

SAM's Trail Map App **PAGE 2** | Annual Award Nominations Open **PAGE 5**

# ON THE TRAIL WITH SAM

SNOWMOBILE ASSOCIATION OF MASSACHUSETTS

## SKI TEST: The MoHawk by SLP



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*M.K. found the Keebler Elves kitchen on Gould's Trail in Adams.* PHOTO BY JOE ROGGE



*The Berkshire Snow Seeker's Tucker Sno-Cat T1000 Groomer with the new Mogul Master XLMBP 16-08 Drag that maintains October Mountain State Forest.*

PHOTO BY RANDY TOTH



*Coldbrook Snowmobile Club's PB200 and ASV DX 4530 go double on ITS 71 in Lake Dennison State Park.*

PHOTO BY GERRY BALCHUINAS

# Club Photos

See Club News on page 6



*Harvard members stand atop one of the snowmobile bridges on their trail system.* PHOTO BY JOE GIBBONS

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enhancing safe  
snowmobiling in  
Massachusetts.



## ON THE COVER

*A roller coaster of snow for  
sledders in Colrain.*

PHOTO BY DAN GOULD

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## President's Message

BY DAN GOULD

# SledMass Trail Map for iPhone and Android

The number one question we're asked at SAM headquarters is "Where can I get a trail map?" It seems that getting the map into snowmobilers' hands is a challenge. You have to go to a club meeting or hope that the local store has one in stock. We aim to fix that.

The number two question is about trail conditions, which, by the way, can be found in the forums at sledmass.com. Bookmark that now, please!

While it may seem simple, the job of creating and maintaining a snowmobile trail map is a colossal pain in the buttocks. I'm talking part-time job with a nasty boss. Sure, we have lots of volunteers but they keep pretty busy clearing and grooming the trails. And besides that, they know the trails inside and out. They don't need no stinkin' map. But I do.

Good news is on the way for those of us that drive in endless loops. SAM is launching the new SledMass Trail Map App this winter. Yes! The Android version will be introduced first, followed closely by the iOS app for iPhone. The target date is late January but be patient. As for unforeseen delays, refer to "colossal pain in buttocks" above.

This project has been a dream of mine for years and I'm happier than a shovel full of snow. What makes our app so unique is that once loaded onto your phone you don't need a cell signal to navigate. I repeat, no cell service required. All 2,000 miles of map data will be preloaded onto your phone. So long as you can pick-up a GPS signal, you're good to go.

The SledMass interactive trail map includes several premium features:

- Displays trails, junctions and spurs to amenities (OK, that was expected)
- Option for trail and junction labels, which can be toggled on and off



- Statewide Trail Pass sales locations
- Clubhouses and club meeting locations
- Businesses and amenities, with info and phone numbers
- Tap to call a business directly within the app
- Parking areas, which can be toggled on and off
- Background map choice of street or satellite view
- Weather radar overlay (when cell reception is available)
- Map will keep centered while riding. A simple but important function
- Breadcrumb tracking records your trip (show-off your endless loops)
- Mark and save waypoints to record key locations and landmarks
- Create/tap a route to follow within the app, for those that plan ahead

Best of all, the app costs the same as the paper map and has far more sizzle. SAM's trail app will be available at the Google Play and the iTunes stores for just \$4.99. We'll also have microSD cards for Garmin GPS devices for \$20.

But wait, there's more... For you old-fashioned types, we still have the paper edition, which folds neatly into a pocket and never needs a battery or GPS signal. Enjoy! 🐾



## The Tech Corner

BY JIM TUCKER

# Great American Ski Test Part IV: The MoHawk

Oh, my God! What was it I pulled out of the box labeled Starting Line Products? Was it a black roller coaster? Was the plastic thingy with bumps on it from outer space or the deep sea? Nope. The skis from SLP were all about wow! These things are what make for some very pleasant snow dreams in the twisted mind of a techie.

I'd seen the pictures, I'd heard a few reports, I just had to get me some of them there MoHawk skis and test those bad boys out! I immediately reached out to Jerry Matthews, owner of Starting Line Products, and told him I craved a set of these skis for a shoot-out style test. He readily agreed and understood that I called the shots as I see them and there could only be one winner.



Speaking of which, the reigning king of skis, the Curve XS, deserved a shot against this new ski, and so do you, the loyal followers of this column. Do the MoHawk skis best the Curve XS? Are they champs or just chumps? At this level of competition you can't stay at the top of the heap forever - or can you? Buckle your chinstraps, as we are about to embark on a wild ride.

Once in my hand, products always get the acid test and the chips fall where they may. I pull no punches and speak the truth as I see it. After all it's my integrity at stake here. If it works it gets a thumbs up, if not, I work with the vendor to sort out any issues that arise or questions relating to fitment or performance. I appreciate business owners lending me products for testing, and by the way, I receive no remuneration for this article or free gifts from the manufacturers. 'Nuff said on that one.

With the ground rules set, a large package soon arrived on my doorstep. I unboxed the skis and noticed how much wider the MoHawks are than the stock SLP Straight Line Tracking skis or stock boards from Cat. Now for you technical types, the tale of the tape is as follows: MoHawk skis: Width 7.5 inches, weight 7.4 lbs each, tip to tail 39 3/8 inches. SLT skis: Width 6 inches, weight 6.13 lbs each, tip to tail 39 1/8 inches. The weight includes saddles, loops, six-inch carbides and all hardware. It does not include ski rubbers.

The new MoHawks have a somewhat deeper keel than my trusty SLTs but that may be because of the high miles and the resulting wear. They also have a very pronounced patented rocker-type pattern to the center keel for deep snow tracking and precision in the corners. The top rails are raised in a roller coaster-type fashion, higher in the front, lower in the rear, and laced with bumps on top, which aid traction when you get stuck.

The outer edges of the skis are deep on the bottom and higher on the top, following that curved pattern mentioned above. See the photos for details. This edge design helps the ski maintain more precision in the corners, both on and off-trail, by "plowing" the snow in corners.

The MoHawk are touted as being made for the crossover, rider-forward sleds of today. As usual, the test mule for this shoot-out is my venerable 2010 Arctic



Cat Z1, non-turbo, four-stroke, without studs. So, why would groomed-trail riders like these wider skis? Let's examine some ski physics. A wider ski planes up better off-trail: Check. A wider ski corners better in loose snow on groomed trails: Check. A wider ski seems to "fit" the look of the sled better: Half check! With all these checks, they should add up to better performance, right? You betcha!

Assembling the components revealed many nice touches the boys from Idaho Falls include, such as stainless steel and aluminum fasteners, and Loctite to keep them fastened. Instructions were easy to understand with lots of pictures. I like pictures! Set-up tips for Arctic Cat's came with the package. Call before ordering and they will help with your particular brand. Boy, those guys think of everything! Note that the literature pronounces "unbreakable ski loops" but it also states not to tow the sled by the ski loop. Always tow using the spindle, a wise practice across the board.

I used SLP's six-inch carbides, part #35-123, torqued to spec and installed the saddles on the skis. This is where I made a mistake. You should instead install the saddle on the spindle first, then the ski to the saddle. Odd, but that's what is required for the Z1 Super Kitty. The ski rubbers were not included, so I used the stock Cat ones. I mounted the ski saddle combo in the rear hole of the saddle, thus putting the ski most forward.

With the ski wars heating up as much as they are, just the slightest tweak here

and adjustment there can make huge differences on the trail. Make no mistake about it, any aftermarket ski will garner riders more performance than stock. The yellow brand riders (Ski-Doo for you folks that live in the backwoods) might argue with that statement, as they seem to have the best OEM skis out there, but I still stand by what I say. Try it, you may like it!

The initial test day looked promising, with conditions to match. My heart was pounding the first time I tried the skis and carbide combo. I was immediately stunned, the skis seemed to be made for the sled. Effortless turns, just like the power steering sensation I get from the SLT's that I run on a regular basis.

Okay, let's start slow and get the feel, then turn the heat up. But these skis just begged to be challenged. I still held off, going many miles until I felt confident of the next tier of speed. The more I pushed, the harder the skis bit into the turn. Amazing. A powder ski that turns like a true trail ski! Time to slow down and head off-trail in my heavy four-stroke, just to see what happens. I was certain it would bog down and make me beg the snow gods for mercy, but no, they planed up very well. So much so that my confidence increased and I began to play in the soft stuff. Nice! Even though you may not go off-trail that often, it's nice to know you can when you need to. Take for example a typical U-turn on a tight trail that forces you off the hard-pack and into the fluff. With the MoHawks, you just glide right around. I'm liking it!

So, how do they stack up against the SLP Straight Line Tracking, Simmons original Flexi-Ski, C&A RZ Razors and the Curve XS Skis? The C&A's have the solid look and feel of a race ski, the SLT's have that smooth power steering feel, the Simmons have the shock absorption and ultra precise cornering, and the Curve XS' combine all those good points and just flat out rock across the board. But the MoHawks had another idea, like stealing the show. How they did it is a testament to the tenacity and testing by the gang at Starting Line Products. I can just imagine the dozens of hours of on-snow testing performed, and know that every Starting Line Product reeks of quality, through and through.

Turning precision of the MoHawks was buttery smooth, even on bombed-out washboard trails, and the nubs on the top



rail of the ski worked as advertised with the best boot traction I have yet seen. This really helps for those unexpected off-trail excursions that happen every so often, giving you that extra measure of confidence knowing you can recover quicker.

I'm now a real believer in the wider skis for us groomed-trail riders, as the benefits of easy off-trail turnarounds, un-groomed connector trails, and virgin powder on top of the trail make the ride that much more enjoyable and safer. There was no special setup for cornering needed, just go in and put the skis wherever you want in the turn, apex down low, down the center, it was just another day at the office for these boards.

It's funny how these skis just give zero negative feedback to the handlebars, no chatter, no back and forth movement, or bad vibes at all. I tried the optional Keel Blade with four-inch carbide combo on the ski, which works well enough to earn most snowmobilers' trust, but they didn't have the

precision of the six-inch, 60-degree, carbide. Most riders won't know the difference, but for the aggressive gang out there you will love these skis with the 6 x 60 set-up.

For the crossover segment, these skis are a must-have as they are not a full-blown, on-trail or off-trail ski, they are a combination of just the right ingredients of both. In reverse gear the ski does what it is supposed to do and again no surprises. One side note is that since the skis are wider, loading on a two-place trailer gets tricky as you have to overlap the skis of the two sleds in the center of the trailer in order to fit. I'll take that any day for a product that rules the trail.

So, the MoHawks get high praise for their precision, effortless cornering, and attention-getting looks. The flotation is head and shoulders above any ski tested but is a crossover specific ski that just happens to rule the groomed trail as well. The hardware is top notch and fits well. They are without a doubt the best skis this

writer has tried to date and that says a lot because all the other skis are really terrific.

The MoHawks can be ordered a la carte at the Starting Line Products website, with a wide choice of colored saddles, loops and several types of runners. I told you my choice, what's yours?

This is the fourth round of ski tests and the third time a new champion has been added to the list. Almost every time I test a ski a winner emerges. It just goes to show that ski evolution is on the fast track, and you, the snowmobilers of today, get all the benefits.

In conclusion the MoHawks gets a five out of five carbide rating, the highest I've ever given to any product, period. I'm hard-pressed to think of anything I don't like about these skis and I'm a tough customer, just ask my wife! 🐾

*Next up, Thermacell heated insoles. Could they be the Holy Grail of trail comfort?*

## SAM Annual Awards

Nominations for the SAM Annual Awards are due **March 1**. Any member of a SAM club can make a nomination. Download entry forms at [sledmass.com](http://sledmass.com) or call (413) 369-8092 for a form.

SAM presents the following nine awards every year:

Groomer Operator of the Year

Club of the Year

Dealer of the Year

Legislator of the Year

Family of the Year

Junior Snowmobiler of the Year

Snowmobiler of the Year

Trailworker of the Year

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## ADAMS SNO DRIFTERS

by Joe Rogge

At a recent SAM meeting one topic mentioned was that of mediation and the use of a mediator to resolve conflicts. With the Sno-Drifters we don't need mediation. We have our own topic and that is of collaboration. We have two ongoing projects that require a great deal of collaboration. The first centers around support of one of our charities: Carrik's Journey. We have been successful in supporting this cause through our club newsletter, SAM magazine, and our Christmas Party Raffle. In addition to that, a member of another club attended our December meeting and offered to share the proceeds of his January ride with this charity: true caring and collaboration. Another example of collaboration is the effort of Northern Berkshire snowmobile clubs to work with local government, state representatives, and local businesses to expand and improve the family sport of snowmobiling. A series of meetings have taken place and discussions and meetings are planned. The impetus for these meetings and discussions was due to the successful Sno-Cross event held in North Adams last winter. A similar Sno-Cross event is planned for winter 2015. Interest is high in North Berkshire County. Use your web search to check it out.



## BERKSHIRE SNOW SEEKERS

by Randy Toth

Come and experience the excitement of snowmobiling in the Berkshires. Our first-class groomer fleet consists of 3 Tucker Sno-Cats, a Thiokol and 2 snowmobile-based groomers. Dues are only \$60 for each snowmobile and that includes a club membership, a SAM membership and a trail permit. Join via snail-mail (PO Box 1102, Pittsfield MA 01202), via our website (berkshiresnowseekers.com), via a club meeting (7pm on the 1st & 3rd Tuesday of the month from September thru mid-April at the Skyline Country Club on Route 7 in Lanesboro)

or via one of our conveniently located trail permit outlets at a participating local business: - Pittsfield Lawn & Tractor (Pittsfield), Ronnie's (Pittsfield), Friendly Fred's (Windsor), Sangar's General Store (Windsor), Hinsdale Trading Company (Hinsdale) and Lanesboro BP Gas Station (Lanesboro). Please visit the SAM website to see our club's scheduled events and our grooming reports covering the October Mountain State Forest Area, the Pittsfield State Forest Area and the Windsor Area. The accompanying picture shows our new Mogul Master XLMBP 16-08 Drag attached to the October Mountain State Forest Tucker Sno-Cat T1000 groomer.



## BERNARDSTON-GILL-LEYDEN

by Brad Stafford, president

Hello all, I hope by now all your sleds are running and your favorite trails have been opened for some time. If this is true remember who to thank and how we all do it. It's SAM and your local club's efforts that made those trails possible. Countless hours go into them every year and so many people don't realize what happens behind the scenes. To those that feel they don't need to contribute the time so many others do, at least respect what they have done. Obey all signs and warnings. Go Slow where you can see houses, and if you see somebody out there, give them a wave and shout out a big thank you! It will go along way to keep our trails open and accessible. Most of our clubs 60+ miles are on private land that is owned by non-snowmobilers, so give them the respect they deserve.

Our club has been busy with new trails, trail re-routes and updates. The club's grants have been awarded for a major bridge update in Bernardston and the club will be outfitting another minitruck with tracks for both grooming and trail maintenance duties. Keep track of our progress on our facebook page and website bglsnow.com and remember to "Keep the Rubber Side Down."



## CHESTERFIELD FOUR SEASONS

by Bill Golaski, president

Hello all. As I write this in early December we have had no rideable snow yet. Hopefully, we'll see some soon. Thanks to all members that helped get trails and groomers ready. Once the snow comes we hope to have the club open every weekend. Our next event will be our Game Supper on January 31 starting at 5pm, \$20 per ticket. There will be game, fish and domestic foods. It was a full house last year so get your tickets early! I guarantee you won't go away hungry.

We will be having our Groomer Benefit Dinner on February 21 at 5pm, tickets \$20 each. This will be a Prime Rib Dinner with a live band. On this night we will also do the drawing for our Snowmobile Trailer Raffle, \$20 per ticket with a max. of 400 tickets sold. This is our major club fundraiser, so please help us and buy a chance.

For more info, to help out, or for tickets, come to a meeting on the 2nd and last Tuesday of the month at 7pm, call the club at 413-296-4048, or call Bill Golaski at 413-585-9403. Hope to see you all ride thru our area soon, stop at the clubhouse and check us out. Check out our events on the SAM website. Let It Snow!



## COLDBROOK

by Mike Roy, secretary

The members have been out clearing up the damage from the Thanksgiving storm. It is a large task but hopefully we will have it done for riding. We have mowed a large section of Lake Dennison State Park. It is a great improvement and looks great. It is a big part of our ongoing commitment to our relationship with DCR and Army Corps of Engineers. Upon reading this we will have mowed a large section of the Ware River Rail Trail. The tractor mower purchased with our grant has proven to be a great investment. This machine can do the work of many volunteers in a fraction of the time. We have allotted the funds to install the 75-foot bridge over the Otter River in Baldwinville. This is a huge expense for us



and hope it works well with our season. Groomer repairs are ongoing. Hopefully all will be ready for winter. Remember all support is the name of the game!



## CONWAY

by Ed Skorupski

Well, Christmas and New Years are behind us and we have a fresh year ahead of us. Hopefully everyone was able to celebrate the season in a manner that they deemed to be enjoyable. We are now in the heart of the season, and with luck are putting on plenty of miles.

This is the time of year that most of us spend as much of our free time as possible on the trails. Don't forget that there is still a need for volunteers. Grooming, groomer repair and trail maintenance are ongoing. Especially if we have an ice storm or high winds. Come on out and give us a hand.

It is time for the CSC annual pancake breakfast - this year held on Sunday February 22 from 7:30 to 11:30 at the Conway Firehouse. Ride in, drive over, or walk. We don't care how you get there, we just want to serve you breakfast. If anyone wants to join the fun on the other side, we always welcome new volunteers to help out. You will be surprised at how much fun you can have serving your friends and neighbors. Check us out on Facebook or at [sledconway.com](http://sledconway.com)



## EASY RIDERS

by Steven Conti,  
vice president

Hello all! We hope everyone is enjoying the riding. Get riding while it's hot, well hopefully cold. With the gas prices at a more reasonable cost we would expect to have a lot more sleds on the trail. So enjoy your riding, but keep the speed down because you never know who may be on the other side of that corner! Be safe out there and enjoy!



## GREATER WHATELY

by Robert Sabola

Attention Snowmobilers!

The high speed train will be traveling north through Hatfield and Whately at approximately 70mph starting December 29. There are two crossings on the Greater Whately Snowmobile Trail System. Trail GW01 to GW16, secondary trail #8 and GW20 to GW19, secondary trail #10. Stop and look both

ways before crossing the tracks.

The Great Swamp Trail will be closed for the 2014/2015 season. Trail GW01 to CN33, secondary trail #7.

The Christian Lane Bridge located on the Mass Fish and Wildlife property has been built. We are waiting to meet with the Whately Conservation Commission for approval. If all goes well with them, we will then contact the Mass Fish and Wildlife for their approval. Cost for the bridge and all the permits are around \$7,000.

Visit the club webpage on SAM's website. It will have all the activities listed for the club as they happen, as well as any pertinent information on sensitive areas. GWSC club meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month, September through April. Time: 7pm, Location: Whately Town Hall. (Across the street from the Whately Inn) Email us at: [greatersnowmobileclub@aol.com](mailto:greatersnowmobileclub@aol.com)



## HARVARD

by Joe Gibbons,  
board of directors

Wow! The 2014 -2015 season started with a bang. We got to ride our trails for two days at Thanksgiving. What a treat. With 6 inches of fresh snow and two very cold days to follow it was like kids at Christmas. On 12/9 our annual Christmas get together was awesome. We all got together with great food and friendship. The club groomer once again was illuminated with a Christmas tree outside the general store in Harvard.

Our signs are up! The trails are cleared but our last challenge was to replace a 24-foot bridge that was in need of replacement. A big thank you to Bob Hebb for providing the material. Nearly 20 guys showed up for this endeavor and it was refreshing to see this many guys on a Sunday morning. Extreme enthusiasm by all. Thanks to Mark Adams our on site acting engineer and a real candidate for future club president! Come join us on the 2nd Tuesday of the month! Harvard Fire Station 7:30pm. Check us out on Facebook.



## KNOX TRAIL SNO-RIDERS

by Jim Richard, media  
director

Happy 2015, fellow sledders! Here is the latest "perfect world" trail report! The trails are all open and the conditions are fantas-

tic! The groomer team is working overtime because the snow is so deep. The new trails are a hit with the riders and the local establishments are doing a brisk business!

Hopefully this is true! Now back to reality. As I write, a lot is happening. The new groomer sleds are being purchased thanks to the MARTAB grant. The raffle drawing is only a few days away and the winner will be announced. Member Mark Burdick has stepped up to manage the [knoxtrail.com](http://knoxtrail.com) website. New features planned include interactive calendars, interactive maps, and improved photo galleries. I will now have time to produce the newsletter and if conditions permit, complete the GPS trail mapping and videos of the trails. Go to [knoxtrail.com](http://knoxtrail.com), the sno-phone at 413-269-0243, or [sledmass.com](http://sledmass.com) and find out about the January 25 Picnic, the February 15 Poker Run and the February 21 Vintage Ride.

Thank you's go out to the Middleton family for negotiating and blazing a new trail to Otis center. Be advised this trail has a curfew after the businesses on the trail close. See you on the trails

## SAVOY



## KANARY KATS

by Doug Decoigne

Greetings. Well, the trail work is over as are the holidays. Hopefully we are all spending our leisure time out on the trails!

The SKK had a successful holiday party, and spent mid-December re-clearing many miles of trails of downed trees, etc. thanks to the heavy snow/ rain we received. I'm sure most clubs had the same experience... a never-ending process. We have seen many welcome new faces on weekends for trail work, as many as 20 people on several Sundays! A huge boost to our efforts! Thanks everyone!

We have a busy schedule of events this winter: Club rides most weekends (See [savoykanarykats.org](http://savoykanarykats.org) for specifics), January 31-Old Timers Ride followed by the raffling of the Ski-Doo snowmobile at the Hilltop, our fantastic winter carnival Feb. 14, 8am-4pm, benefitting the Harold Rice scholarship fund, snow or no snow! Regular monthly club meetings second Friday of the month - 7pm at the Hilltop, with one exception: February meeting Friday, 2/6 (first Friday in February) Think snow! 🐾

# Trail Tales

By Brad Stafford

In the past, I've written articles about snowmobile safety and being prepared, my perspectives on the sport we love and the importance of supporting your local club and SAM. I can't emphasize how important it is for all of us to take that extra step and help out your club anyway that you can, at functions and work-bees, so our trails will continue to stay open and in decent shape to ride. But this time I've decided to take you in a little different direction and share with you one of my "Trail Tales."

One of my earliest memories of snowmobiling happened in the early 70's, when I was about 7 years old and my little sister was about 5. We were lucky enough to enjoy the wintertime riding snowmobiles with our parents on their machines and on our own "Kitty Kat." We did our best sharing "Sibling Quality Time" but as you can imagine, this lead to conflicts on whose turn it was as we would just ride around randomly in the backyard by the house.

My dad came up with the solution to this problem by breaking a trail out through our property, which included some woods and fields, probably a quarter-mile loop. The snow was deep enough so we had our own track that kept us on the trail. We would ride the loop and then stop by the barn to swap. The problem was solved and I can't imagine how many miles we put on that machine. It seemed like a flawless plan until...

As I remember back to that day, my parents had friends over to visit who had never ridden sleds before and wanted to try. My mom's sled was a Lynx 292 and a great rookie machine. Everyone gathered by the barn and talked as my sister and I started our routine of riding the loop. I remember them laughing as my sister rode out of sight. We could hear the machine running and her singing as she always did as she made her way around. My parents'



PHOTOS BY GERRY BALCHUINAS AND STAN KOPALA

friends then followed suit on my mom's machine, each taking a trip around our loop and coming back to the barn with a smile and that glow you get when you ride a sled for the first time.

As usual, when it comes to snowmobiling and life, just when you let your guard

down there comes the curveball. As I returned from my ride I noticed my mom having a fit, knowing all too well what those looked like. Come to find out, my sister saw Mom's Lynx just sitting there idling and thought it must be her turn to take a ride around the loop. Before any-



body could stop her, she jumped on, and off she went. My dad reached over and shut down the Kitty Kat. I remember the look of despair from my mom and their friends and all the suggestions of what to do. "Get your other sled and go get her!" "Run after her and make her stop!" I remember my dad just smile and say, "Listen, the motor, she's not going fast and she's still singing."

The next 2-3 minutes were probably some of the longest in my mom's life, although I've given her a couple myself. But my sister, being who she was, made the loop and pulled up where we always did, and stopped. She got off the machine and wondered why Mom came and gave her one of the biggest hugs of her life. There were laughs and sighs of relief from everyone, except me, as I got the "not today" response when I asked if it was my turn on the big machine.

As I was writing these words it seemed like my dad and sister were right here



with me, although they have moved on from this world to what awaits us in the next. And I imagine they can hear me when I say, "Hope your still singing when you ride, Sis, and remind Dad to keep the rubber side down." 🐾



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# Do It Yourself Sign Making - Re-Visited

By Jim Richard

**T**he November 2011 issue carried my first article about do-it-yourself trail signs. After many attempts and failures, I've finally settled on the best method to make them. Here is a recap of the original article and the new how-to's.

Laser printed self-adhesive polyester material applied to plastic sign boards makes professional looking signs for trail route numbers, advertisements, or any other kind of trail information. My early attempts failed because I used uncoated toner which would rapidly erode, but not in all cases. A number of factors such as temperature of the laser fuser, toner quality, and exposure to wind, rain, and sun would allow some signs to last longer than others. Coating the signs was a hit or miss attempt. Clear spray paint would sometimes discolor or bleed the toner. The paint would eventually yellow and peel. At the end of the first article I discussed problems I had with clear polyester lamination. Early attempts at that had some bubbling, but perfecting an application method solved that. There were some problems with the type of plastic used for backing. Got that solved too! Now that the method is perfected, I have signs looking as good as new over two years later. The only noticeable aging is slight change of red toner to orange on southeast to southwest exposed signs.

The first step is laying out the sign. Any type of page layout software compatible with your computer will work. I use Pages on a Mac. Your signs can be small (I've made up to six on a 8.5 x 11 inch sheet) or as large as a full sheet. Even larger signs can be made by "tiling" multiple sheets. Sheets are even available in 11 x 17 inch but you need a tabloid printer for that. I originally printed on die-cut circle-shaped labels but found that full size prints cut into smaller square labels are much easier. Save money by trial-printing your layouts to paper first. Self-adhesive polyester has a



peel-off backing that is slit for easy removal. Use diagonally slit type for small signs and single 8.5 inch slit for full sheet signs. If your sign ends up without a slit, it will be hard to separate. If this happens, make your own by carefully scoring the backing with a very sharp knife. Be careful not to cut too deep!

Now that you have a sign, it is time to apply a clear laminate sheet. The clear printable polyester from my supplier is not advertised for laminating but it does the job perfectly. Use the type with a single 8.5-inch slit. The trick is applying it! Take your full sheet sign or full sheet print of smaller signs and place the clear

on top (step 1). Align it very carefully, place face-up on a hard, flat, and clean countertop, with the narrow end towards you. Tape the entire edge nearest you to the countertop. Make sure the lower sheet stays aligned. The next step takes some practice! Get a window squeegee at least 9 or 10 inches wide or similar tool. Place it across the sign just before the clear's back slit. Roll the other end of the clear towards you. The backing will "pop" away. Now, with even pressure, push the squeegee forward as you coax the clear's backing forward (step 2). Do not get too far ahead or you will pinch the backing. Now untape the sign and turn it around, re-tape





it (step 3) and repeat step 2. You may waste the first try but once you get the knack, your lamination will be bubble free!

Plastic signboards must not be polyethylene or polypropylene. This is what the peel-off backing is coated with so the sign won't stay stuck! The best boards are white cellular PVC. The stuff is UV stabilized and made for sign-making. The adhesive fuses to the PVC and makes the sign virtually non-removable. A full 4x8 sheet is about \$50, but local plastic supply houses often sell small "drops" from larger jobs at a reduced price, usually a dollar a pound. Smooth ABS material also works. Avoid pebbly finishes because smooth material has better adhesion. I use a 3mm thick sheet for small signs and a 6mm thick sheet for large signs. By using white board, the sign background and board are the same white color. The shape of the printed area stands out like a die-cut label and crooked trim cuts are hidden. I have made a few large signs on thin white aluminum flashing. They look just like baked-on enamel and are flexible for round surfaces, like a tree.

If you are making small signs, cut out the laminated sheet with scissors or better yet, a paper shear. Peel and apply to your signboards. If the sign is large, apply it to the board using the same steps as laminating. The sign will stay aligned and bubble free.

Drill holes in your signs slightly larger than the nails you use. Aluminum siding nails are the best for trees. They are easier



PHOTOS BY JIM RICHARD

on chain saws if ever cut. Never nail tight on trees. Use 1.5 inch nails driven in half an inch. The tree will grow into the nails. Angle the nails slightly to stabilize the sign. Never put up signs without permission from the tree or property owner!

If you want to try my techniques and need further help, send me an email at [info@knoxtrail.com](mailto:info@knoxtrail.com). I'll send links for what materials to get, and where. My next project is reflective signs. I have some prototypes in testing and they look good. I'll show you how to make 'em in a future article! 🐾



## Legislative Corner

BY LARRY TUCKER

# The 2014 Mass. Trails Conference Reveals Growing Interest in Trails



*Dave Purple (center), SAM Delegate and Savoy Kanary Kats member, was one of four SAM members in attendance.*

PHOTOS BY DAN GOULD

**T**he 3rd Annual Massachusetts Trails Conference on November 8 reflected a continuing groundswell of interest in trails in the Commonwealth. The fact that this year's conference grew by 28% over last year underscores a not surprising boost in involvement by all trail enthusiasts.

Over 250 participants from every trail-based organization one can imagine were

there, including conservation commissions, state land advocates, bike trail committees, land trusts and multiple trail user groups. Snowmobile attendees included Dave Purple; Dean Zuppio, MARTAB snowmobile representative; Lawrence Tucker; and SAM President, Dan Gould.

The event was again co-sponsored by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Board (MARTAB), at the Double Tree Hotel and Conference Center in Leominster. The DCR, with 450,000 acres, the ninth largest State Park system in the country, was offering an opportunity for all trail users to gain awareness of the different users, to learn from each other and to come together to realize a more enhanced trail system in Massachusetts.

This daylong event offered 16 appealing and beneficial sessions. One seminar titled "Examining Rail Trail Surface Options: Design, Construction and Maintenance" discussed the surface designs on the Norwottuck Rail Trail and the Mass Central Rail Trail. This was led by John Scannell, DCR Regional Director of Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP). John has extensive experience with the Public Access Plan for both the Wachusett and the Sudbury watersheds. The Mass Central Rail Trail runs on DCR DWSP lands in the Wachusett and Ware River watershed.

Another seminar titled "Local and Regional Trail Visions" gave an interesting look into a successful trail visioning process for the community of Groton. Paul Funch, of the Groton Trails Committee, explained how this committee used GPS technology to create an interactive map of all 110 miles of town trails and post it on the committee's website.

Peter Westover, of Conservation Works, who are involved in trail system design and construction, led "Negotiating Trail Easements." Peter presented a very interesting seminar on the laying out and construction of the 47-mile, 10-town Robert Frost Trail.



Stephanie Cooper, Assistant Secretary for Land & Forest Conservation within the Mass Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, led the “Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation in Mass: Programs, Policies and Updates” seminar, which highlighted OHV use on state lands and the use of OHV funds. Captain Merri Walker of the Mass. Environmental Police spoke about OHV laws and regulations, and took many questions.

The “State-Wide Trail Mapping Center” panel discussion presented an outline and strategy for our state to create an accessible trail map database for all trails across the entire state.

This is just a highlight of some of the very interesting and informative seminars. I hope it has piqued your interest in considering attending next year. Thanks to Amanda Lewis of the DCR, most of the presentations are online at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/services-and-assistance/grants-and-technical-assistance/2014-massachusetts-trails-conference.html>



*The Sustainable Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance workshop was a hit with attendees.*

[setts-trails-conference.html](http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/services-and-assistance/grants-and-technical-assistance/2014-massachusetts-trails-conference.html)

Special thanks go to Amanda Lewis, DCR, Recreational Trails Program, Paul Jahnige, DCR, Director of Greenways and Trails Program, and Dick O'Brien, the Chairman of MARTAB, for their tireless efforts to bring this event to its culmina-

tion. I hope to see you all next year.

The emphasis on creating, building and maintaining trails in Massachusetts continues to evolve and expand, not only for SAM clubs, but for the entire trails community. And, remember, snowmobilers are trail stewards. 🐾

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Avoid engine damage, pay attention to ethanol levels in fuel. PHOTO BY DAN GOULD

# Look Before You PUMP

*Snowmobiles should not use fuel with more than 10% ethanol (E-10)*

The International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association (ISMA) has partnered with the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) and the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) in the 'Look Before You Pump' campaign, an ethanol education and consumer protection program. The campaign reminds consumers to always use fuels containing no greater than ten percent ethanol when powering their outdoor power equipment or other non-road product, such as boats, snowmobiles and motorcycles, not designed for higher ethanol fuel blends.

The International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association is the leading association representing the manufacturers of

snowmobiles, which encourage policies, programs and activities to improve the lifestyle activity of snowmobiling.

The 'Look Before You Pump' campaign is most known by its emblematic prominent, red warning hand symbol indicating 'OK' for 10 percent ethanol and 'No' for mid-level ethanol blends (such as E15, E30, E85). The campaign was launched in October 2013, in response to higher ethanol blended fuels being made available in the marketplace for 'flex-fuel' automobiles, and to warn consumers not to inadvertently mis-fuel their engine products not designed to handle these higher ethanol fuel blends.

The level of support for 'Look Before You Pump' continues to grow. No one wants to damage or destroy their equipment. But the changing fuel marketplace demands education, as evidenced by retailers, dealers, and manufacturers—and now major industry organizations—being more proactive in telling American consumers and business owners to be more mindful when selecting the right fuel for their products.

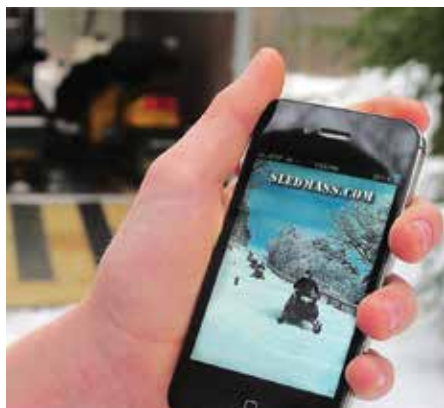




According to Ed Klim, President of ISMA, "It is important our customers know their fuel selection is important."

The National Marine Manufacturers Association also joined forces this summer in spreading the campaign messaging, and major retail outlets including Lowe's, Walmart and True Value, as well as independent dealers, began using the 'Look Before You Pump' message in their stores and in customer circulars and catalogs this past year.

A summer 2013 Interactive study shows the vast majority of Americans (71 percent) are "not at all sure" if it is illegal or legal to put high level ethanol gas (i.e., anything greater than 10 percent ethanol) into engines such as those in boats, mowers, chain saws, snowmobiles, generators and other engine products. The US EPA is on record stating that snowmobiles should NOT use fuel with more than 10% ethanol (E-10). 🐾



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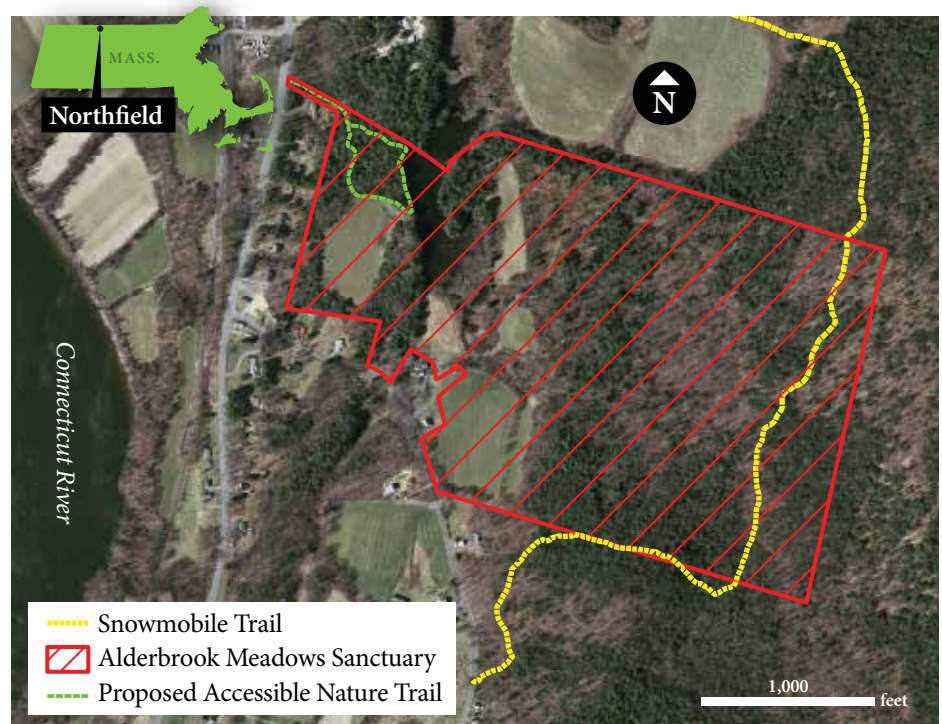
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# SAM Partners with Land Trust to Protect Key Trail in Northfield

One of the most important north-south snowmobile trail corridors in Northfield is one step closer to permanent protection thanks to a partnership between landowners Bill and Nancy Ames, the Northfield Snowmobile Club, the Town of Northfield, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, and the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts.

Bill and Nancy Ames own 145 acres of woods, agricultural fields and wetlands that slope up from the picturesque Connecticut River farmlands to the side of Beers Mountain. During the course of the year, the property sees a lot of activity. Local farmer Bill Llewelyn of Five Point Farm, Northfield's only dairy farm, mows 2,000 bales of hay each year from the Ames' 19 acres of hayfields. The nearby woods include stands of oak and plentiful white pine and are managed for timber production. The forest edges provide shelter for the animals that forage in the open fields and a thriving beaver population has created two ponds set in wetlands that teem with bird and animal life. For decades the Northfield Snowmobile Club has used and maintained a trail on the property that provides a critical north-south corridor for riders.

Thanks to their conservation vision, Bill and Nancy Ames wish to permanently protect the farm by placing a conservation restriction (CR) on 142 acres of their property. A CR allows the landowners to continue to own the property and enjoy the land, but permanently prevents development. In this case, the CR will also include a provision to allow the use and maintenance of the snowmobile trail in perpetuity.



**“This project will enable snowmobile enthusiasts to have access to the trail on the property for generations to come”**



Thanks to a \$5,000 donation by the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts, the project is one step closer to reality. “We are thrilled to be working with the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts, Peter Blake of the Northfield Snowmobile Club, and the Town of Northfield to help the Ames family

protect this significant property,” said Jay Rasku, Land Conservation Director with Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust. “This project will enable snowmobile enthusiasts to have access to the trail on the property for generations to come. And we look forward to working with riders to secure other important trail resources across in North Central and Western Massachusetts.”

In addition, the conservation of the Ames family land – to be named Alderbrook Meadow Sanctuary – will involve the creation of a loop trail designed specifically to be wheelchair-accessible. The trail will invite the public to an observation deck at the pond and will provide places to sit and enjoy (and learn about) nature. 🐾





## Member Profile

# Peter Blake

**Club:** Northfield Snowmobile Club

**Years snowmobiling:** 40

**Current snowmobile:** 2003 Arctic Cat Pantera 550

**Club position:** Currently serving as the club treasurer for the past five years, and SAM Delegate for nine years. I also served as president of my club for five years and before that as vice president for four years.

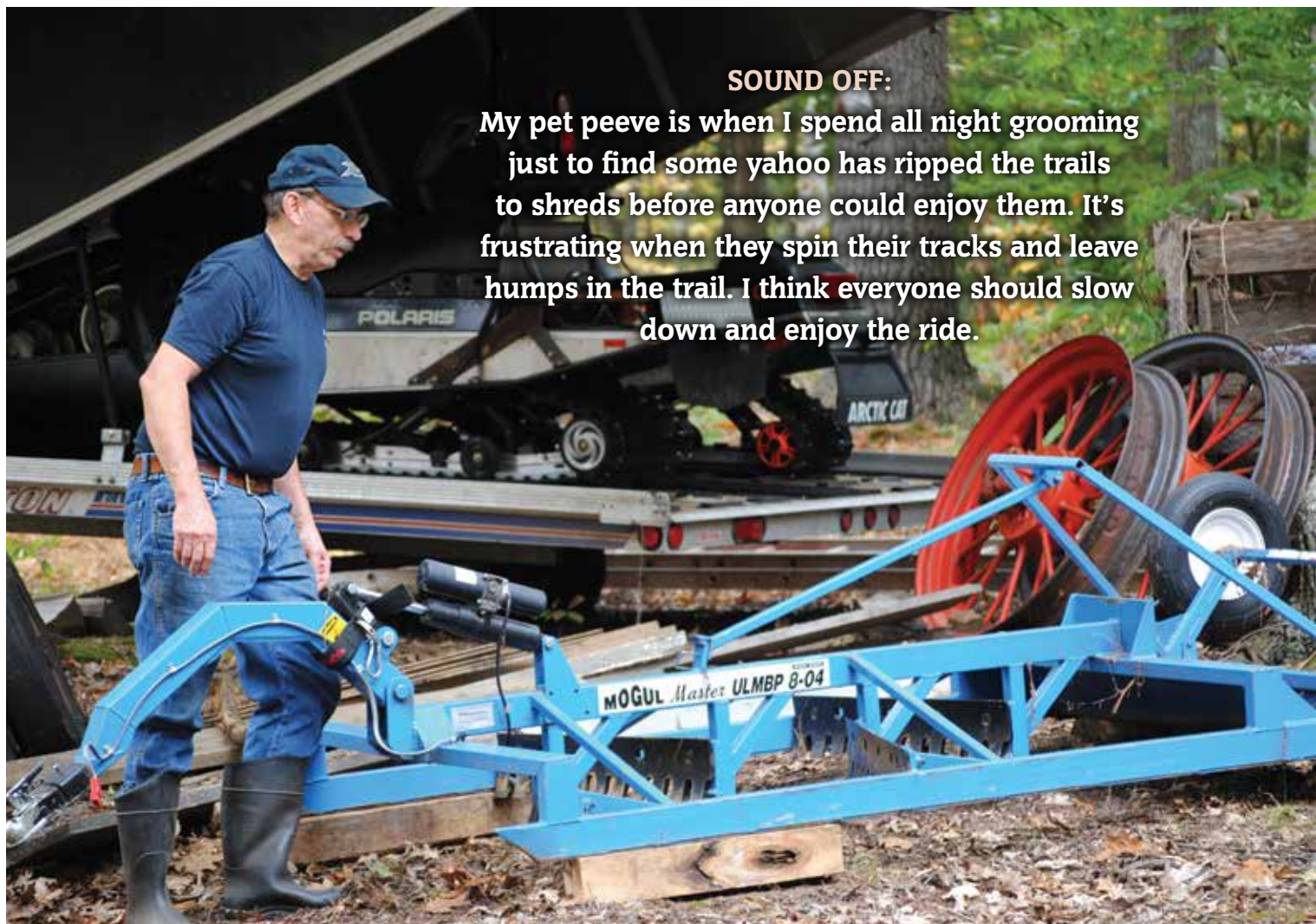


**VOLUNTEER WORK:** I'm out doing trail work every weekend, building bridges on the trails and in the community! I also groom the trails all winter long.

**FAVORITE RIDING AREA:** Right here in Northfield. After a long night of grooming, it's very satisfying to ride nice smooth trails.

### SOUND OFF:

My pet peeve is when I spend all night grooming just to find some yahoo has ripped the trails to shreds before anyone could enjoy them. It's frustrating when they spin their tracks and leave humps in the trail. I think everyone should slow down and enjoy the ride.



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