



Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs, Inc.

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WISCONSIN'S LANDOWNERS & SNOWMOBILERS

A UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP

Something unique has happened in the world of Wisconsin's outdoor recreation – something that is over 30 years in the making. It is Wisconsin's snowmobile trail system, and it shows how concerned individuals work with each other and their neighbors to create something extraordinary.

To give you an idea of what this is all about, the AWSC (Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs) has prepared this explanation of why the trail system exists and shows how it serves everyone's best interests. The questions that follow are the most common ones posed by landowners who have been asked to allow trails across their property.

1. What is the AWSC?

The Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC) is a statewide organization, which is also recognized at the national level. The AWSC is comprised of an Executive Board with Directors and Rep's representing each county within the state of Wisconsin. These individuals are all volunteers who are dedicated to the sport of snowmobiling.

The AWSC is the snowmobilers' voice at the at the Capitol, they promote safe and responsible riding, and they are involved with charitable fundraisers along with giving High School scholarships. AWSC membership is from club members, associate memberships and commercial (business) sponsorship.

2. How popular is snowmobiling?

The number of snowmobiles in use peaked in the 70's, however the sport is still very popular today due to the excellent trail systems that exist. In Wisconsin alone, there are over 600 active snowmobile clubs, and they are found in every county of the state. Snowmobiling is a major contributor to the Wisconsin winter recreation business.

3. Why do trails exist? Who pays for maintaining them?

Snowmobile trails exist so that snowmobilers can enjoy their sport in harmony with their neighbors. In the booming early days of snowmobiling (late 60's – early 70's) there were few snowmobile trails and people rode wherever they pleased. This created problems, so responsible snowmobilers formed clubs and worked to establish trails connecting various locales. This gave them places to ride without disturbing their neighbors. This approach has worked extremely well, and after 30 years, the trail system now covers virtually the entire state, with nearly 25,000 miles of trails.

Snowmobilers are especially proud of the fact that they pay for the maintenance of their local county, state and federal trails. Registration fees and gas taxes paid to the state, come back to fund trail development (cost of signs, bridges, etc...) and trail grooming, (operation of machines to smooth the trails). Landowners allow the free use of their land, and snowmobilers themselves donate countless hours of labor through local clubs to set up, mark and maintain the trails in their area. Many businesses also contribute to this effort.

4. Who decides where the trails go?

At the county level, clubs work together to build a network of trails that connect one club's system with another's. Then club representatives contact individual landowners to seek their permission to route a trail across a particular piece of land. The exact location of the trail is worked out with each property owner, and routing is made to keep the trail a reasonable distance away from homes or any other sensitive areas.

United We Trail – Divided We Fail

5. What does the landowner have to do?

The landowner does not have to do anything other than to provide permission, either verbally or by signing a standard permission form provided by the snowmobile club. The marking of trails is done by members of the local club.

6. Is a landowner liable for those on his property?

Under Wisconsin law, specifically Chapter 350.19 Section 895.52 landowners are not liable for any injury occurring on their property when they have granted permission for snowmobiling.

Note: A copy of the Wisconsin laws is available through the snowmobile club.

7. When are the trails open for use?

The trails are marked in the late fall, most commonly after crops have been harvested and the deer hunting season is over. The markers are usually removed by the end of March. The trails are open for use when adequate snow cover (usually 4 to 6 inches) is on the ground.

8. Are wheeled vehicles allowed on the trails?

Generally, snowmobilers discourage the use of wheeled vehicles (ATV's) on the snowmobile trails because of the damage they can do when marginal snow conditions exist. Some Wisconsin counties routinely allow ATV's to share part of the snowmobile trails.

Wisconsin law allows landowners to use ATV's on their own property. The same law also allows ATV's to be operated on trails where each individual landowner has specifically given permission to allow ATV use. If you are concerned about this, please consult with your local club for further information.

9. What if problems occur?

Snowmobile clubs exist to promote responsible snowmobiling and to prevent problems from occurring. Since snowmobilers are the guests of landowners, your local club will work with you if you should have any specific concerns. Each club has a trail-boss or trail committee who will respond if any problems should arise.

10. Is there anything else a landowner should know?

YES! Wisconsin's snowmobilers are proud of the statewide trail system that ranks the best in the nation. By allowing trails to be set up, the landowners are helping clubs to promote responsible and safe snowmobiling, which is a benefit to everyone. This trail network would not be possible without the generosity of thousands of landowners which is why snowmobilers greatly appreciate the cooperation of landowners.

For further information – www.awsc.org

A local snowmobile club.