



## *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 40 years in the making. It is Wisconsin's snowmobile trail system, and it shows how committed 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 a factsheet which explains 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. How popular is snowmobiling?**

The number of snowmobiles in use continues to increase due in no small part to the excellent trail systems that exist statewide. In Wisconsin alone, there are close to 600 active AWSC snowmobile clubs. These clubs are not only responsible for the WI trail system, they are volunteers that promote safety, raise money for local charities, gather for social events, etc... Snowmobiling is a major contributor to the Wisconsin winter recreational business.

#### **2. What is the AWSC?**

The Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC) is a statewide non-profit organization that represents Wisconsin's snowmobilers at the state and national level. The AWSC is comprised of members who join through their local club. The AWSC is made up of an Executive Board with Directors and Reps representing each of the Wisconsin counties. These individuals are all volunteers who are dedicated to the sport of snowmobiling.

#### **3. Why do trails exist and who pays for maintaining them?**

Snowmobile trails exist so that snowmobilers can enjoy their sport in harmony with their neighbors and with nature. 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 40 years the trail system now covers virtually the entire state, with nearly 22,000 miles of trails.

Snowmobilers are especially proud of the fact that they pay for the maintenance of their system for local, county and state trails without state tax dollars. Registration fees and gas taxes paid to the state come back to help 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 financially to this effort.

*United We Trail – Divided We Fail*

#### **4. Who decides where the trails go?**

At the county level, clubs work together to build a network of trails that connects one club's system with another's. 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.

#### **5. What does the landowner have to do?**

Since the marking of the trails is done by members of the local snowmobile club, the landowner does not have to do anything other than provide permission, either verbally or by signing a standard permission form provided by the 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, nor does the owner have any responsibility to keep his/her property safe for such activity. A copy of the Wisconsin snowmobile laws is available through the snowmobile club. Please note that most clubs do incur the cost of liability insurance policies to cover injury on the trails.

#### **7. When do 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. Trail 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. Always check with local authorities!

#### **8. Are wheeled vehicles allowed on the trails?**

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

Wisconsin law allows landowners to use ATV's & UTV's on their own property. The same law also allows ATV's & UTV's to be operated on trails where each individual landowner has specifically given permission to allow ATV & UTV 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, safe 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. The trail network **would not be possible** without the generosity of thousands of landowners which is why snowmobilers appreciate the cooperation of landowners. By allowing trails to be set up, the landowners are helping clubs promote responsible and safe snowmobiling, and that is a benefit to all!

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