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Stay on the right trail

East Lansing, Mich., March 2019—While unspoiled fresh powder next to a trail can be alluring to snowmobilers, the American Council of Snowmobile Associations (ACSA) and the U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) remind snowmobile riders to stay on trails unless they're absolutely certain that adjacent lands are open to snowmobiling.

“Riding off-trail on private lands is illegal, as well as on many public lands unless specifically allowed by agency travel rules,” said Greg Hiles, president of ACSA. “And just because you see snowmobile tracks off-trail doesn't mean it's open or legal for you to ride there.”

According to ACSA, trespassing is the number one complaint by landowners have against snowmobilers.

“Unless you have express permission from the land owner to ride there, stay on the designated trail route,” advises Hiles. Always ask first and know before you go. There are an estimated 230,000 miles of signed and maintained snowmobile trails in North America that have been developed by snowmobile clubs and associations, usually in cooperation with provincial, state and local governments, according to ASCA.

Snowmobile clubs across the country work with landowners year-round to secure appropriate, safe and legal access to private lands that may crisscross over public areas. This often includes education and awareness outreach about the sport of snowmobiling, Hiles said.

The website snowmobileinfo.org has numerous materials for clubs, associations and trail managers designed to assist with those efforts including suggestions and guidelines on how to interact with land owners to establish communications between snowmobiling groups in a community.

The Safe Riders! Snowmobile Safety Awareness website www.snowmobileinfo.org provides essential and detailed materials pertaining to staying on proper trails, avalanche safety and snowmobile safety and additional snowmobile operations in an easy-to-understand format. For more information on snowmobile associations and clubs, visit www.snowmobilers.org.

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