Wisconsin Snowmobiling PR / Marketing Considerations / Talking Points

Snowmobile Recreation Council Tourism Committee – APPROVED Snowmobile Recreation Council – APPROVED

Andrew Nussbaum, Wisconsin Department of Tourism Snowmobile Recreation Council Liaison / Tourism Committee Liaison - PIO / AWSC Liaison Updated Feb 5, 2025

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Governor's Snowmobile Recreation Council

• Origin and Appointments: There is created in the department of natural resources a snowmobile recreational council consisting of 15 members nominated by the governor, and with the advice and consent of the senate, appointed for staggered 3-year terms. Commencing on July 1, 1972, ...all terms shall be for 3 years with 5 positions on the council to expire each year. At least 5 members of the council shall be from the territory north, and at least 5 members shall be from the territory south, of a line running east and west through the south limits of the city of Stevens Point. s. 15.347(7), Wis. Stats. [exit DNR]

Duties: (1) The snowmobile recreational council shall carry out studies and make recommendations to the legislature, governor, department of natural resources and department of transportation on all matters related to this chapter or otherwise affecting snowmobiles and snowmobiling. (2) The department shall prepare written minutes of each meeting of the snowmobile recreational council and shall make them available to any interested party upon request. s. 350.14, Wis. Stats. [exit DNR]

- Wisconsin Department of Tourism and Wisconsin DNR representatives serve as advisory liaisons to the Council on a strictly ex-officio position (non-voting).
- Website with Minutes, etc.: http://dnr.wi.gov/Aid/Meetings.html

Members	Term Expires	Representing	Committee Assignment
Bob Lang, Chair	July 1, 2026	South	Chair participates on all
Sue Smedegard, Vice-C	Chair July 1, 2025	North	Vice-Chair participates on all
Lynsey Burzinski	July 1, 2027	North	Chair Tourism
Ann Degenhardt	July 1, 2027	South	Finance
Joel Enking	July 1, 2027	North	Infrastructure, Finance
Abby Haas	July 1, 2025	South	Chair Finance
Gary Hilgendorf	July 1, 2026	North	Chair Infrastructure
Mike Holden	July 1, 2025	South	Infrastructure, LE and Safety
Tara Krall	July 1, 2025	North	Tourism, Finance
Sam Landes	July 1, 2026	South	Chair LE and Safety
Andy Malecki, Jr.	July 1, 2026	North	Infrastructure, Finance
Dale Mayo	July 1, 2027	North	Infrastructure
Don Mrotek	July 1, 2025	North	LE and Safety, Tourism
Holly Tomlanovich	July 1, 2025	North	Tourism, LE and Safety
Erica Voelker	July 1, 2025	South	LE and Safety, Tourism

Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC)

- The Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC) maintains over 600 snowmobile clubs supported by over 41,000 club members
- AWSC estimates "over \$1 billion annually in tourism and retail revenue to state coffers"
- Volunteers throughout Wisconsin maintain more miles (25,000) of trail than any other state or province in North America. 20k miles funded (2024 DNR reporting), 5k miles unfunded
 - Minnesota: 21,000 / Maine: 13,200 / New York: 10,300
- Our state's snowmobile program, regarded as one of America's best, exists without funding from non-snowmobiling taxpayers. No General Fund revenue from non-snowmobilers is collected or spent under the Snowmobile Program.
- Snowmobile registration fees and a Wisconsin gasoline tax on 50 gallons per snowmobile are directed to a segregated account used to cover costs related to maintaining our state's snowmobile trails.
- AWSC is a volunteer organization, including county directors and reps, the executive board, and
 even the groomer operators. Snowmobile club members volunteer their time to obtain access
 from landowners, prepare the trails by trimming brush and removing hazardous objects. They
 mark the trails with directional and safety signs, groom these trails throughout the
 snowmobiling season, and finally, remove the signs, gates, etc. once the season has concluded.
- In 1969, a small group of concerned individuals met to discuss the challenges that recreational snowmobilers were facing. This small group of snowmobilers had the foresight to recognize that this new sport could not survive without coordinated leadership. If laws were to be written with respect to snowmobiling, these snowmobilers needed to be involved in this legislation. The Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC) is dedicated to the preservation of

- snowmobiling in Wisconsin and subsequently monitor regulations and proposed legislation that could affect this sport.
- Any person who is born on or after January 1, 1985, and who has reached the age of 12, must have completed and received a snowmobile safety certificate in order to operate a snowmobile in Wisconsin. The certificate must be carried while operating the snowmobile and displayed to a law enforcement officer upon demand.
- AWSC Motto: "United we trail, Divided we fail".
- 2019 marked 50th Anniversary of AWSC, now 55 years in 2024
- Only counties may apply for Snowmobile Program funds they are not available to private
 organizations or individuals. Once a county has been awarded a grant, it contracts with local
 (county) snowmobile associations and individual clubs for the construction and maintenance of
 the trail system.
- Snowmobile clubs bear the cost of carrying liability insurance (a minimum of \$2 million in coverage) related to trail use. Costs associated with the purchase and maintenance of expensive grooming machines are absorbed by snowmobilers.
- AWSC information sourced via site: https://awsc.org/

AWSC Youth KAOS Program (Kids and Adults On Snowmobiles)

MISSION: The purpose of the AWSC KAOS Youth Program is two-fold. First it is to give the youth an indepth understanding of how the total snowmobile program is organized, starting from the local clubs up to and including International. Secondly, KAOS is considered a leadership training program for young snowmobilers. As dedicated volunteers are getting older, our goal is to train the younger members to take over leadership roles in order to keep our organizations as strong as they currently are.

MEMBERSHIP: Each county elects one/two high school age snowmobilers (high school age being 14-18) who will represent their county in the statewide youth program known as KAOS (Kids and Adults On Snowmobiles) as a Youth Representative. Once a member of KAOS for a minimum of two years, youth can apply to become a Youth Advisor. These youth are selected by the Adult Committee and the Youth Chairman/Advisor(s). Youth Advisors can be ages 18-21 and serve as mentors to the Youth Representatives.

CHAIN OF COMMAND: The KAOS Program begins with the blessings of the AWSC Executive Board and the Board of Directors. Their directives are given to a Youth Chairman/Advisor(s). The Chairman/Advisor works firstly with an Adult Committee who form policy, implement ideas, and supervise all youth activities and projects.

https://awsc.org/KAOS/Youth-Clubs-Representatives

Next Gen Riders

Established in 2023, "Next Gen Riders are here to support, promote and grow the sport of snowmobiling for current and future generations."

To be part of the Next Gen Riders you must be within the age demographic of 21-35 years old and be a member of a snowmobile club / AWSC.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1fnMGkYPBb1-7mitcH6unwicd-gfDMr-T-OpDfDsJ6B0/viewform?edit requested=true

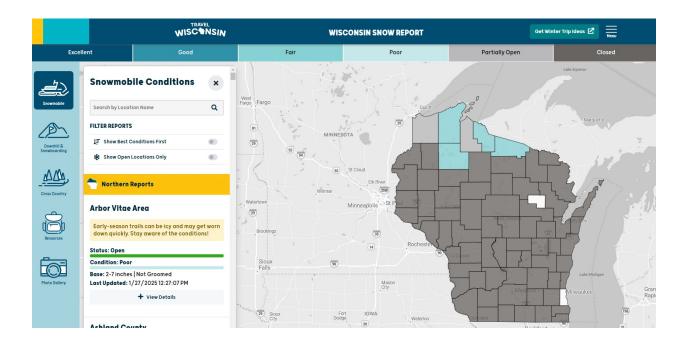
https://www.facebook.com/p/Next-Gen-Riders-61553712525607/

American Council of Snowmobile Associations https://www.snowmobilers.org/index.aspx

- ACSA is a national organization uniting the snowmobile community and promoting snowmobiling as a safe, fun and environmentally friendly family sport
- 17 States that are Members of ACSA
- Focus Areas of Work for ACSA
 - o Federal Highway Administration FHWA
 - Trespassing addressing the #1 reason for trail loss
 - National Forest Service
 - Over the Snow Rule (Over the Snow Vehicle)
 - Wilderness designations
 - Recreational Trails Program
 - ACSA Legal Action Fund
 - Improve member Services
 - o ACSA Brand Improvement
 - Youth involvement in ACSA
- Contact and information
 - o President, Bert Miller
 - 4330 Pat O'Hara Mountain Drive
 - Cody, WY 82414
 - P: (307) 899-3419
 - E: b.miller1962@hotmail.com
 - Vice President, Dave Newman
 - Unity, WI
 - P: (715) 212-7914
 - E: dnewman@ceas.coop

Wisconsin Department of Tourism / Travel Wisconsin

- Snowmobile report link: https://www.travelwisconsin.com/snowreport/snowmobile
- Widget to embed link: https://www.travelwisconsin.com/snowreport/widgetcreate
- Snowmobile trail conditions reported in 70/72 counties by 108 volunteer reporters, including
 county recreation departments, snowmobile clubs, destination marketing organizations, and
 local business owners. (no reports for Menominee and Milwaukee Counties in 23-24, no funded
 trails). Approximately 75 additional contacts assist with providing information on local trail
 conditions directly to snowmobile trail coordinator.
- Contact: Andrew.Nussbaum@wi.gov 715-299-5422
 - o Snowmobile Recreation Council Liaison / Tourism Committee Liaison / AWSC Liaison
- The Snow Report was the most viewed page on TravelWisconsin.com in 2022-2023.
- The 2022-2023 season, the snowmobile report yielded **1.7 million pageviews, which is also up over 39%** from the previous season. (2023-2024 clearly was lower due to low or no snow conditions and thus not included, 2024-2025 expected to be similar to 2022-2023 season)



Snowmobile Registration Stats - 2024

• 228,189 registered in Wisconsin

Minnesota: 219,460Michigan: 167,140New York: 95,823

The Wisconsin DNR provides registration services for snowmobiles.

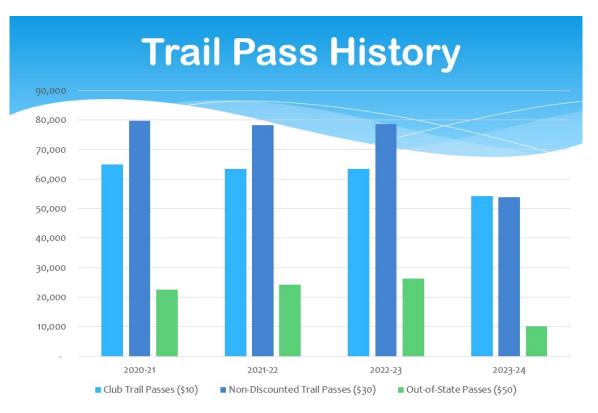
- https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/permits/registrations/snowmobile
- https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/permits/registrations/snowmobile/trailpass.html

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation issues titles and/or registration (license plates) for some trailers.

https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/about-wisdot/newsroom/statistics/veh-info.aspx

Trail Pass / Registration Information - update via DNR Report 10.26.24

- Revenue vs. Expenditures
 - o Annual Revenue = \$12 million
 - When Trail Passes came online, the program built up a small surplus in the first few years, which allowed for increased higher than average grant expenses.
 - Were able to fund new miles, get caught up on bridges, etc.
 - The surplus has been spent down, so now we are trying to balance revenue with expenditures.
 - With an average revenue of \$12 million/year =
 - \$6 million needed for base maintenance
 - Average \$2.5 million for supplemental
 - Approx \$1.4 million needed for State Properties, Law Enforcement, misc Admin
 - = \$2.1 million available for bridge rehabs, etc
 - Additional revenue sources would help ensure sufficient funds for bridge rehab, etc.
 projects and may allow for additional new mile funding.





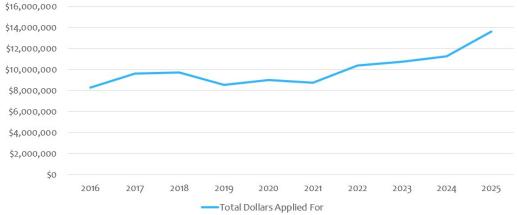
Annual Expenditures (5 Yr Av)



Maintenance	\$ 5,882,000	49%
Supplemental	\$ 2,221,000	18%
Dev/Rehab	\$ 2,603,000	22%
State Proj	\$ 190,600	2%
DNR LE	\$ 142,000	1%
CO Aid to LE	\$ 421,000	3%
Misc Admin	\$ 638,000	5%
TOTAL	\$ 12,097,600	

Grant Requests & Rising Costs





DNR Off-Highway Vehicle Program Snowmobile Updates:

- 9251 students certified in both online and in-person safety classes in 2023.
- Snowmobile safety instructors lead the state with 535 instructors. More than ATV and boat instructors combined. Keep up the good work!
- 3 snowmobile fatalities this last season. Low number poor snow conditions throughout the state.
- The main contributing factors in snowmobile crashes continue to be: Excessive speed, alcohol use, and careless/reckless operation.
- Operation Sled Safe all hands-on deck effort for snowmobile safety with wardens and sheriff's
 office patrols. This season we will monitor snow conditions and try to have the effort occur during
 the most impactful timeframe possible. We are limited to some extent because we have to pick a
 date a month or more out.
- If you have a problem area, please reach out to your local Conservation Warden, Recreation Warden, or rec enforcement deputy.
- DNR sheriff department patrol grant 2023 to 2024 season:
 - 24 Agencies reimbursed.
 - 5 audit claims denied (did not meet 40-hour minimum, or did not issue any citations)
 - o Denied counties: Marathon, Langlade, Taylor, Washburn, Sawyer
 - Many agencies did not submit a claim due to knowing they would not meet minimum requirements – understandable.
 - The good news Reimbursement percentage 100% of eligible claimed costs due to not meeting max grant total.
 - \$262,385 reimbursed out of \$596,000 available.
 - Total hours reported 2,827 or 1.4 FTE position equivalent positions.
 - o Compared to 11,995 or 5.7 FTE positions in 2022 to 2023 season.

Additional data available on WI DNR website 2023 Annual Report:

https://widnr.widen.net/s/cvj85nvksn/2023-recreational-vehicle-annual-report

Supplied from:

Lt. Jacob A. Holsclaw
Off-Highway Vehicle Administrator | Conservation Warden
Division of Public Safety & Resource Protection
Wisconsin DNR

Marketing and Safety Considerations

https://www.snowmobile.org/snowmobiling-safety.html

Approved imagery and resources:

https://www.snowmobile.org/photos-of-snowmobiling-snowmobiler.html https://www.snowmobile.org/resources-for-snowmobilers.html

Take care of the trail

- SAFE RIDERS snowmobile to enjoy the outdoors. They treat it with respect.
- They wait for enough snow cover to protect vegetation.
- They avoid running over trees and shrubs.
- They appreciate, but don't disturb animals or other outdoor users.

Take the honorable trail

 Beautiful trail systems and riding areas are available throughout North America. Stay safe and legal within the areas that you are permitted to ride or those for which you've obtained permission.

Stay alert

- Focusing on the taillight of the snowmobile ahead of you is the cause of many accidents. If your
 eyes are fixed on the taillight, you are not likely to notice the slight turn the machine ahead
 makes to avoid collision or the object that was almost hit.
- After snowmobiling for several hours, your reaction time slows. Be aware that even though you may not feel tired, the motion, wind and vibration of the machine may begin to dull your senses.

Beware of darkness

- Low-light and darkness require special care. Slow down and watch for others. Overcast days require extra caution.
- Don't over drive your headlights. Ask yourself, "Am I driving slow enough to see an object in time to avoid a collision?"
- At night on lakes and large open fields, estimating distances and direction of travel may become difficult. It is important to keep some point of reference when riding at night.

Beware of water

- The safest snowmobiling rule is never to cross lakes or rivers. Besides the danger of plunging through the ice, you have far less traction for starting, turning, and stopping on ice than on snow.
- Collisions on lakes account for a significant number of accidents. Don't hold the attitude that lakes are flat, wide-open areas, free of obstructions.
- Remember, if you can ride and turn in any direction, without boundaries, so can other riders. The threat of a collision, then, can come from any direction.
- However, if you do snowmobile on the ice, make absolutely sure the ice is safely frozen. Don't
 trust the judgement of other snowmobilers. You are responsible for your own safe
 snowmobiling. Drowning is a leading cause of snowmobile fatalities. Consider buying a buoyant
 snowmobile suit.

- If you go through the ice, remember that your snowmobile suit (even a non-buoyant one) and helmet may keep you afloat for several minutes. Slide back onto the ice, using anything sharp to dig in for better pull. Kick your feet to propel you onto the ice, like a seal.
- If the ice keeps breaking, continue moving toward shore or the direction from which you came. Don't remove your gloves or mitts.
- Once on the ice, roll away from the hole. Don't stand until well away from the hole.

Mountain measures

- Even if we don't live near mountains, many of us want to visit the Cascades, Adirondacks, Rockies, or other mountains someday. Mountain snowmobiling is spectacular but can pose extra dangers, such as avalanches. Some avalanche areas may be posted and closed.
- Be cautious of avalanche dangers throughout mountain country. Riding in these areas should
 only be done after receiving proper mountain riding training. Mountain snowmobilers should
 carry avalanche beacons, shovels, probe poles for locating people buried in snow and a portable
 radio to summon help.

Safe Riders! pledge

- I will never drink and ride a snowmobile.
- I will drive within the limits of my machine and my own abilities.
- I will obey the rules and laws of the state or province I am visiting.
- I will be careful when crossing roads, and always cross at a right angle to traffic.
- I will keep my machine in top shape and follow a pre-op check before each ride.
- I will wear appropriate clothing, including gloves, boots, and a helmet with a visor.
- I will let family or friends know my planned route, my destination, and my expected arrival time.
- I will treat the outdoors with respect. I will not litter or damage trees or other vegetation.
- I will respect other peoples' property and rights and lend a hand when I see someone in need.
- I will not snowmobile where prohibited.

Marketing and Imagery

- Must include operating safety practices, including hand signals as appropriate
- Snowmobiles MUST be operating only on marked trails or approved open areas, and in single line with proper distance between sleds
- Avoid imagery showing traveling across bodies of water, and never when uncertain of ice
 thickness or water currents. Rapidly changing weather and moving water in streams and lake
 inlets also affect the thickness and strength of ice on lakes and ponds. Snow cover can act as a
 blanket and prevents thick strong ice from forming. If using images that incorporate frozen
 waterways, they must be properly marked as part of the trail system.
- All operators must be in proper attire and safety gear when in motion.
- Wear a Helmet: Use a full-face helmet, goggles, or visor to prevent injuries from twigs, stones, ice chips and flying debris.
- Trail passes and licenses should be visible





- Snowmobiles should NEVER be shown off the ground or "mid-air".
- All skis must be on the ground
- Avoid images and video showing tracks throwing excessive snow indicating potential high-speed situations or unsafe acceleration
- Two-up riders should be only shown on properly equipped machines
- Videos with sound should avoid excessive noise and be within approved decibel limits
- Use of alcohol and smoking materials PROHIBITED in marketing materials depicting Wisconsin snowmobiling
- Inclusion of related tourism impact imagery is encouraged: supper clubs, shopping, fuel stations, resorts, and lodging, etc.
- Snowmobile brand should be noted and considered, but no restrictions in place.
- Secondary aspects should be observed for proper procedures and safety when appropriate: Trailers, trucks, groomers

Operator Hand Signals

Stop



Left turn



Right turn



Oncoming sleds following



Slowing



Sleds



Last sled in line



Snowmobile Friendly Community Program (AWSC)



The program requires communities and their related local snowmobile clubs interested in the Snowmobile Friendly designation to complete an application, describing how they advocate for safe and responsible snowmobiling in their area.

"Created through a partnership between the AWSC and the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, a statewide Evaluation Panel includes a Tourism professional to ensure the Program accurately identifies which communities and snowmobile clubs are 'best' at welcoming, preserving, and providing snowmobile access, support, and services for snowmobilers."

Once they receive the designation, the communities are awarded large, reflective highway signs they post so folks entering their city can see their status.

Wisconsin's Snowmobile Friendly Community Program Snowmobile Friendly Community Awards will be presented at the AWSC Spring Banquet Saturday Evening. Early in 2017, the AWSC Executive Board created an ad hoc Committee to explore the feasibility of creating a Statewide Recognition Program to recognize and reward the volunteer efforts of its 600+ Clubs and the Com- munities they reside in. Although small, a "Snowmobile Friendly Community Committee" was organized and began to research and review a wide variety of recognition programs in order to create a statewide "Snowmobile Friendly" program to meet the goals laid out by the Executive Board.

By 2018, the SFC Committee finalized their program, and the AWSC formally introduced a new "Snowmobile Friendly Community Program" to the Directors, Reps, and Clubs at Fall Workshop.

There are three main components of the AWSC's Snowmobile Friendly Community Program:

- 1. Create a Recognition Award: to recognize/thank the dozens of volunteers in the Club and Community who work tirelessly to support, preserve, and protect snowmobiling...(in short, no matter how large or small the community, award them with a sign/symbol celebrating the collective efforts of their local Trails)
- 2. Create a Tool: to advocate for the preservation and protection of snowmobiling: The Community, Club, or County can use the SFC Award to:
- 3. Account for and increase visibility of their Volunteers, (celebrate and motivate) Improve relationships with their community by/thru:

- 1. Engaging with key stakeholders (educate)
- 2. Partnerships, activities, and events (participate)
- 3. Create a Checklist for Measurable Success: The SFC Application is also Standardized Guide for Clubs, Communities, and County organizations.

When used as a Checklist, the SFC Program can help Clubs measure and guide their success in four key areas:

- Encouragement
- Engineering
- Education
- Enforcement

2025 Snowmobile Friendly Community Applications (New and Renewals)

- Can be downloaded from the AWSC website beginning November 1, 2024
- Both applications utilize a Check Box Format, so it is SIMPLE and EASY to use.
- The size of your "community" does not matter. Your application may represent a town, city, county, or a regional area, etc., it's up to you.
- Submit your Application via email or by mail.
- Deadline was Jan 5, 2025

Miscellaneous Resources

Vilas County Snowmobile Alliance Trail Safety Video.

Link to view video – https://vimeo.com/762102507

Direct Download Link – https://bit.ly/3Tf74sb

Embed code (if they plan to use on their websites) -

<iframe src="https://player.vimeo.com/video/762102507?h=cba9087de4" width="640"
height="360" frameborder="0" allow="autoplay; fullscreen; picture-in-picture"
allowfullscreen></iframe>

Here is a brief explanation on how our Statewide Snowmobile Program works...

(edited for use, taken from FB on 2.22.24 by Sam Landes, AWSC Director-Dane County, AWSC Legislative Committee Chair, Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs)

All revenues collected from snowmobile registrations, annual trail passes including those out-of-state trail passes (minus 75 cents apiece for printing and distribution) are deposited into our Segregated Snowmobile Trail Aids Fund. We also receive into that segregated fund the fuel tax revenues on 50 gallons of gas per registered snowmobile in Wisconsin, along with an additional 55% of that figure, in consideration of out-of-state users. This fund is how the clubs can apply for, and get reimbursed for trail maintenance and grooming. It also helps fund projects and grants that are awarded to clubs and county alliances that include replacing and repairing bridges and trails on our self funded trail system. These funds truly go to our clubs and trails! While it is administered by the DNR, only a very small portion of the money in that segregated snowmobile fund goes to aid local law enforcement efforts. (DNR administration and enforcement expenses have been negotiated and reimbursed for out of Wisconsin's Tribal Gaming Funds.)

How are our AWSC Clubs able to acquire reimbursements to help offset their related expenses?

At present, our volunteer AWSC clubs are able to claim up to \$300 per mile for maintenance reimbursements on trails that are designated as funded through the program. To be able to apply for additional supplemental funding, if available, they must have legitimately expended and claimed at least \$200 a mile directly for grooming. Again, if available, they can then request up to a total of \$900 a mile for maintenance under the supplemental funding criteria. The clubs that qualify for these supplemental funds cannot request more than \$250 per mile for approved non-grooming expenses.

I hope all riders understand that while reimbursements received by our volunteer organizations help aid their expenses, they do not in any way cover all of the true costs encountered.

Without our clubs, snowmobiling as we know it would not exist in Wisconsin!

United we Trail... Divided we Fail!

For those asking why ATV/UTVs don't need trail passes, read on - this from the DNR grant manager of both programs:

Snowmobile trails can be opened to winter ATV/UTV use at the discretion of the county managing the trail system. Of the 20,000 miles of funded snowmobile trail in Wisconsin, 4,500 miles are also open to winter ATVs. Since ATVs will cause additional wear on the groomed trail surface, riders DO in fact contribute to the maintenance - \$100/mile of funding comes directly from the ATV/UTV registrations and goes to the county/club. If the trail is ALSO open to winter UTVs, another \$100/mile is contributed.

So why don't ATVs/UTVs need a trail pass? Simply put, the revenue generated by the registration of ATVs/UTVs is more than enough to cover maintenance of their summer trails AND the winter trails that allow them. There are nearly a half million registered ATVs/UTVs, and the program currently has sufficient funds to meet the maintenance and rehab requests of the program.

Meanwhile, the snowmobile registration dollars just don't spread as far. With ~225,000 registered snowmobiles riding on 20,000 miles of trail, those dollars spend a lot faster on maintenance and rehab. Half as many machines but 4x the trails. The trail pass system was introduced to bring a little more revenue into the program to help with the trail maintenance needs (and it worked!)

At this time, the ATV/UTV trail system just doesn't "need" the revenue from a trail pass. If that ever changed, I'm sure the trail pass would be a great consideration.

Andrew Nussbaum - PDM Wisconsin Department of Tourism Andrew.Nussbaum@wi.gov