

Snowlands Network – Snowmobile Policy

Adopted 2002.12.04

Revised 2003.02.01

Revised 2003.05.03

Revised 2003.08.03

Recreation on public land is not a right but a privilege that society grants itself. Those who use public land for recreation must do so responsibly and with consideration of others. We are responsible for preserving public land for the benefit of future generations.

Activities that can damage the environment must be carefully regulated. Restrictions on recreation on public land should be in proportion to the harm that may result. Activities that cause more damage must be more highly restricted.

Public land belongs to all of us and must be shared responsibly. If the actions of one group can diminish the experience of others, that group must accept restrictions on their recreational opportunities. Public land should be managed to achieve a fair balance between the interests of competing groups.

Snowmobiles can damage the environment, have adverse effects on vegetation and wildlife, and seriously detract from the recreational experience of the non-motorized community. Noise, odor, pollution, compaction of the snow surface, and the presence of motor vehicles greatly diminish the enjoyment of backcountry skiers, snowshoers, and snowboarders who seek quiet, undisturbed conditions of natural public land.

Snowlands Network, therefore, has adopted the following policies for over-the-snow (OSV) motor vehicle recreation:

1. The operation of vehicles for recreation on public land is a privilege not a right.
2. The availability of funds for a particular type of recreation is not in itself a justification for providing that form of recreational opportunity.
3. OSV recreation may be permitted on public land, but only where appropriate and under certain conditions and restrictions:
 - a. There is a demand for OSV recreation in the area that cannot be met on private land,
 - b. There is no significant adverse impact to the environment, vegetation, and wildlife,
 - c. The impact on other forms of recreation is minimized, and

- d. The use is well regulated and monitored, with effective education, enforcement, conservation, and rehabilitation policies and practices.
4. Adequate environmental analysis must be performed before OSV recreation is permitted. The analysis must take into account the impact of OSV recreation on other users and must have a significant review with public input every 5 years. Categorical exclusions do not provide sufficient analysis to permit snowmobile trail grooming.
 5. OSV use on public land should be limited primarily to existing, designated roads and trails.
 6. Areas should be closed to OSV use unless designated open.
 7. Limited open riding areas may be permitted where such use will not conflict with other users, will not disturb wildlife or vegetation, and will not harm natural resources.
 8. Regulations requiring minimum snow depths for OSV use should be established and enforced to protect soil, vegetation, and wildlife habitat.
 9. Some portion of each area that permits OSV recreation should be set aside specifically for non-motorized recreation to provide an equivalent recreational opportunity.
 10. Conflict between user groups must be monitored and mitigated when it occurs. The absence of conflict reports should not be taken as evidence of no conflict.
 11. Trails that are shared by OSV and non-motorized users (pedestrians) should have speed limits and such limits should be posted and enforced. The speed limits should be set to provide for the safety of pedestrians. The speed limit shall not exceed 15 mph in congested areas on shared routes and not exceed 30 mph where trails are shared but pedestrian use is low. The maximum speed limit shall be 15 mph when passing a pedestrian on any route.
 12. All applicable environmental and land management policy regulations must be enforced, including, for National Forests, 36 CFR 295, which states in part:

. . The planning process will analyze and evaluate current and potential impacts arising from operation of specific vehicle types on soil, water, vegetation, fish and wildlife, forest visitors and cultural and historic resources. If the analysis indicates that the use of one or more vehicle types off roads will cause considerable adverse effects on the resources or other forest visitors, use of the affected areas and trails by the vehicle type or types likely to cause such adverse effects will be restricted or prohibited until such time as the adverse effects can be eliminated as provided in 36 CFR part 261. (36 CFR 295.2(a))

Off-road vehicle management plans shall provide vehicle management direction aimed at resource protection, public safety of all users, minimizing conflicts among users, and

provide for diverse use and benefits of the National Forests. Designation of areas and trails shall be in accordance with the following:

. . (3) Areas and trails shall be located to minimize conflicts between off-road vehicle use and other existing or proposed recreational uses of the same or neighboring public lands, and to ensure the compatibility of such uses with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account noise and other factors. (36 CFR 295.2(b))

The effects of use by specific types of vehicles off roads on National Forest System lands will be monitored. If the results of monitoring, including public input, indicate that the use of one or more vehicle types off roads is causing or will cause considerable adverse effects on the factors and resource values referred to in Sec. 295.2, the area or trail suffering adverse effects will be immediately closed to the responsible vehicle type or types until the adverse effects have been eliminated and measures have been implemented to prevent future recurrence as provided in 36 CFR part 261. (36 CFR 295.5)

13. OSVs should have readily visible registration numbers or license plates.

14. Violation of OSV closure areas should result in significant fines and possible confiscation of the vehicle.

15. No public funds should be used for snowmobile trail grooming.