

Quebec: The Ultimate Experience PAGE 6 | Clubs awarded RTP Grants PAGE 2

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**Knox Trail Sno-Riders hosted the Third "Be Bold, Ride Old" Vintage Sled and Tractor Show. Bud Gorden's beautiful brood of vintage Sno-Jets, one of which won Best Original Racer. PHOTO BY MEL SCUDERI**



**Michelle Dugre with a '79 Wheelhorse which took 1st place powder puff winner. She also helped park cars at the Knox Old Sled and Tractor Show. PHOTO BY MEL SCUDERI**



**All ages pitch in to help clear the Buckland Club trails on a beautiful fall day.**

PHOTO BY STEVEN HOWLAND

# Club Photos

**See Club News on page 4**



**Birch Hill groomer operator Ajax smiles for the crowd. The Birch Hill Rangers had a winter-themed float in the Royalston 250th celebration parade.**

PHOTO BY CHRIS HAYNES



**Chesterfield's new groomer works the snow in the Knightville basin Huntington.**

PHOTO BY BILL GOLASKI



**Sno-Drifters sell popcorn at Bike Night 2015 to support Shriners. PHOTO BY JOE ROGGE**

# Contents

VOLUME 31, ISSUE 2

## DEPARTMENTS

President's Message .....	2
Club News .....	4
The Tech Corner .....	10
Marketplace .....	16
Body Double .....	17

The Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts is committed to enhancing safe snowmobiling in Massachusetts.

## FEATURES

### 06 / Riding and Dining at the Manoir

By Dan Gould



### 14 / Expectations of a Volunteer

By Randy Toth



## ON THE COVER

*The sun's golden glow saturates the trails of the Burgy Bullets Snowmobile Club.*

PHOTO BY DAN GOULD

### 12 / The Challenge of Creating Trails

By Larry Tucker





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Printing services provided  
by Walsworth Print Group

**CONTRIBUTORS:** We welcome unsolicited materials and letters for possible publication. Stories, manuscripts, photos, artwork and other contributions must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope if you wish it returned. ON THE TRAIL WITH SAM accepts no responsibility for returns, losses or damage of unsolicited materials. Letters to the Editor must be signed with address and telephone number of the sender. We reserve the right to edit the material to suit the presentation and available space.

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**PUBLISHED BY:** On the Trail With SAM is published five times a year, October, November, December, January-February and March by the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts (SAM), C/O Rena Sumner, P.O. Box 386, Conway, MA 01341. Phone: (413) 369-8092. Fax: (413) 369-0203. E-mail: rena.sumner@sledmass.com.



## President's Message

BY DAN GOULD

# Clubs Awarded RTP Grants

Although well organized and healthy, most clubs have limited resources and count on dues and donations to keep the trails open. Sometimes that isn't enough to finance a large project or purchase a critical piece of grooming equipment. That's why the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants are so important.

Several clubs were recently awarded RTP grants and deserve major recognition, especially the individuals who wrote the grants. Every snowmobiler is indebted to these volunteers.

This year's snowmobile awardees are:

### Mill Valley Snowmobile Club - Grant

**Award: \$12,532** This project will purchase new grooming drags in order to update an aging fleet of groomers. The project will provide grooming on snowmobile trails through the winter months in Belchertown and the surrounding area.

### Chesterfield 4-Seasons Club - Grant

**Award: \$20,745** This project will purchase a new storage building for the club's snowmobile equipment as well as local emergency equipment. The project will also involve the reclamation of two historical sites in the Chesterfield Gorge, including clearing of undergrowth and installation of interpretive signage.

### Conway Snowmobile Club - Grant Award:

**\$23,893** This project will purchase needed equipment for snowmobile trail maintenance and grooming in the greater Conway snowmobile trail use area.

### Hadley Snowmobile Club - Grant Award:

**\$9,375** This project will purchase needed equipment for snow grooming and the maintenance of snowmobile trails in Hadley and the surrounding area.

### Lunenburg Snow Riders - Grant Award:

**\$34,800** This project will purchase needed snow grooming equipment to service Lunen-

burg recreational trails and the surrounding area. In partnership with the Town of Lunenburg, the project will also construct a parking area at a recently acquired parcel of land in Lunenburg. The partnership will make additional improvements to the parcel through the construction of six bridges, improvements to the existing trail tread, and the installation of trail markers.

### Berkshire Snow Seekers Snowmobile

**Club - Grant Award: \$12,000** This project will involve the restoration of badly eroded sections of snowmobile trails in October Mountain State Forest by removing large rocks and improving trail drainage structures. This will provide for long-term safety and trail stability along the snowmobile trail system in all seasons.

### Department of Conservation and Recreation - Grant Award:


**\$50,038** This project will provide a trail siting, construction and maintenance crew to exclusively focus on OHV trails at DCR's Western Region lands, where the majority of trails that are open to motorized use are located.

### Department of Conservation and Recreation - Grant Award:

**\$57,263** This ongoing trail project involves the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the backbone of the Pittsfield State Forest OHV trail system, the Skyline Trail. The project will also restore large portions of discontinued trail, extend the OHV trail system to a new, appropriate parking area and access point, and provide a safer and more enjoyable riding experience overall.

### Savoy Kanary Kats Snowmobile Club -

**Grant Award: \$33,869** This project will purchase new snowmobile trail grooming equipment to service the area of Savoy, Hawley, Plainfield, and Windsor.

The next deadline for RTP grants is February 1, 2016. Details are at sledmass.com 



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### ADAMS SNO DRIFTERS

by **Chrissy Satko and Joe Rogge**, board of directors

As we write this we are looking at Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow. Under the heading "Yesterday" we look back to our participation in the August Street Fair and Agricultural Fair in Adams. We also participated in the annual Bike Night and Fall Run. We are proud of the fact we raised \$200 for the Shriners through the sale of popcorn at Bike Night. It was a team effort. The team was pretty much the same group that does all the special projects but it does demonstrate what camaraderie and organization can do. Looking at "Today" we are organizing trail trims, and leadership is working with landowners to insure a positive riding season. We continue to work with the DCR to meet common goals for our local trails. As we look to "Tomorrow" we anticipate a great riding season along with preparation for our December Christmas Party. We are also in the process of discussing the allocation of club funds for various charities during this season, and are working with a group of community members to advance snowmobiling in the Northern Berkshire area. We meet on the second Thursday of the month, 7pm, at the American Legion.



### BERKSHIRE SNOW SEEKERS

by **Randy Toth**

Come experience the excitement of snowmobiling in the Berkshires. Our first class groomer fleet consists of 3 Tucker Sno-Cats, a Thiokol and 2 snowmobile-based groomers. Dues are only \$60 for each snowmobile and they include a club membership, a SAM membership and a trail permit. Join via snail-mail (PO Box 1102, Pittsfield, MA 01202), via our website ([www.berkshiresnowseekers.com](http://www.berkshiresnowseekers.com)), via a club meeting (7pm on the 1st & 3rd Tuesday of the month from September thru mid-April at the Skyline Country Club on Route 7 in Lanesboro, MA) or via one of our conveniently located

trail permit outlets at a participating local business: - Pittsfield Lawn & Tractor (Pittsfield), Ronnie's (Pittsfield), Friendly Fred's (Windsor), Sangar's General Store (Windsor), Hinsdale Trading Company (Hinsdale) and Lanesboro BP Gas Station (Lanesboro). Please visit the SAM website to see our club's scheduled events and our grooming reports covering the October Mountain State Forest Area, the Pittsfield State Forest Area and the Windsor Area. Grooming reports are promptly posted in the SAM Forums by our trail coordinators within hours of grooming. We hope to see you out on the trails this winter.



### BIRCH HILL RANGERS

by **Chris Haynes**, secretary

The Birch Hill Rangers had a winter-themed float in the Royalston 250th celebration parade. Thousands attended the event which featured a parade, food, music, and even helicopter rides. The float had our tracked Polaris Ranger and drag which was decorated with pine trees and fake snow. Deep down we were hoping for a freak blizzard, but it never materialized. We had to settle with polyster filling material as a substitute. Thanks to everyone that supported the event and of course the volunteers who put in so many hours to represent our sport!



### BUCKLAND RIDERS

by **Steve Howland**, secretary

The new season is just around the corner and I can hardly wait. To kick off the season we will once again be selling hot stuffed baked potatoes in conjunction with Cliff's Smokin' Barbecue at the Shelburne Falls Moonlight Magic event on Friday, November 27. Yes, the day after Thanksgiving. This is a big event in Shelburne Falls with stores open late, street vendors, music and more. We have a great time being part of this event and the weather is usually just right for warming up with a steaming hot potato topped with pulled pork, melted cheese, and more. Hope to see you there. Of course,

there's always the regular work to do as well. Meetings are held at the Buckland Fire Department on the second Monday of the month at 7pm. To keep up with activities, work days, club rides and more be sure to visit our web page at [bucklandriders.com](http://bucklandriders.com) and sign up for our email group.



### CHESTERFIELD FOUR SEASON

by **Bill Golaski**, president

Hello All. We're happy to see summer is gone. Now our thoughts turn to snowmobiling season. The club has been very busy this fall with clubhouse rentals and events. We have also done a lot of improvements to the club grounds. Trail work has already been started but will continue into December. More help is always needed so stop in and lend a hand with the trails. Please watch for any re-routes and please stay off the old trails.

The club has won a second grant from the state for a groomer and drag. This will be a great boost to our grooming fleet. The trails and grooming has really been great the past few years and will be even better with a new machine added to the fleet.

The Club will be doing its best to be open on Friday eves, Saturday 11am and Sunday 11am to 5pm but it is always best to call in advance 413-296-4048. We hope to offer gas for sale this winter on a smaller scale and to increase our food options, so stay tuned.

The club has two raffles this year: one is for a black powder gun and the second is for an enclosed snowmobile trailer. Go to a meeting on the 2nd and last Tuesday of week at 7pm or call the Club at 413-296-4048 or Bill G. at 413-585-9403.



### CONWAY SNOWMOBILE CLUB

by **Ed Skorupski**

There is a chill in the air and the trail crews are busy. Every Sunday at 9am we meet in front of the library and head out to get the trails in shape so that we can lay down that white blanket for the winter. As always we could use more volunteers

and it would be great to see new faces out there. Work on the Henhawk trail has been progressing steadily throughout the summer and fall and is presently 95% complete and should be finished by the time you read this. Other areas are being maintained and repaired as well. Thank you to the dedicated volunteers for all of their hard work again this year.

Early Bird passes are available online and at meetings. Or you can purchase them at one of our community partners, Ray's Cycle, Baker's, Savage's, Hatfield Center Store, and Sunderland Corner Store soon. Buy early and save yourself some money and help the club at the same time. Family passes are available at club meetings only. In order to get the Early Bird or family discount you must purchase before December 15. Check us out online at [sledconway.com](http://sledconway.com) and on Facebook as Conway Snowmobile Club.



## EASY RIDERS

by Steven, Conti,  
vice president/  
newsletter editor

On behalf of the Easy Riders Snowmobile Club we would like to wish you a Happy Thanksgiving. This is a special time of the year (as we get ready to sled), we can sit back and be thankful for what we have, and be grateful. Hope you enjoy this holiday. For me it is most special. Short and sweet. Enjoy and Think Snow!



## KNOX TRAIL SNO-RIDERS

by Jim Richard,  
media director

In September, the Knox Trail Sno-Riders hosted the third "Be Bold, Ride Old" Vintage Sled and Tractor Show. Originally scheduled for September 13, the September 20 rain date provided great weather. Vintage sleds and tractors, their owners and fans, gathered at the Izaak Walton League field in Otis for a great day of fun, food, raffles, trophies, and reminiscing, all to the sound of music from the 60's, 70's, and 80's! Kudos to member Mel Scuderi and all the volunteers that made this happen.

This second club report is being written before the leaves have fallen but the first meeting of the season is a wrap. Trail work is ramping up and so is groomer

work. We all hope the snow comes soon but not until a good hard freeze precedes it.

Get your sixth annual raffle, dinner, and dance tickets before it's too late! The grand prize is a 2016 Ski-Doo MXZ600 Sport snowmobile and only 125 tickets will be sold. Your \$125 entry donation also includes a buffet dinner and entertainment for two at the Stockbridge Sportsman's Club. Join us for fun, food, and raffles on January 9. Tickets are available online at [knoxtrail.com](http://knoxtrail.com) or by calling 413-269-0243. See you on the trails!"



## SAVOY KANARY KATS

by Doug Decoigne

Happy Fall, All! SKK had its booth at the Expo in W. Springfield again, manned by the usual teams. We also displayed one of our 3 LMC 1800 groomers. Lots of excitement for the upcoming sled-

ding season was apparent. If the Farmers' Almanac is correct, it should be a good snowmobiling season! Our grooming fleet is ready to provide the white carpet of trails that we all crave. Our extremely successful snowmobile raffle is going smoothly again. The winning ticket will be drawn at the Hilltop, Jan. 30.. A logging operation is going to affect the trails in Hawley forest connecting Savoy, Windsor, Florida, etc. to Ashfield, Buckland, Goshen, Charlemont, etc. this winter. There will be a plowed road for some distance to connect the 2 key areas. The upside is that the roads affected will be improved to allow for even better trails in the future. We also would like to give a shout out to the Buckland Riders for going out March 6 grooming specifically for our club ride March 7, showcasing Buckland/Ashfield trails. It's an awesome idea for clubs to help each other out! Think snow! And cold temps. ❄️

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*The snowmobile gods  
looked down upon us and  
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# QUEBEC:

## The Ultimate Snowmobile Experience

Story and photos by Dan Gould

**D**id you know that some of the finest snowmobiling in the world is only a few hours away? If you get up at your usual work-a-day time, hop in the truck around 6:30-7am, your skis will be on Quebec trail's shortly after lunch. That's a quicker trip than many other popular spots in the Northeast.

And these aren't just any trails, these are the ones you dream about all year long. Wide, endless sight lines, sweeping corners, beautiful vistas, and groomed to perfection.

If you haven't been to Quebec, you haven't fully experienced snowmobiling, and if you haven't stayed at the Manoir du lac William (The Manor on Lake William) you are missing the ultimate snowmobile vacation.

We arrived in St-Ferdinand, Quebec, at lunchtime, and the Manoir du lac William was buzzing with activity. There were about 25 family members skating on the ice, some playing hockey, others gliding

down the mile-long path, meticulously cleared along the shoreline. Several airplanes waited on the temporary tarmac as their pilots enjoyed a hot meal inside. Yes, there was a plowed airfield on the lake.

What about snowmobiles? Sure, there were snowmobiles everywhere, but I was completely taken by everything else going on. In past sled trips we've stayed at the typical roadside no-tell-motels. Clearly the Manoir is not a typical snowmobile destination.

Inside we were greeted by the owner, Franco Lessard, and his staff. Everyone spoke English but with an enticing French accent that made you think you had just winged over the Atlantic. They showed us to our rooms near the indoor pool, which was surrounded by an expansive glass wall overlooking the grounds.

My room had two queen size beds, one of which folded out of the way against the wall, allowing extra space to change into my snowmobile gear. There was a beautiful whirlpool bath and a spacious bathroom, too. The view from the patio



*The view from our room at the Manoir du lac William. Choices, choices... You can enjoy the Nordic spa, play some ice hockey or snowmobile to infinity.*

was spectacular. Steam from the Nordic spa below lofted over the snow, with picturesque Lake William and the Appalachians behind. I kept reminding myself that somehow I would survive this.

There are riders that feel the need to saddle their sled at first light and rack up 200 miles before lunch. That is easily done, but not by me. I enjoy a relaxed pace while vacationing. We arrived at the breakfast buffet by 7:30, enjoying eggs, bacon, French toast and fruit, while the Zamboni operator applied a crystalline surface to the outdoor rink. Yeah, they have their own Zamboni and they drive it on the lake! Okay, we all know hockey is big in Quebec, but this is taking it to the extreme. It looks to be some sort of training ground for the next Ray Bourque or Mario Lemieux.

Around 9am we fetched our sleds from the heated garage. That's right, no cleaning the snow off, no wrestling with covers, and they start so easy. A gent named Martin manned the secured garage and was there in the morning when we arrived and again in the evening when we tucked them into bed.

Planning a day's trip often revolves around where to have lunch. (More about that later.) With that decided, we ride and ride and ride. The average trip was between 125-150 miles and that wasn't at a crazy pace. We stopped, took in the sights, stretched the legs, you know, regular stuff. The trails are so good, remarkable actually, that you can ride for hours on end without fatigue.

There are over 20,000 miles of trails in Quebec, none of which I'm familiar with. That really didn't matter as the snowmobile maps supplied by Quebec Tourism have color-coded loops, suggested travel routes, along with the approximate mileage. Pure genius. That, and the fact the signage is on par with street signs, make navigation simple and allow an extra sense of comfort.

Terrain and conditions varied, not only day to day, but hour to hour. One particular ride presented just about every type of weather imaginable, heavy snow squalls, best described as mini blizzards, followed by bright, warm, sun. At one point the wind was carrying light snow across an expansive farm field in dramatic fashion. Riding through the dancing snow

**The trails are so good,  
remarkable actually, that  
you can ride for hours on  
end without fatigue.**



dust and ramping over artfully carved drifts was everything one could want in a snowmobile adventure.

Blue skies ruled the bulk of the week, even on those mornings when a fresh layer of snow welcomed our sleds. The groomed trails took us through winding tree lined S-curves, leading to wide-open power lines and fields where the turbo-charged Cat 1100 would take chase to imaginary mice. In the woods, at the bottom of a ravine, we crossed an impressive suspension bridge, somewhere between the towns of Laurier-Stanton and Val-Alain, north of where we were staying. It

deserved a few photos, so I obliged.

We never got cold but there are several warming huts that the local clubs maintain throughout the area, many with wood stoves. We pitted at one in Saint Patrice with a heated bathroom. Hallelujah!

Riding south one day we stopped for lunch in a converted train depot in Richmond, just as a conductor hooked a line of trains. Now, I'm not a foodie but I have to say that I've never experienced trail food like that in Quebec. We stopped at several small lunch spots during the week and everything was absolutely fresh and delicious, not the yucky frozen and fried stuff that is commonly shoveled to snowmobilers. They take dining serious in these parts, everything from a simple sandwich to broiled tenderloin is a work of art.

The trails led us through rolling hills and fields dotted with farm silos. A friendly farmer waved as we trekked across his property. A smiling gas station



## STAY AND PLAY: IT'S CHEAPER THAN YOU THINK.

The Manoir du lac William is one of the best values on snow. Rates start at \$125.00 per-person, double occupancy, which includes a generous breakfast buffet and the mammoth five-course dinner.

Considering the favorable exchange rate is in excess of 25% means it only costs about \$100 for the hotel room and the majority of your meals! Do the math.

You also get to park your sled in a heated garage and have access to the Nordic spa, Jacuzzi, indoor pool, sauna and all the other fun stuff. If your significant other prefers to hang at the Manoir one day, there's plenty for her to do while the guys go for a long rip across Canada. Perfect.

Manoir du lac William, 3180, Principale, St-Ferdinand, Québec G0N 1N0.  
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attendant, a French-speaking woman, greeted us and quickly filled our fuel tanks. This was a small town and she was one of the few people we met during our trip who didn't speak English. Regardless of the language gap, the exchange was easy and convenient. It also reminds me that I really should learn some basic French, simply as a courtesy.

I don't know why, but I'm fascinated with old buildings, vehicles, rock walls and farm machinery along the trail. Maybe it's the juxtaposition against the white snow or the wonder of who and why it's in the middle of nowhere. There were plenty of found artifacts during our travels, in particular, a gorgeous old sugarhouse and a long abandoned farmer's home in a field, both weathered to perfection.

You know what else is great about a snowmobile trip? You don't have to cook dinner. Even if I did, I could never match the amazing gourmet meals that awaited us every night at the Manoir. The choices were many, everything from beef and lamb to seafood, all cooked and served in the



*Peter Pyskaty, Gary Bushey and Dave Pyskaty made sure I got back to the Manoir every night in time for dinner.*

French culinary tradition. A five-course dinner was the perfect way to kick back and socialize after a day under the helmet. The discussion moved from my getting lost, ever so briefly after a missed intersection, to dialing out some of the sled's understeer with a tweak to the shocks. The food was amazing, the staff outstanding and the desserts... Que c'est délicieux!

I was so preoccupied with snowmobiling (and eating) during the week that I never did get around to the health spa or sauna. Next time, for sure, and believe me, there will be another visit, and several more after that. 🐾

*Additional photos and video online at [sledmass.com](http://sledmass.com).*

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# The Great American Ski Test: Part V

## Simmons Gen III Flexi Ski


Story and photos by Jim Tucker

**W**ill these ski wars ever be done? Hell no! As long as there is American exceptionalism and ingenuity at work here in the USA, this reporter will bring product tests to the dedicated readers of SAM and performance hungry snowmobilers.

Know this: I still believe that the greatest single performance upgrade you can make on your sled is better skis. Think about it. You could have 300 horsepower under the hood, 500 studs on the track and the lightest chassis in the world but if you can't turn a corner with precision what good are the other performance goodies?

Let's face it, money is tight these days so every performance dollar counts. New skis will make any sled wake up. You'll swear you just bought a new ride. Remember, money spent on aftermarket skis will pay you twice, once when you install them and once again when you take them off to mount on your next snowmobile.

Last season the MoHawk by SLP won the top-gun ski award against all comers as it garnered a maximum five out of five carbide rating by yours truly. How would the Simmons stack up? Would it unseat the newly crowned king or be relegated to court jester status?



*Compared to the original Simmons, mounted on the sled, the new Gen III is much wider.*



And so it was that I placed a call to Verlin Simmons, one of three owners of Simmons Skis. He was most gracious in sending me a pair of Gen III's to test. As most of you remember I tested the original Flexi Ski early on and it got rave reviews.

For you history buffs, Simmons is the ski that really started it all, with stellar bump absorption and cornering precision. They were the one who thought out of the box and designed the Flexi Ski, a world-beater design when it was introduced back 1994. It looks to me as though Ski-Doo took it, made changes to the original design, and to this day have not wavered from that style platform. The litigation between Simmons and Ski-Doo is something you can research, but suffice it to say, the yellow team from up north seems to have adopted the attitude that if something works, why redesign the wheel?

The Simmons Gen III is one ski that if designed right could really bridge that gap between groomed trail rider and off trail mountain sleds. But is it designed right? The MoHawk ski by SLP is, I think, the first of the big ski makers to try to bridge that gap. Would the Simmons take that concept one step further?

Some quick stats on the Simmons are as follows: They weigh 9 lbs 12 oz with carbides and mounting brackets. They are eight inches wide, with massive dual carbide runners, the inside being shorter than the outside. The outside runner has a six-inch carbide on a 17-inch host bar and the inside bar is 9-inches with four 2-inch wear pads. Make no mistake, the Gen III's are heavier and wider than most stock skis, and you will have a problem fitting two sleds side-by-side on a 8 1/2 foot-wide trailer when so equipped. We got them loaded on my friends clamshell trailer but had to perform some acrobatics to get it done. They do overlap handily.

Mounting these snowmobile skis was straightforward on my 2015 Arctic Cat ZR 5000 test mule. The ski really does fit the sled nicely, although aesthetically they look large. I wonder if this is the new normal? Not sure myself, you can decide. Either way, the original Flexi Ski or the Gen III's, are sure to please.

A friend and I had the privilege to ride the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec last winter, a good litmus test for any skis to



*The Gen III carbides are not pushed out to the edge of the ski as they were in previous versions. Note the deep keel.*

**I give top ratings to this ski's ability to carve corners, plane up on the snow and off-trail prowess.**



prove their mettle. The first day of riding started at about 10 degrees with a brisk wind across the fruited plains of Canada. For the first 50 feet the skis planed right up on top of the snow, much like the original Flexi Ski, but way more pronounced. Neat! Later on in a rough section of ice and wind blown conditions, the ski just laid the trail to rest. It absorbed so much ski shock I had to look down and make sure I was not on ball bearings. Yep, they rode smooth and planed up way better than the original Flexi Ski. Looking good but the real test was yet to come.

As we progressed on our journey the conditions changed from wind blown to packed powder, to drifts and then flat as a pancake trails. Not to mention some Volkswagen Beetle sized bumps thrown in for good measure. The trails were sometimes as wide as 9 to 10 sleds, some through fields, others over mountainous terrain... here it was, the ultimate test track. On this day I was The Man, and these skis were The Skis. The skis handled all those condi-

tions with aplomb and vastly exceeded my expectations, tremendously. I just could not get my head around the fact that here I was in one of the most beautiful places on earth, blessed beyond belief to be testing these skis. They perform better than any ski I've ever tried before. If there is a snowmobile heaven I must have come real close on that trip.

Even backing up or going off-trail to make u-turns, the ski just floated on top of the snow, with ease. Surprising, because the heavy four-stroke could not argue with positive real world results. Carving corners was even more of a surprise as these skis were like scalpels on the trail. Early morning snow, late day snow, icy, rutted conditions, no matter for this ski, it did it all. They even surpassed the mighty MoHawks for cornering precision, and that says a lot because they were the king of snow just last year! The ski hoop handles were easy on the hands and large enough to make moving the sled very easy.

In conclusion, I give top ratings to this ski's ability to carve corners, plane up on the snow and off-trail prowess. It also measures one level better than the original Flexi Ski in bump absorption. There is just one slight ding in regards to the weight of the ski but the performance improvements easily overshadow that minute detail. They are presently the best ski I have ever tried and I've tried many on the Arctic Cat ProCross chassis. Admittedly your results may differ on other brands of sleds or riding style, but if I were a betting man I'd wager you would say the same. The Flexi ski gets a five out of five carbides and top gun status going into 2016. Hats off to the engineers at Simmons for delivering us the best of breed.

Some people might say that this tester is nuts. Every ski he tests is better than the last. I would like to submit to you that this is what actually happened and is a testimony to the tremendous talent the snowmobile industry holds today. I'm proud to be living and riding in this era of innovation and technology and hope others take advantage of it all.

Okay, so what's next? What ski is going to come out and throw the Simmons under the bus? Whatever it is I can't wait to test it and when I do I'll take you for another ride. 🐾

# Creating Trails: Challenging but Rewarding

By Larry Tucker

**L**ike many of you, I have been busy maintaining the trails almost every weekend, sometimes hiking and sometimes covering a lot of ground with an ATV. There is a long list of things to do to maintain our trails that keep the crew and myself very busy. Maintaining our trail system is one aspect in the life of a trail. I'd like to talk about the aspect of creating a new trail because it is seemingly consuming an increasing percentage of my time, even more than the time spent maintaining trails or riding once the snow flies.

We all know that we must first and foremost get landowner permission. This is the step that actually creates the trail. What goes into obtaining these landowner permissions is continuing to evolve in today's society.

Back in the '60's most snowmobilers were also landowners, so it took relatively little time to obtain permissions and to weave a trail together. But in today's society it is a dramatically different ballgame. Today few landowners own sleds and public agencies have much tighter requirements to obtain their permissions. A significant percentage of parcels have conservation restrictions already in place that preclude motorized recreational trails. This coupled with the fact that municipal agencies are increasing the oversight of their properties is making it difficult to develop new trails. The creation of a new trail could involve dealing with just one landowner. But creating a new trail that crosses town lines will invariably involve



PHOTO BY DAN GOULD





several private and public landowners. This type of effort involves phone calls, meetings, GPS gathering and presentations, all of which consume a lot of time.

Creating a multi-community trail involves working with local agencies such as conservation commissions, land trusts and most likely include working with a state entity, such as the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Working with these agencies will involve at least two and often three or four meetings with each. Because of this, I've found it a big help to offer an informational and educational presentation on snowmobiling as part of the process.

Once non-snowmobilers become aware that we take great care of our trails, that we are good stewards of the forests, and that we are very responsive to the needs and desires of the landowners, they often become inclined to partner with us. Information provided to municipal and state agencies might also include studies done on how environmentally friendly

snowmobiling is, facts that dispel old myths, facts that show snowmobiling having less impact on woodland trails than other uses, facts that show snowmobiling having less impact on wildlife, and the fact that snowmobilers are good partners. Other information presented to agencies might include an accurate GPS of the proposed trail with maps, handouts on who the local club contact is and the fact that the club is a member of the statewide Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts. This process is sometimes both frustrating and challenging but this educational effort is producing positive results and giving hope that new trails can still be created.


Again, I offer special thanks to everyone who makes the SAM trail system what it is today. Please keep in touch with your local conservation commissions, DCR property managers, and private landowners, and remember, all snowmobilers are members of the trails and grooming team. 



PHOTO BY JEFF GARNELLI



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PHOTO BY GERRY BALCHUNAS

# New Volunteers: Don't Let Them Just Fade Away!

**By Randy Toth**

**T**he other day I read another impassioned plea by one of our club members for volunteers. It started with the normal lament about how only a few club members do most of the work and that more people have to step up and join in doing the actual work whether it be clearing trails, digging rocks, grooming, signing, processing trail passes, writing newsletters, helping to cook, planning events, running events, etc.

This conversation brought to mind the old often repeated story about the new

member who attended his first club meeting, was warmly greeted and welcomed to the club and then left alone as other folks arrived. He left the meeting feeling disoriented; because although he had finally gotten up the courage to attend a club meeting, and while the folks seemed pleasant enough, they did not make the effort to personally include him. He may even have shown up at a few more meetings and then wandered off never to be heard from again.

Well I ran across a snowmobiler this past season that has the time and motivation to help a club in a variety of areas. He followed the standard advice to call a trail coordinator and volunteer his time. He was thanked profusely and then never heard from the trail coordinator again. He was giving it one more try by relating his story. A number of thoughts occurred to



me. First, do the club members we often refer volunteers to really know what to do with a new volunteer? Second, do they need and are they ready to accept a new volunteer? Third are they willing to go out of the way to encourage and mentor the new volunteer?

Sometimes the task leader has everything under control and doesn't really want or need any extra help at the moment. Maybe all of the trails have been cleared and are completely ready for grooming (dream on). In this case the task leader may simply dismisses the volunteer by putting him off and hoping he will go away. Note: he probably will go away. A better approach might be to ask the new guy what other things he might be able to help the club with and you might be surprised at what you learn. You can then personally introduce him to the proper task leader. If you truly don't need him at the moment, then you can take down his name and address and personally ensure that he gets called the next time a work party is needed. I've even heard

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you must make sure that  
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do to help.**



the excuse, "I wrote this new guy's name down somewhere, but I can't find it." This is simply inexcusable!

Sometimes the task leader may be afraid of letting someone else into his group for fear of upsetting the status quo. His may even fear that his leadership skill might be challenged and he may respond to a suggestion from the new guy with "But we have always done it this way." The leader may indeed be correct, but just maybe the new guy has a better idea or a better way of doing something. The task leader might

also feel that a new guy in the group might upset the closeness or comradery of the group's dynamics. Well, maybe it's time to expand the group's horizons?

Another problem with new volunteers is that they often require a higher level of mentoring/motivation/monitoring to become an effective part of the volunteer team. Some task leaders just aren't up to the mentoring task. They simply announce that they need help on a certain date and time and expect that the team will meet at "the usual place." Only a few folks show up. Perhaps the new guy didn't know where "the usual place" was. Remember he's the new guy here! Perhaps the time was changed at the last minute and everyone in the group automatically got this information via mental telepathy except for the new guy. Or maybe the new guy just plain forgot.

Another task team leader I know has less trouble getting volunteers because he puts more time into the process. He calls and gets a preliminary commitment – easy to do. Then he calls again a few days before

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**You must be sure to include them in the group's conversations so that they truly feel they belong with the group.**

■ ■ ■

the event reminding the folks that he is personally depending on them to show up and help. He may even call the night before, for critical projects, just to let his team know that everything is all set and he is looking forward to working together with them. Yes this is time consuming and shouldn't have to be done but the crazy thing is that this usually works! The team members have said yes three times and know that everyone is counting on them to show up and help. They usually do.

With new volunteers you must make sure that they know what they are expected to bring in terms of equipment and food and what they are expected to do to help. If you are all planning to drive deep into the woods on ATVs you need to make provisions for the new guys to ride along and not walk in by themselves. Finally, you don't want them just standing around watching or they may never return. On the other hand you don't want to work them to death or scare them off. You must be sure to include them in the group's conversations so that they truly feel they belong with the group.

Sure, I've had folks approach me and say, "I just got this really great chainsaw and I have some free time. Where can I go and cut down some trees?" Maybe you just put them off thinking "I don't need or want that kind of help." What you should have been thinking is where/how can I utilize this kind of self-motivated individual. Not everybody should be entrusted with mentoring the new guy. It takes some time and effort to "interview" the new guy and find a place for him to help your club. Maybe he rides around a lot and would be happy and very helpful making sure all of the trail signs are properly maintained. Or maybe he likes making trail signs or helping to cook at fundraisers or write newsletter articles. You have to find out and help him get involved or in today's world he will just simply fade away.

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Of course not every prospective volunteer will pan out and actually become a hardworking member of the club but it is definitely worth a try. Finally, as I often remind some of our complaining club members, the vast majorities are not cut out to be active volunteers so we should

just happily accept their money, perhaps ask for an additional donation and then use their money as our club see fit. Otherwise, just imagine what it would be like if 80 new folks suddenly showed up at club meeting or work parties and all tried to actively help! 🐾





# BODY DOUBLE:

Wood carving closely resembles iconic sled

By Dan Gould

**K**en Packie carved this 1966 Ski-Doo Olympic for the Knox Trail Sno-Riders from a single log. The piece is used as a fundraiser, with money going into a slot behind the windshield, like a piggy bank. Knox club president Jeff Gamelli came up with the idea, and wouldn't you know it, he just happens to own a real '66 Olympic, which he acquired when he was 14 years old.

Ken Packie is a professional wood sculptor residing in the Berkshires. He uses chainsaws, chisels, and fire to free his creations from their logs. You can learn more about Ken and view his artwork at [kfpackie.com](http://kfpackie.com)

The real machine in the photo belongs to fellow Knox member, John Ruffo, who wrote about his grandfather, Paul Bogos in last month's issue. His grandfather was given the sled in the late 70's and rode it for many winters before parking it in the basement.

John hauled the 1970 Ski-Doo Olympic out from under his grandfather's house for restoration. After he got it running again, he changed his mind about the restoration aspect, deciding instead to keep it original, in its "Barn Find" condi-



THE CARVING



THE SLED

tion, just as it was when his grandfather was squeezing the chrome throttle lever.

The sled was proudly on display at the Mass Vintage Snowmobile Club's exhibit at the Sled Expo and if you keep your goggles clear you may spot it on the trails this season. John's putting "Old Yeller" back on the trail and will be steering it through the hills and switchbacks of Massachusetts once again. 🐾

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