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Curious George waits for snowmobilers to pass by along the trails of BGL.

PHOTO BY BRAD STAFFORD



The Adams Sno-Drifters sell popcorn for benefit of Shriners. PHOTO BY JOE ROGGE



This fantastic Chevy Astro groomer makes smooth work of the snow while operated by Bruce Cooper of Knox Trail.

PHOTO BY JIM RICHARD

Club Photos

See Club News on page 6



A big work crew makes the trail work go faster for the Buckland Riders.

PHOTO BY STEVE HOWLAND



A Massachusetts musher zips along the trail.

PHOTO BY JEFF GAMELLI

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The Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts is committed to enhancing safe snowmobiling in Massachusetts.



ON THE COVER

The sparkling sun welcomes snowmobilers to Worcester County. PHOTO BY DAN GOULD

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President's Message

BY DAN GOULD

What I did this summer

What's new in the world of SAM? Lots-o'-stuff. This summer the Executive Committee wrestled with a review of the bylaws, a task that should actually be done every year or two, not after ten years whizzing by. So, why did we all of a sudden decide to take on such a thrilling rewrite? The hot-prod to the rear end was an even greater need to finally compose a policy manual or Standard Operating Procedure guide, as it's known.

SOPs are far more exciting to write than bylaws. I'd compare it to painting a house versus scraping the old flakes off. Thrilling stuff!

The issue before us was a matter of organization. For instance, in 2004 the Delegates approved a policy regarding replacement trail pass decals. Trouble is, few remember what the exact language was and the only way to figure it out was to dig through ten years of action-packed meeting minutes. Neato, that's like cleaning the gutters.

This is an ongoing issue in regards to other decrees handed down by the Delegates over the years. Questions arise about dues, committees, groomer policy and so forth. A debate ensues and time is wasted.

So, I asked the Executive Committee to join me in an endless summer of fun. We dug through old minutes, taking note of critical decisions and edicts made over the past million years. We then tried to make sense of it all and organize the thoughts for perpetuity.

This led to the belief that the bylaws needed tweaking to dovetail with the SOPs. If you're gonna paint the house, you need to paint the trim. Every time we thought the paint was dry, we'd find a blemish that forced a second coat.

The finished product was presented to the Delegates in October. You should have seen their faces light up when they realized

we were going to review every item, line by line! It was precious. We got about half way through when someone finally interrupted and claimed that it was time to go home. Killjoy.

The good news is that we're in the mineral spirits phase of clean up. From this point on, new policies will be entered into our shiny new SOP book instead of being chucked into a moldy box at the rear of the garage, next to the dead mouse that no one will touch.

The chore of painting a house is a stinker. I'd rank it just short of cleaning a septic tank with a toothbrush. But there's nothing like standing back and enjoying the colorful glow after it's all done. I'm talking about the house, of course, not the septic, and in this case the bylaws and SOPs, which were stinkers, too.

Next up... Vice President Jeff Miller and I plan to take the dreaded map in a new direction. This could take a while. Stay tuned. 🐾



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Snowmobile Trail Work:

By Randy Toth

A number of folks seem to think that our yearly trail work effort is nothing more than grabbing a pair of loppers and strolling along a snowmobile trail snipping a few inches of tree growth here and there. Besides the loppers, bringing a lunch and something to drink is also essential to enjoy a day of walking and working in the woods. This idyllic picture of trail work may be true in a farmer's meadow; but is far removed from reality on most forest trails. You wouldn't believe just how far some trees grow in a year or the number of rocks that surface after one winter or the rapidity with which water bars fill in with debris or the wear and tear on bridges every year or the number of trees that come crashing down each year or the erosion caused by spring, fall and summer cloudbursts. In order to properly face reality, let's look at what a well-equipped trail crew might routinely carry during the fall trail-clearing season.

Transportation, especially for us senior trail crew volunteers, consists of a couple of registered ATVs (\$250 fine for no registration) and helmets (\$250 fine for no helmet) and landowner permission (\$250 fine for trespassing). A small tool kit, along with an air pump or a can of tire sealant is a welcome addition in the event of a flat. We also display a sign identifying us as a snowmobile trail work crew and describing what we do. We also check in with the forest supervisor in order to legally operate on snowmobile trails, which don't normally permit ATVs.

Be Prepared

PHOTOS BY RANDY TOTH

A full complement of equipment can make trail maintenance easier and more productive.

Our equipment repertoire is quite extensive and can be tailored to meet the needs of the job at hand, but we never enter the woods without a majority of the following items:

- First there is a chainsaw with extra gas and oil and a small tool kit with a file for field repairs. A hammer and wedge or two are also mandatory for when you get the chainsaw stuck while cutting a downed tree. Of course personal protection equipment for the eyes, ears, and body parts is strongly recommended as is a chainsaw safety course.
- Loppers, the anvil or bypass type, and a hand saw make quick work of small trees, branches and vegetation. Sometimes pole saws and hookers are very useful for clearing high overhead branches which aren't so high with lots of snow on the ground. Our custom hooker has a "J-Hook" on one end and screws together in sections for easy transport. It is very useful in grabbing high branches and pulling them down far enough to be cut with loppers.
- Good, tough work gloves are a must to protect your hands from cuts, scrapes, scratches and blisters. Also, don't forget the bug spray for protection against mosquitoes and ticks especially, with the prevalence of Lyme disease, Eastern Equine Encephalitis and West Nile Virus to name a few.
- Waterbar maintenance tools usually consist of shovels and picks and sometimes even rakes to make clearing existing waterbars or constructing new waterbars easier.
- Rock relocation equipment involves shovels, picks, pry bars, come-alongs or ATV winches, tree savers, snatch blocks, clevis pins, lengths of strong chain, cable or nylon strap. Sometimes old tire chains are very useful for capturing and holding on to rocks while pulling them off of the trail. The tire chains grip the rocks nicely and avoid the problem of a simple chain or cable constantly slipping off. A sledgehammer is



sometime useful, as a last resort, for breaking off the top of stubborn protruding rocks that can't be dug or pried out. It can even be used to break off pieces of protruding ledge.

- Waterproof boots are useful for standing in mud holes while digging an outlet to drain them or for walking in streambeds to examine the underside of bridges. A tape measure with pencil and paper is useful for recording the size of bridge repair material necessary to fix a problem.
- Heavy hammers and long nails are needed for securing loose decking and installing new decking and wrecking bars (especially the 4 foot long ones) are great for easily pulling up stubborn old decking.

- A large plastic garbage bag for collecting garbage, cans and bottles along the trail is very useful for hauling trash out of the woods.
- Plenty of food and water, cell phones, a flashlight, matches, warm clothing and raingear are also in order just in case things don't go exactly as planned.
- Navigation aids like a map, compass or GPS are generally not required due to the difficulty of getting lost on a known snowmobile trail. However, a GPS is useful for marking a new trail or noting the exact location of various trail obstacles for future work parties.
- Other items like brush cutters, pole chainsaws, tractors, brush hogs, excavators, bulldozers, dump trucks, jackhammers, dynamite, etc. are also occasionally called for; but not discussed further in this article.

Finally one must remember to record the number of volunteer work hours performed by the work party and turn them in to the state authorities and the SAM office so they can keep track of the time spent in the woods doing public service trail work. OK — Now get out there and help get our trails ready! 🐾



ADAMS SNO DRIFTERS

by Chrissy Satko and Joe Rogge

As we write this we are looking at Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow. Under the heading "Yesterday" we look back to our participation in the August Agricultural Fair in Adams. We also participated in the annual Bike Night and Fall Run. We are proud of the fact we raised a significant amount of money for the Shriners through the sale of popcorn at Bike Night. It was a team effort. The team was pretty much the same group that does all the special projects but it does demonstrate what camaraderie and organization can do. Looking at "Today" we are organizing trail trims, and leadership is working with landowners to insure a positive riding season. We continue to work with the DCR to meet common goals for our local trails. As we look to "Tomorrow" we anticipate a great riding season along with preparation for our December Christmas Party. We are also in the process of discussing the allocation of club funds for various charities during this season, and are working with a group of community members to advance snowmobiling in the Northern Berkshire area. We meet on the second Thursday of the month, 7pm, at the American Legion.



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 per snowmobile (\$50 if you join before December 15) and include 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 (7:00 PM 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. Grooming reports are promptly posted in the SAM Forums by our trail coordinators within hours of grooming.



BERNARDSTON-GILL-LEYDEN

by Brad Stafford, club president

Leaves have fallen, and now hopefully soon, we will see the white stuff that we look forward to. This year we hope to have a few areas with groomer upgrades to tracked vehicles vs. just snowmobiles like our mini truck and Geo tracker that we currently use. There are a couple of trail changes and new QUIET ZONES so PLEASE obey all signs that you see, not just on our trail system but wherever you are. These posting are not there because we wanted to put them there, but because we had to! These signs are usually by landowner request and obeying them is vital to keeping our trails open. We will have workbees throughout November and December and can always use more help. Find out when and where by coming to our meetings at the Bernardston Vets club at 7pm on the first Monday of the month or email me at nvrplay2ty@yahoo.com. Don't forget to take advantage of our early bird special on trail passes by going to our website www.bglsnow.com and for all news and updates follow our club on Facebook at Bernardston Gill Leyden snowmobile club. Ride safe and Keep the Rubber Side Down.



BUCKLAND RIDERS

by Steven Howland, secretary

The new season is just around the corner and I can hardly wait. To kick of the season we will once again be selling hot stuffed baked potatoes in conjunction with Cliff's Smokin' Barbecue at the Shelburne Falls Moonlight Magic event on Friday, November 28. Yes, that's the day after Thanksgiving. This is a big event in Shelburne Falls with stores open late, street vendors, music and more. We have a great time being part of this event and the weather is usually just right for warming up with a steaming hot potato topped with pulled pork and melted cheese. Hope to see you there. Of course there's always the regular work to do as well. Meetings are held at the Buckland Fire Department on the second Monday of the month at 7pm. To keep up with activities, work days, club rides and more be sure to visit our web page at bucklandriders.com and sign up for our email group.



CHESTERFIELD FOUR SEASONS

by Bill, Golaski, president

Well it's already November, how time flies. As the weather gets colder we think even more about riding the sled. If you have not prepped the sled yet, better get going! Part of that prep is to get this winter's trail pass and club membership. Both are available at our meetings on the 2nd and last Tuesday of the month at 7pm. The club is working on other sales locations, as Chesterfield General Store is now closed. We are still working hard on the trails. November is our last big push on trail work. We can always use some more help, so please lend a hand. I had many calls this summer about re-routing some trails. Watch for the new trails and stay off the old, please. Also, we are looking for members to help keep the club open during riding season. Come to a meeting and get involved, it's your club and trails. The club is running two raffles, one for a black powder gun and one for an enclosed snowmobile trailer. Go to the

meeting, call the club at 413-296-4048, or Bill Golaski at 413-585-9403 for ticket info. Keep checking the SAM website for more club info. Thanks to all the members that keep the club running. You know who you are.



CONWAY

by Ed Skorupski

Another season has already started. You may not believe this, but it is certainly evident within the Conway Snowmobile Club. Trail work started the Sunday after the Sled Expo and will be continuing until further notice. Crew and volunteers meet on Sundays at 9am at the library in Conway. We are also getting the grooming equipment ready for what we hope is a long riding season. You can email us or FB us for more information. We are still gathering names for grooming trainees for this year. No experience necessary, we will train you. All you need is enthusiasm and the willingness to learn. Mechanical aptitude is a plus. For some people, nothing is as satisfying as flattening the bumps and filling the divots. Give yourself a chance to find out if you are one of them. Meetings this year will be held on the first Tuesday of month, 7pm at the Conway Fire Station. Stop by and meet your fellow club members. Buy your trail pass early, help the club and save ten dollars. Passes are available online at sledconway.com, at meetings, or check our website for retail partners. Remember, this is your club, get involved.



EASY RIDERS

by Steven Conti, vice president

As we get a little closer to the snowmobiling season, it's about time to dust off the sled and get her running with some fresh gas. The Easy Riders Snowmobile Club members are planning a tune up day for members to get together and get their trailers maintained. Always a good idea. At our November meeting we will continue with trip planning and current sled events talk. Please check us out on Facebook or at ersc.net. Wishing you all a very happy Thanksgiving. Always thinking snow.



GREATER WHATELY

by Robert Sabola

Time seems to be traveling at warp speed. My Dad always said "time waits for no one." I think about how much needs to be done before winter to get the trails and bridges back in order. Getting the work done is always a task and getting folks to help is even a greater task. I'm not sure why more people don't want to get involved when it comes to trail work. For those of you that have never experienced working with a crew on a bridge or clearing a trail or visiting a landowner for permission, you're missing out on an experience of a lifetime. It doesn't cost a penny, only a few hours of your time. It's memories being made that someday you will look back on and smile. Folks that get outdoors have a different perspective on life. Try it. You may just be surprised how good it will make you feel. 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: greaterwhatelysnowmobileclub@aol.com, visit us at sledmass.com/club/greater-whately-snowmobile-club



KNOX TRAIL SNO-RIDERS

by James Richard, media director

This is the slow news day time of year so I will keep it short. The club had its first meeting on September 28 and all of the "standard fare" was discussed. It looks like a good season ahead with a lot of new trails and improvements. The Vintage

meet on September 9 was a great success and the weather was perfect. We are all anticipating the upcoming Sled Expo, the December Raffle Drawing, Dinner, and Dance, and oh, by the way, SNOW! Be on the lookout for Bruce Cooper of Cooper Excavating and his fantastic Chevy Astro Van atop an LMC groomer. He donates the machine time to the club and grooms the larger trails in the Tolland, Otis, and now, Beartown State Forest. So if you are on a trail and see a Chevy Astro Van approaching, you probably are not hallucinating! Thank you, Mr. Cooper!



SAVOY KANARY KATS

by Doug Decoigne

Hello SAM! I hope everyone is well. As all SAM clubs are doing, we Kanary Kats are well into trail maintenance and equipment repairs at this time. We are utilizing our new track mounted brush mower every weekend. I would say that it is even more useful than we anticipated. We are raffling off a 2015 Ski-Doo MXZ 600 Sport liquid-cooled snowmobile with reverse and electric start, awesome machine! Tickets are \$20 each and no more than 700 will be sold. Tickets can be purchased by calling Sandra LaFrance at 413-743-2556 and are also available at LP Adams in Dalton, Ronnie's in Adams and Pittsfield, P.L.T. and at the Hilltop during meetings, second Friday of the month at 7pm. Please feel free to attend. It was great to see everyone at the Sled Expo, gets people in the "mood." Don't forget about SKK's early bird membership deal before 12/15, see our website for details. Think snow!! 🐾

Online at sledmass.com

- Poll: In what era did you start to ride?
- RTP Grants: Applications due February 1st
- Free classifieds: Buy & sell sleds, trailers
- Cat, Polaris, Ski-Doo unveil race sleds
- Interactive trail pass & club locator
- FAQ: Answers to your questions
- Mass sled laws and regulations



Charity Corner

By Marcia Miller

Christmas time already? The holidays will be here before you can say snow, so let's start thinking about the Toys for Tots program. As in the past, SAM's Charity Committee requests that each club bring a new, unwrapped toy (or a check made out to Toys for Tots) to the December 4th SAM meeting. The gifts will be distributed to children, who without these presents, would have a very disappointing holiday season. It's fun to be Santa!

Last year hundreds of toys were collected and more than \$300 donated during our fundraiser. It took six people to carry the bags of toys to the Oak Ridge Marine Corps breakfast, where they were dropped off. They were overwhelmed with the generosity of the clubs. We should be very proud of our members for making this program so successful.



PHOTO BY MARCIA MILLER

2014 CHARITY BREAKDOWN BY CLUB

Clubs	Grooming Hours	Trail Work Hours	Total Hours	Local Charity Donations	National Charity Donations	Total Donations
Adams Sno-Drifters	200	6	206	\$700.00	\$2,680.00	\$3,380.00
Berkshire Snow Seekers	248	360	608		\$70.00	\$70.00
Bernardston Gill Leyden			1,250	\$450.00	\$450.00	\$900.00
Buckland Riders	161	1,179	1,340	\$50.00		\$50.00
Chesterfield Four	400	600	1,000	\$1,700.00	\$300.00	\$2,000.00
Coldbrook	250	200	450	\$400.00		\$400.00
Conway	560	320	880	\$300.00	\$0.00	\$300.00
Easy Riders				\$400.00		\$400.00
Harvard	56	114	170	\$50.00	\$60.00	\$110.00
Hilltown	800	2,200	3,000	\$2,000.00	\$500.00	\$2,500.00
IndianHhead	170	325	505	\$300.00	\$100.00	\$400.00
Knox Trail Sno-Riders	235	458	693	\$250.00	\$100.00	\$350.00
Northfield	150	250	400	\$200.00	\$50.00	\$250.00
Savoy Canary Kats	365	150	515	\$3,200.00	\$720.00	\$3,920.00
SAM Club Totals	3,595	6,162	11,017	\$10,000.00	\$5,030.00	\$15,030.00

2014 CHARITY REPORT

As we all know, many of our neighbors are less fortunate and that's why it's so important to help in every way we can.

Last season SAM's clubs donated over \$15,000 to charities, of that \$10,000 went to local charities! We also donated over 11,000 hours of volunteer work. However, the actual numbers are far greater, maybe double. Unfortunately less than half of the clubs submit a charity report. Come on people, we know you are doing great things. Tell us about it.

In addition to Toys For Tots, SAM's other charity of choice is the Easter Seals' Camp SnoMo program, where children and young adults, ages 11-21, with disabilities and special needs can participate in a wide variety of activities including

A total of \$1,425 was collected for Camp SnoMo, including \$500 from the association.



water sports, team sports, hiking, archery, a ropes course and crafts.

Last year SAM clubs were challenged to donate \$50 towards SAM's Camp SnoMo charity, which funded a week of outdoor fun for two disabled Massachusetts residents. Only about half of the 34 clubs accepted the challenge, although a few exceeded it by donating \$100 and \$250. A total of \$1,425 was collected for

Camp SnoMo, including \$500 from the association. We fell short of our goal by a small amount but I'm confident we will do better this year. I ask every club to get ready for the call to action!

Many clubs volunteer time for charities and almost all participate in trail work and grooming. It is imperative that the hours be reported to SAM. The numbers clearly show that we are a community of givers, not takers. SAM shares this valuable information with legislators as well as state and federal agencies. It's easy for clubs to send the report, please be sure to do so.

We are very fortunate to be able to ride in a wonderful part of the country. We have been given much and in return, should give much back. In closing, thank you to all that participated in our charities. 🦋



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Legislative Corner

BY LARRY TUCKER



PHOTO BY MARK KENYON

A New Trend for LAND

Fall is the time of year to get our trails cleaned and ready for the coming season. The trail crews for all the clubs are out there working on our most important asset – our trails. My club has not only been working on existing trails but is undertaking the creation of some new trails. These activities have been on-going since Labor Day. So, I will start off by saying a big “thank you” to all the trail crews in the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts.

As most of our trails are receiving increased attention, so are the discussions and actions concerning land, land-use and open space preservation. Let's take a look at some very real numbers. Between 1985-1999 land

was being developed at a rate of 40 acres per day. Between 1999-2005 land development decreased to 20 acres per day, and between 2005-2013 land developments barely reached 13 acres per day. During this same timeframe however, activities to protect and conserve land have steadily increased to a high of 41 acres per day.

To further underscore this protection effort, during this 2005-2013 timeframe Massachusetts reached a milestone first for land, as permanently protected land in Massachusetts exceeded developed land. Today, Massachusetts has a total acreage of 5 million acres, of which 1.26 million acres is protected land and 1.1 million acres is developed land. This change has come about as the state has infused over \$370 million for park creation and awarded 1,380 grants to help municipalities and land trusts acquire and preserve open


As most of our trails are receiving increased attention, so are the discussions and actions concerning land, land-use and open space preservation.



space. And, the pace of land protection will continue to accelerate for the remaining 2.6 million acres as this land is neither developed nor protected. For example, the Kestrel Land Trust recently added 336 acres to the 10,000 acres of already conserved and protected land in the Mount Holyoke Range. This is part of the 1,000 acres they are trying to protect by the end of 2014. And they are continuing to work towards the goal of protecting the remaining 677 acres within the next six months.


What do all these numbers mean to us as snowmobilers? These numbers reveal that municipalities and land trusts are making an increasing number of land use decisions. These decisions almost always involve conservation restrictions and they almost always involve the restriction of "passive recreation only." It is these restrictions that could have an increasing impact on our sport. A good topic for discussion on this issue would be to open a dialogue with a land trust to improve the wording of the standard conservation restriction document used by land trusts so that the word "passive" would have to be intentionally included as opposed to being already embedded.

I am proud to say that the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts is ahead of the curve on this issue. Over the last several years SAM has partnered with land trusts such as the Worcester County Land Trust and the Franklin County Land Trust, and this has created a very favorable condition for SAM throughout the land protection community.

I hope to see you all soon and please keep in touch with your legislator for their support with our legislation, both H3856 and vintage bill H752. And remember, all snowmobilers are on the Land Conservation Team. 

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Requiem for a Sledder

By Mike O'Hara

This soul has not yet passed from the Earth but surely will if others continue the path they are on as demonstrated on February 17, 2014 on Trail 114 in Newark, Vermont.

I was, like many of you that welcomed the Valentine's Day storm, like a kid on Christmas morning. That snowfall gave snowmobilers a long awaited opportunity to travel anywhere on the Statewide Snowmobile Trail System. A friend of mine at work suggested a President's Day ride and I jumped at the opportunity. We departed at 8am at a crisp minus 10 degrees and headed out for the wide open trails of Essex County. The trip was absolutely fabulous with great trails and bright sunshine. After traveling through Maidstone we headed for lunch in Island Pond. We got a couple of cups of hot coffee and a great burger into us and headed out to return to Caledonia County and home.

This is where the trip turned from fun to one of great concern. At the Junction of 114 and 58, we turned south to find a trio of sleds traveling in our direction. The lead sled was a vintage model that produced periodic clouds of smoke followed by two more modern sleds that were nose to tail traveling at about 15 MPH. The slow pace was not an issue. The real problem was sled number two.

This individual rode to the extreme left of the trail all of the time. I actually motioned to the operator with my hand to move to the right—an action that was misread by the third sled as “pull over.” I had no intention or desire to pass any of the sleds in front of me. I was gravely concerned that an accident was imminent.

I watched in horror as this person continued uphill on a blind knoll with the sled in the opposite lane of travel. Around every corner this driver, who apparently is from a foreign country where they drive



Experienced riders stay right, just as you would when driving a car. PHOTO BY DAN GOULD

on the left, proceeded without a care. My riding partner and I slowed to a crawl to avoid what looked to be carnage in the making. I literally felt sick to my stomach. This went on for over four miles.

Adding insult to this unfolding tragedy in the making was the fact that sleds two and three had helmet communicators. I could not imagine traveling with this crew without chastising #2 for unsafe operation. Just prior to Bald Hill Pond, sled number three spotted someone on a feeder trail and pulled to the left to stop. I went by slowly hoping to get his attention, but no way. I proceeded cautiously, fully expecting to come upon an accident only to come up to the now party of two.

Driver number two did not have mirrors or any concern for what was behind him and traveled unaware of how many were still in his party. He also didn't care to stop at stop signs. We got to Job's Pond and I stopped. I had given up on gesturing to lefty and left them to their own devices.

This requiem is for the sledder on the second sled. You will die. Worse yet you

may live but kill or seriously harm some unsuspecting and law abiding snowmobiler. I don't expect that you will read this or a driver's manual. Your aberrant behavior reveals you only care about you. I am disappointed that I could not do something about your outrageous operation of a snowmobile.

The vintage driver and sled #3 are complicit in allowing you to operate the way you did. You need to correct bad driving habits in your traveling party. You also have a responsibility to make sure your party does not get lost by checking behind you once in a while.

The rest of the trip was uneventful. 99.9% of the miles I travel are safe and fun. Nearly all snowmobilers are good operators. There is a very small percentage, just like car drivers, that do not have a care about anyone. Those, unfortunately, are the ones that make the headlines with their reckless conduct. 🐼

Mike O'Hara is a member of the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers

Something is Missing

By Jim Richard

So you got your new sled, trailer, outfit, and helmet. Your Mass registration sticker is on the hood and the tank is full of gas. You head up to the Berkshires to the many miles of state forest trails but you feel like something is missing. What could it be? How about your SAM Trail Pass? You say to yourself "I don't need it because I'm staying on the state-owned trails." You realize many of the parking areas, and all of the gas stations and restaurants are on private property. Without your pass you are trespassing and subject to arrest! So you cave in and buy your pass. With it comes a map. The map tells you about the structure of the club and how much your help is needed. You are amazed to find how much riding is beyond the state forest boundaries. You ride and ride! You go home, come back and ride and ride again. You enjoy the smooth trails made that way by the groomers. "Wow, this is great," you say, but you still feel something's missing.

The season ends and you come back for a second season. You go to buy a trail pass but none are available. So you try to ride anyway. You don't get very far. The trail that was so smooth last year is blocked by a fallen tree. You get around that and find a closed gate with "No Trespassing" signs. So you turn around and try another way. You reach a raging brook where once stood a nice bridge, but it's gone! The trails you do manage to ride are bumpy and all of the trail signs are gone, too. You finally reach a state-owned trail and find it bumpy. Suddenly you realize what you are really missing! All of those trails are negotiated, made, and maintained by VOLUNTEERS.

Don't let the "second season" happen like this. Don't just gripe about the trails or expect them to be "just right." Learn how to run a groomer and groom some trails! Join a trail work party and go out to trim brush, build a bridge, and put up signs and snow fence. Help organize, set up, run, cook for, and knock down an event. Do you like to write? Like to work on equipment? The club's groomers always need work. On top of that, the club always needs officers!

Still uncertain? Your trail pass includes membership to a club. You are very welcome to attend the meetings and present your vote. There you will find a small circle of about 15-20 volunteers. Join them so the "second season" is just like the "first season". They work like crazy to make the riding the best it can be, sometimes to a point where there is no time for them to ride. Please help them find more time to ride and keep your ride too! Volunteer! 🐾



PHOTO BY JIM RICHARD

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