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Keeping snowmobile trails groomed the job of snowmobile clubs.

East Lansing, Mich., February 2018—If you enjoyed a well-groomed trail recently, consider thanking a local snowmobiling club, suggests the American Council of Snowmobile Associations (ACSA).

Because states typically don't receive enough federal or state funding to maintain trails, volunteers with local snowmobile clubs often step up to do the work.

The Sault Ste. Marie Snowmobile Association, in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, for example, has 20 drivers to manage the 1,500 miles of trails within the council's area while The Jordan Valley Trails Council (JVTC,) in Michigan's Lower Peninsula, has 45 people who maintain their 75 miles of trails.

JVTC has three tractors going seven days a week and even then, it's not always enough, said Karl Davenport, JVTC vice president and trail master. The council receives a small dividend from the sales of seasonal permits and a portion of the federal gas tax. That money collected is used for maintenance, storage and fuel costs. Grooming machines can cost upwards of \$300,000 for the trailer and the grooming drag.

Maintenance doesn't end when the snow has melted. "Grooming never stops," explains Davenport. "In the summer, we are usually filing for grants for maintenance of the machinery, developing a rapport with private land owners, mowing, checking out the trails, reviewing the trail signs and more." During the snow season, the JVTC has 45 volunteers that put in thousands of hours to maintain the trails. Grooming machines don't move very quickly—averaging 8 mph—and it can be challenging to groom while there are snowmobilers enjoying the trails.

In South Dakota, Ryan Raynor, Snowmobile Trail Coordinator for South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks oversees the \$312,000 South Dakota Snowmobile Grand and Aid Program for 15 snowmobile clubs to groom, repair signs and maintain a nearly 1,200-mile trail system.

"We have no general funds," Raynor explains. "Our budget comes from snowmobile registration fees, fuel tax reimbursement based on number of registered snowmobiles and a three percent initial registration tax on the purchase price of new or used snowmobiles."

Even with available grant funds, many clubs volunteer their time and resources to keeping the trails pristine for riders.

"It's not just grooming," says Martin Cottle, Sault Ste. Marie Snowmobile Association president. "We are working year round to get ready for three months of riding. The best trails come from volunteers because it's their passion."

“These groups are very dedicated and committed,” Raynor agrees. “There is only a small window of opportunity to do what they love.”

For more information on state snowmobile associations, trail management or grooming, visit www.snowmobileinfo.org.

In 2016, ACSA and the U.S. Federal Highway Administration extended their professional relationship with a new, five-year partnership to educate, unite and promote responsible snowmobiling in the United States. For more information, visit www.snowmobileinfo.org.

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