of 280 Active Groomers with 16 Standby Units and for the first time ever, 4 provincial standby units stationed strategically for quick deployment in an area of need with as little turnaround time as possible.

Each new piece of grooming equipment has a positive ripple effect on up to 5 or 6 districts in some cases. **Existing higher hour machines are being moved to lower demand areas while lower hour machines are moved to higher demand areas.** All the relocated equipment has undergone or will undergo a full mechanical assessment to ensure they are "groom ready" when they arrive at their new home. As a Federation, working together as one, we have made significant strides with more to come. It's not only good news for our organization, it's good news for Ontario snowmobilers no matter when or where they ride on our provincial trail network. Rest assured, your permit dollars are hard at work and your Board remains committed to expanding on the success of this program in the years ahead.

While this has not been an easy undertaking and has required hard work from our volunteers and staff, we are in the best position we have been over the last 50 years to handle our grooming needs and in-season issues and ensure grooming equipment is available where and when it is needed. GSOM

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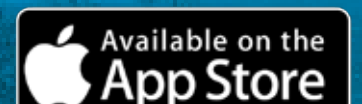
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ONTARIO'S WORLD-CLASS SNOWMOBILE TRAILS ARE A **4** SEASON EFFORT

OFSC STAFF WRITER

Photo courtesy of Blaise Tremblay

Snowmobiling is about winter, but the other three seasons play a part in delivering over 30,000 kilometers of trails for more than 100,000 riders. If you've never volunteered with your local club and want to contribute, there are many ways to get involved 12 months of the year!

Each winter, tourists come from areas far beyond the Great Lakes Region to enjoy the outdoors. It's critical their experience is second to none, and they leave our trails with no doubt their tourism dollars have been well spent.

Before we delve into how we make that happen, let's start with a brief exploration of the raw numbers to put snowmobiling in perspective. **Snowmobiling in Ontario can annually contribute up to \$3.3B in economy activity and \$842.8M in expenditures, creates 6,436 full-time jobs, and generates over \$216M in Federal, Provincial, and Municipal taxes.** Needless to say, the industry is a critical supporter of thousands of businesses (restaurants, gas stations, parts/accessories/service, hotels, etc) who are able to keep their doors open and staff employed through some of the most challenging economic months (i.e. winter!) for many rural parts of this province. These numbers certainly lend support to the age-old saying that "snowmobilers travel with two things: their sleds and their wallets".

If you ponder the question of whether trails simply prepare themselves, the answer is a resounding no; our organization relies on over 190 Snowmobiles Clubs, fueled literally by thousands of volunteers across the Province who put their own sweat equity in to ensuring we are more than ready for the influx of domestic and

international tourists each winter. A rolling fleet of nearly 300 industrial snow groomers with heavy duty drags pulled behind them certainly affords us a mechanical advantage, but they require operators who are willing and able to groom during our ideal time, overnight. Our work however does not start once the mercury drops and the snowflakes start flying; the reality is that while snowmobiling may primarily be a deep winter activity, it is a 4-season work effort.

Spring/Summer

If mother nature cooperates, snowmobiling season in Ontario can stretch to the end of April, particularly in the northern parts of the Province. Once the snow base melts and our trails are permanently unavailable for the season, volunteers actually get a brief chance to breathe and let the ground harden up again. This respite is short lived though, as summer is the ideal time to tackle our annual infrastructure challenges, including the cutting or grading of existing and new trails, bridge and groomer repairs or replacements, warm-up shack construction, and a host of other projects. Aiding our volunteers in this effort is the support of local contractors, strong partnerships with municipal and provincial governments, and of course, the many landowners across the province who generously allow us access for our trails.

Fall

Once the leaves start to change colour, sleds are taken out of storage, gear is checked, and snowmobilers start to plan their trips for the upcoming season. **For the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC), we plug-in to that excitement by opening our trail permit purchases at an early-bird rate on October 1, by**

far our highest traffic sales period. On the topic, permit revenue funds our organization, including groomer operations, purchases, maintenance, insurance and trail work.

Fall is also the perfect time for snowmobile shows across the Great Lakes Region. The Big East Powersports Show in New York, Snowmobile USA Show in Michigan, and Hay Days Snowmobile Grass Drags in Minnesota meet the demand south of the Border, where the OFSC engages in a mix of digital and physical marketing to let attendees know that "Winter is Coming to Ontario!".

Closer to home, the Toronto International Snowmobile, ATV, and Powersports Show brings more than 35,000 people from all over the Great Lakes Region to Toronto, where alongside the many businesses involved in our industry, our 16 distinct Ontario snowmobiling districts engage with riders, help them plan their trips, and provide the advice only the locals know.

Meanwhile, our volunteers are vigorously brushing, staking, and signing the trails. Believe it or not, these efforts have become a micro-tourism attraction itself, with many 'out-of-towners' coming to help the local clubs get things ready.

Winter

Game time! As a weather dependent tourism industry, our trails become available as conditions allow for it, generally seeing our first availability in December/January. Regardless of when the snow and cold comes however, our clubs are ready to start grooming because of the efforts volunteers have put in during the previous 3 seasons. These efforts ensure our trails hold up as long as the cold and snow decide to stick around.

Simply put, more than 100,000 riders rely on us to get over 30,000kms of trails ready, and our volunteers deliver! GSCM

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BY THE NUMBERS

2018-19 DRIVER TRAINING
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SHOW OUR LANDOWNERS SOME LOVE

BY GRAHAM SNYDER & OFSC STAFF WRITER



Photo courtesy of Kevin Mertens

Close to 60% of OFSC Prescribed Trails access private land and a good portion of these are only possible with the generosity of landowners who work closely with their local snowmobile club to ensure trails are accessible for Ontario Snowmobilers! Unfortunately, we've been experiencing an influx of trespassing incidents as well as modified exhausts which are not only disrespecting our landowners but putting our trails at risk if access to the land is revoked.

Online, these hot topics are expressed and as we follow the conversations closely, it's no surprise most snowmobilers do only ride within marked trails and have no need for modified exhausts that not only disrupt our landowners but, more importantly, are illegal.

Securing seasonal access for trails takes a lot of hard work and trust by our landowners and while we try to avoid preaching, as snowmobilers WE ALL need to do better to secure the future sustainability of snowmobiling in Ontario. As OFSC Governor for District 5, Graham Snyder is not only a volunteer and a snowmobiler, he's also one of our landowners who graciously donates his land for our use each winter. As a landowner himself, Graham is concerned about the ongoing issues of trespass and shares with us his experience as a landowner and what we can all do to show our landowners some love...they deserve it!

The first challenge most landowners have when approached by the local snowmobile club asking for permission to run a trail across our property is making sure we are protected against any law suits. "We've worked all our lives to own this property, so we don't want to take a chance of losing it in the event of an incident". The OFSC provides landowners with peace of mind that the trails are insured, and landowners are protected in exchange for their willingness to share their land with snowmobilers each winter.

Even reluctant landowners agree to trail access knowing that having a designated trail mitigates 'free riding' and controls where snowmobilers can ride and minimizes damage to crops during the winter months. There is a common misconception damage is not possible when snow is on the ground, but this is simply not the case.

Imagine your frustration as a landowner seeing entire crops damaged or killed because of sleds taking "short cuts" and going off trail. I assure you this is the quickest way for clubs to lose sections of trail and yet snowmobilers often

look to the OFSC as the source of the problem. This is not a problem that can be fixed through communication or even enforcement but it starts with us as snowmobilers. It's about respecting the trail markers and more importantly, refusing to ride with those who choose to trespass and potentially ruin a farmer's crops or contribute to the demise of our trail network.

As a landowner, I feel this shows a total lack of appreciation and respect. These are the people who are not welcome on my property. The real problem with the crop damage is that every time the landowner drives by the field with the damage, he is reminded of the decision he made that now has resulted in a loss of income. Many of our landowners are permit buyers and ride the trail system, but even if you're a sledder, it still hurts to see the damage that is left behind after a good season of snowmobiling.

While trespassing continues to be the biggest area of concern, nothing drives landowners (and entire neighborhoods) crazy more than unnecessarily loud machines. Altering the exhaust

on a snowmobile to gain horsepower creates a "crackle" in the air that can make your ears ring even when you are a far distance from the snowmobile. That same "cracking noise" can be heard as the sled speeds up and slows down for the next four or five road crossings. Many of these modified machines ride at night which wakes our landowners (and their families) from their sleep giving them yet another reason to consider shutting down access to the trails we all enjoy.

As a landowner, I can tell you that there are only a few "bad apples" contributing to our trespassing and noise pollution issues. The problem is that a few "bad apples" may literally damage the entire "crop" of good apples like you and me! It is a pleasure to see groups of sleds ride across my property. Kids riding with their mom or dad, and groups stopping at the intersection to chat about what took place since their last stop.

These are the simple things that make me feel good about having the trail cross my property. One of the other good things is when I drive out of my lane and the sleds stop and wave as I drive by.

Every time I drive by my field, no matter what the season, I am reminded of my decision to contribute to Ontario snowmobiling and my neighbours appreciate it too because I am saving their fields from damage.

So many snowmobilers respect the trails, ride safely and show appreciation to our landowners and yet we continue to hear about the issues caused by only a few. It all starts with us and refusing to ride with those who willingly break the law and show no respect to the landowners who graciously allow us to enjoy the sport we hold so dearly to our hearts. Our sport. Our future. It's our job to do better ourselves and only ride with other like-minded responsible riders.

If you're out this winter, show your landowner some love by respecting their land, respecting the law and maybe even saying thanks if you get the chance! GSOM



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