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*Chesterfield's new grooming sled is ready to smooth trails this winter.* PHOTO BY BILL GOLASKI



*The Mill Valley Club made their presence known at the Belchertown Fair, where they parked cars as a fundraiser.*

PHOTO BY NATHAN SANSOUCY

# Club Photos

See Club News on page 3



*The Adams Sno Drifters raised a significant amount of money for the Shriners through the sale of popcorn at Bike Night.* PHOTO BY JOE ROGGE



*Repairs and updates to the Hilltown groomer fleet will pay off this season.* PHOTO BY MIKE

DUFRESNE



*The Knox Trail Be Bold Ride Old Sled and Tractor Show attracted 36 vintage snowmobiles and 18 vintage tractors.* PHOTO BY MEL SCUDERI

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



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*Members of the BGL Club hang out by the campfire during a BBQ.*

PHOTO BY DAN GOULD



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**President's Message****BY DAN GOULD**

# An Open Letter To Snowmobilers, Businesses and Friends

**F**rom time to time there are questions about the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts. I hope this letter clarifies how SAM operates and why our partnership is key to the success of snowmobiling and the economy at home.

## NONPROFIT - NO STATE FUNDING

SAM is not a company, it is a non-profit organization of clubs. We do not receive state funding. Zero comes back to SAM from state registrations. We are self-funded through trail pass memberships and fundraisers (such as the Sled Expo). If you think grooming a ski resort is an expensive undertaking, try grooming 2,000 miles of trails that stretch across the state of Massachusetts.

## CLUBS MAKE THE DECISIONS

The clubs run SAM. They make the decisions. Each club has a representative (director) on the SAM Board of Directors, they are the only ones who can vote on policy. The officers cannot vote. It's easy to point a finger at a fictitious person called "SAM" but the clubs are the decision-makers.

## VOLUNTEERS

SAM volunteers do just about everything, from running the clubs and the association, to maintaining and grooming trails. SAM has a part-time contracted executive director who acts as the initial point of contact and carries out tasks that are beyond the scope of the volunteers.

## NO SAM = NO SNOWMOBILING

SAM clubs pool their resources to develop and maintain the trail system. We are "The

Ambassadors of Trails." Without SAM the trails would cease to exist and snowmobiling would halt in Massachusetts.

## LOBBYIST

SAM contracts a legislative advisor who represents the best interests of snowmobiling at the State House. We are the only snowmobile activists in Boston. Our lobbying efforts benefit both SAM and the businesses that profit from snowmobiling in Massachusetts.

## INSURANCE

SAM pays a premium in excess of \$60,000 annually for general liability that protects landowners with SAM trails. Without this insurance the trails would close.

## TRAIL PASSES

The SAM Board of Directors (the clubs) recently voted for unified dues, \$55 early bird through December 15, and \$70 thereafter. We are also investigating online sales. Participating businesses would be able to use the online tool to simplify the transaction and allow immediate trail pass distribution.

## MAGAZINE & WEBSITE

SAM's magazine, website, and social media channels are vital tools used to communicate with thousands of enthusiasts in Massachusetts. Our magazine is direct-mailed to snowmobilers.

## YOUR SUPPORT

We appreciate your support of SAM. Our continued partnership is vital to protect and expand snowmobiling in Massachusetts.

Sincerely,  
Dan Gould

### ADAMS SNO DRIFTERS

by Chrissy Satko and Joe Rogge



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 Agricultural Fair in Adams. We also participated in the annual Bike Night and Fall Run. We are proud of the fact we raised a significant amount of money 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 in the process of discussing the allocation of club funds for various charities during this season. We proudly note that charity discussion has become a regular topic of our monthly meetings. 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, a tracked ATV and 4 snowmobile-based groomers. Dues are only \$70 for each snowmobile (\$55 if you join before December 15) 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 ([berkshiresnowseekers.com](http://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) 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 October Mountain State Forest, Pittsfield State Forest and the Windsor Area. Grooming reports are promptly posted in the SAM Forums by our trail coordinators within hours of grooming. See you on the trails!

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## BERNARDSTON-GILL-LEYDEN

by Brad Stafford, president



The temperatures are starting to drop and Walmart has Christmas trees out, so we all know what that means. Yup, it's time to go support your local snowmobile club! Our club has been busy throughout the summer and fall with our golf tournament and swap-meet to raise funds to keep our trails and groomers ready to go. This happens whether or not we get snow. Just like all clubs, every year there are hundreds of volunteer hours and thousands of dollars needed to make our trails ready. Like all clubs just about every weekend we will have work-bees where we will talk with landowners, repair bridges, and prepare groomers. If it's only one afternoon or every time you see the call for help, it will be appreciated and it is an investment in your trails and the sport we all love. We meet the first Monday at 7pm at the Bernardston Vets Club. We welcome any and everybody that wants to help out at any level. Follow us on Facebook at Bernardston-Gill-Leyden Snowmobile Club or [bglsnow.com](http://bglsnow.com). Until then, "Keep the Rubber Side Down!"

## BUCKLAND RIDERS

by Steven Howland



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 25. 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.

## BURGY BULLETS

by Kevin Kukucka



Can you smell the snow in the air? I can, and it will be here soon. Are you ready? Are your sleds ready? Most importantly... have you helped your local club get ready? The Bullets have been hard at work with trail work and with clubhouse repairs. We meet every Sunday at the clubhouse at 9am sharp for trail work. Club meetings are every 2nd & 4th Wednesday of the month at 7pm. We have memberships and SAM passes available at the clubhouse and at Valley Motorsports. Our annual holiday party is scheduled for December 3 at 6pm with a prime rib dinner and a live band. Also scheduled is a club ride for January 14 and a Poker Run for January 28, both leaving the clubhouse at 9am. Don't forget our annual "Big Game" party with a chili cook-off, and the Daytona 500 party with pot-luck dinner. Check our Facebook page for details and updates of upcoming events, or call Kevin at 413-559-7920. Clubhouse winter hours start Dec. 30 (depending on snow conditions) are: Fri. 6-10, Sat. 10-10 & Sun. 10-6ish.

## CHESTERFIELD FOUR SEASONS

by Bill Golaski, delegate and treasurer



Hello All. As we head through November and the air gets cooler, we think even more about the up and coming riding season. If you haven't done a pre-season check, now's the time to get prepped. Remember to get your SAM pass and club membership early, as pricing will be changing this year with the new Early Bird Special format for all clubs. They are available at our meetings on the 2nd and last Tuesday of the month at 7pm. We are still working hard on trail prep and can always use a helping hand, so please come on down and get involved with your club and your sport of snowmobiling. It would be nice to see some new people get involved. We always have a good time. It will be nice to see our new second Bearcat out smoothing our trails. Our hall/club is available for rent and has a full bar and seats about 150 people. Feel free to come to a meeting and check it out if you'd like to rent the hall. Our club will be running two raffles this fall/winter. One is for a black powder rifle and the other will be a cash raffle. Please help support our club by buying a ticket. Club phone is 413-296-4048, and meetings on 2nd and last Tuesdays of the month at 7pm.

## CONWAY

by Ed Skorupski



The end of the year is here and as usual, we have too much to do and not enough time with which to accomplish our goals. Somehow, time seems to compress as we near the holidays. We had a good group of volunteers for our annual booth at the Conway Festival of the Hills. Thanks to all of them. This event is a good way for us to meet our neighbors and connect with the community. Even though it is a lot of work, we all seem to have a good time. Trail work, while never completely stopped, has regained its typical preseason momentum. We can always use more help as we have a couple of re-routes to finish this year, one of which involves Corridor 93. We usually meet at 9, Sunday mornings, in front of



*Burgy Bullets member Delaney Kukucka is ready for the snow!*

PHOTO BY KEVIN KUKUCKA





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the library in Conway. Please send us a quick email (snow@sledconway.com) or a message on Facebook to let us know you are coming. Hope to see you there. Trail passes are available, online at sledconway.com, or at any of the following locations: Ray's Cycle Center, Bakers, Sunderland Corner Store, and Hatfield Market. Or you can come to a meeting first Tuesday of the month at the Firehouse.

## EASY RIDERS

by Kris Auger, president



I know I'm not the only one who is starting to get excited about this upcoming riding season. These cool mornings are a sure indicator that it will not be long before we are back into the freezing weather that brings that white stuff we all live for. Here at the Easy Riders Snowmobile Club we are gearing up for our open house meeting on November 8. I would like to welcome everyone to come and check us out, you will be sure to have a good time and who knows, you could win a raffle or two. On December 13 we will be having our annual pot luck Christmas party with a good old Yankee Swap. Please check us out on the web at ersc.net for upcoming trips and events. Here's wishing you all a spectacular and safe 2017 riding season. Club meetings are held at the Marlboro Moose Lodge, 67 Fitchburg St., Marlboro

## GREATER WHATELY

by Robert Sabola



To continue the story, the year was maybe 1969 or 1970. My father worked in Greenfield with a gentleman by the name of Mr. Bruce Baker. The Baker's farm was located in Conway and they were the dealership for Skiroule Snowmobiles. Mr. Baker invited us to the farm to take a ride on a snowmobile. Being 11 years old this was pretty exciting and also pretty scary. We went and we rode a Skiroule. After that ride my brother and I knew we just had to have a snowmobile. The following summer we went in halves and bought a 1967 Polaris Colt from Mr. Baker. He was kind enough to let us pay for it over two summers. The sled was equipped with a single cylinder 372 cc, 32 HP, JLO engine. To help make it easier to start, the engine was equipped with a decompression button on the side of the cylinder head and also a preheater on the muffler. It had a 15-inch steel cleated track. (Story to be continued!) GWSC meetings are the second Monday of the month September through April, Whately Town Hall, 7pm. Email: greaterwhatelysnowmobileclub@aol.com or visit us at sledmass.com/club/greater-whately-snowmobile-club/

## HARVARD

by Joe Gibbons, board of director



Hibernation has ended. After a long hot summer I am certain all of us are back to thinking about getting those sleds started, trail clearings, club outings and activities. We deserve a huge blast of the white stuff after the lame season last year. Being the eternal optimist that I am, I had my stockbroker invest in snow shovels and plows. By the time the first issue is in your hands, board of director meetings, as well as club meetings, are underway. There is plenty of enthusiasm here in Harvard waiting for that first snowfall. Our groomer is hungry, for sure, and Mark Shaw has taken good care of her while she had this long rest. Signage, bridge repairs, mowing and trail clearing are all in process and our trails will welcome all SAM members. We meet at The Harvard Fire Station, the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7:30pm. Come join us, you are all welcome. Trail passes can be purchased at Toreku Tractor at the rotary in Ayer. Get ready for the great blizzards of 2017/2018 and let's have some fun.

## KNOX TRAIL SNO-RIDERS

by Jim Richard



Hello Sno-Riders! The leaves are turning and the nights are getting colder. The first meetings of the new season are behind us. Enjoy the holidays and remember, "Think snow!" September 25 was a perfect day for the 4th Be Bold Ride Old Vintage Sled and Tractor Show in Otis. Mel Scuderi is the driving force behind these popular events. To Mel and all of the volunteers, exhibitors, and participants, thank you! Once again you can win a 2017 Ski-Doo MXZ 600 Sport snowmobile in the seventh annual raffle. Only 125 tickets will be sold at \$125 each. Entry includes a buffet dinner for two at the Stockbridge Sportsman's Club on January 7, 2017. Tickets are available from knoxtrail.com, club officers, vendors, or the Sno-Phone at 413-269-0243. Hurry before it sells out!

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**Watch out Rick! The Porcupine Ridge Runners remind you to always be on the lookout for downed trees and other obstacles on the trail.** PHOTO BY LEW STARKEY

As always, volunteers are needed for trail work, groomer maintenance and operation, club events, etc. Would you like to help? Call the Sno-Phone, go to [knoxtrail.com](http://knoxtrail.com), write to KTSR, Box 363, East Otis, MA 01029, visit us at an event, or attend a meeting! See you on the trails!

## MILL VALLEY

by Nathan Sansoucy



The grass is still green but the temperatures are getting colder as we are getting more and more restless waiting for snow. We had a pretty busy month with trail clean-up on Sundays started. The club is still looking for more volunteers to help clean trails. If you would like to help, please contact with Nathan Sansoucy at [nrsansoucy@gmail.com](mailto:nrsansoucy@gmail.com). We were also at the Belchertown Fair, parking cars to raise money for are club. Thank you to all who parked in our lot and a big thanks to the volunteers that donated time out of their weekend to come out and help park everyone. As we continue building our club's new drags, we are on their final stages of completion. Our club meetings have started up again they are held on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at the Masonic Temple in Belchertown. For more information about meets or other events, please visit our website at [millvalleysnowmobile.org](http://millvalleysnowmobile.org)

## PORCUPINE RIDGE RUNNERS

by Lewis Starkey, president



The Porcupine Ridge Runners have been meeting to prepare for the upcoming season. We are excited about the condition of our trails and plan to be out a few more times before the snow flies to remove downed trees and branches to ensure the safety of our riders. Just a reminder - always be on the lookout for downed trees and other obstacles on the back trails that fall after the first snow. Slow down and enjoy. We continue to look for volunteers to help us with trail maintenance and welcome newcomers to join us on the second Monday of each month at the Shutesbury Athletic Club. Our trails in Shutesbury, Leverett, Wendell and New Salem are

beautiful and not something you will want to miss this year! Our SAM trail passes will be available online this year so please be sure to support your unpaid volunteers when buying online. Also passes should be available at the usual spots. Important and new this year, passes are priced at \$55 early bird everywhere, every club, and after December 15 they go up significantly. Buy now, support your local club. Passes are available at Amherst Welding and at club meetings, or see Puff, your groomer of the year. See you on the trails!

## SAVOY KANARY KATS

by Doug DeCoigne



Happy autumn sled fanatics! Our season is rapidly approaching... hopefully!? I'm sure every club is working to clear trails and readying grooming equipment for the winter. SKK has been doing extensive repairs and upgrades to our fleet of 3 LMC 1800 groomers, track work, turbo and drive upgrades as well as routine maintenance. The new Bearcat has been modified to work with our custom built drag. It was a tough start to the trail work with rainy Sundays in September. Trail work will continue until snow flies. We had our usual set up and cast of characters at the Big E Snow Expo with our raffle sled and we did well selling raffle tickets. There was plenty of room in the larger building. Obviously we all will be doing our snow dance until the first ride! Think snow! ❄️

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# Timber Harvesting and Snowmobile Trails – Making it Work!

**By Randy Toth**

**M**ention the word logging today and many people immediately assume the worst. They envision “clear-cut” logging—cutting down every tree in sight for miles around. The Department of Conservation and Recreation’s (DCR) timber harvesting program actually employs a kinder and gentler form of logging which does not leave the landscape looking like a tornado just ripped through. Today’s politically correct terminology, when referring to logging, is “timber harvesting.”

Ideally, timber harvesting is done when the forest is relatively dry to minimize the creation of mud holes and deep scarring of the landscape caused by heavy timber harvesting equipment. Poor ground conditions can often lead to erosion, rutting, damaged root systems and disturbance to the natural soil conditions. As a result, many woodland areas are best suited to timber harvesting in the winter with frozen ground to protect the landscape. Winter is, of course, also home to our ever shorter snowmobile season. In the past there have been conflicts between DCR timber harvesting and snowmobiling since both users often require the





Timber harvesting,  
along with  
recreational  
trails creation  
or restoration  
can be mutually  
beneficial to both  
the state and trail  
users, particularly  
motorized trail  
users.



PHOTO BY JEFF GAMELLI



PHOTO BY DAN GOULD

same network of roads and trails for access to the state forests. Fortunately, through improved communications, advanced planning and understanding each other's needs, forestry operations and snowmobiling can successfully co-exist.

The timber harvesting process itself is carefully and painstakingly planned and monitored by the local DCR forester. The local DCR forester identifies the proposed timber harvest area and any forest areas requiring additional protection within the harvest area. Next a relatively standard DCR Forest Management Proposal consisting of the following sections is prepared:

- **Overview** - Describes the proposed timber harvesting area and the reasons for selecting the location for forest management such as forest age, health and positive economic impact.
- **Project Area Description** - Describes the size and forest types present in the proposed timber harvest area. It lists the specific trees present on the site, the specific trees to be harvested and certain trees to be avoided. It also describes the topography of the area including slopes, streams and soil types.
- **Aesthetic Considerations** - Describes the public and private land affected, the overall size and location of buffer zones and slash handling areas, and the techniques to be employed to mitigate the negative appearance of the area after the timber harvest.
- **Recreation Considerations** - Describes plans for dealing with existing legal recreation in the area that will be affected either temporarily or permanently by the timber harvest. For example it addresses how snowmobiling and harvesting equipment may safely share forest roads and trails during the harvesting operation.
- **Water Resource Considerations** - Describes all water resources and mitigation plans for dealing with wells, wetlands, vernal pools, streams, stream crossings and nearby bodies of water.
- **Cultural Considerations** - Describes all key cultural artifacts and plans to protect them from disturbance. This includes items like stone walls, old cellar holes, historic sites, etc.
- **Rare and Endangered Species Considerations** - Describes key species present and plans to completely avoid or fully protect them.
- **Wildlife Considerations** - Describes the animals normally encountered in the area and plans for the protection of any rare animals and critical habitats known to be or discovered in the area.
- **Sale Layout and Harvesting Limitations** - Describes the planned access to the project, landings, skid road and trails, wetland and stream crossings, road and trail buffers, harvesting equipment limitations, special excluded areas, erosion and sedimentation control, site restoration, in-kind services and sensitive public issues like dealing with the Appalachian Trail (AT) and the Statewide Snowmobile Trail System (SSTS).



- **Silviculture (the art and science of forestry)** - Describes the goals and objectives of the project, the methods used to accomplish these goals, the short and long-term expected outcomes and potential future treatments. For example, harvesting northern hardwoods includes planning for the transition of forest lands from evenly-aged forests to unevenly-aged forests by employing irregular “shelterwood cuttings” in

which a new generation of seedlings can grow while being protected by the more mature trees left standing. These small forest openings also provide wildlife with additional places to forage for food. Tree species diversity and disease mitigation, by harvesting dying trees while they still have some economic value, are also factored into the plans.

- **Stand Maps** - Describes the general project location, the specific temporary and permanent roads to be constructed, specific areas to be harvested and the location of any special items



PHOTO BY DAN GOULD

for consideration that can be made public. The SSTS map is a useful tool for identifying and locating corridor trails.

After the forest management proposal is complete and released to the public, the local DCR forester marks the specific trees to be harvested as well as the special areas to be avoided. Public hearings and public walkthroughs of the proposed areas are conducted, a request for proposal is issued, bids are received, a contractor is selected and

finally the actual harvesting is performed while being closely monitored by the area forester to insure full compliance with the contract and all applicable state rules and regulations. While this process is quite complex and costly, it definitely helps protect and improve forest lands while providing an economic benefit to the state and local communities.

Timber harvesting, along with recreational trails creation or restoration can be mutually beneficial to both the state and trail users, particularly motorized trail users. Timber harvesting requires a dirt roadway capable of supporting log haulers, permanent and temporary stream crossing structures, a network of smaller trails for the log haulers, a cleared landing to stockpile the harvested logs and a number of very small clear cut openings in the forest. The dirt access roads are generally more environmentally sound and sustainable than the original motorized trails and can sometime be repurposed to replace poor sections of existing recreational trails. They can become sustainable Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) trails during the permitted riding season and a groomed snowmobile trail for the short riding season in the winter. Sometimes access road bridges can be left in place to be used by various trail users, forest fire suppression teams, rescue teams and future forest harvesting operations. Some of the smaller trails might remain as passive use trails while the majority of the smaller access paths are quickly reclaimed by the surrounding forest. Some landings may even become parking areas for forest visitors.

Rather than bumping heads with timber harvesting plans, working together ahead of time can be a win-win operation for everyone. The timber harvesters get the timber, DCR and the local communities share in the profits and the snowmobilers get to keep on riding. Key trails, which can't be temporarily bypassed, can be safely shared during the logging operation, by various techniques such as providing a small unplowed “shelf” along one side of the road, leaving a thin layer of snow on the road, installing traffic control gates, dual use signage and agreed to rules of joint access. The key is communication and cooperation.

A special thanks to DCR's Central Berkshire forester Kris Massini for help with this article and for the great coordination and communication between DCR and the local clubs (Berkshire Snow Seekers and Knox Trail Sno-Riders) concerning timber harvesting in October Mountain State Forest. 🐾

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PHOTOS BY DAN GOULD

# 'Tis the Season for Giving

By Brad Stafford

**T**he temperatures are starting to drop, the leaves have been falling and the Big Box stores have had Christmas decorations out for at least two months. So, we all know what that means. Yup... Its time to support your snowmobile club! Last year was rough on all us snow-lovers. Besides the people that make a living dealing with the white stuff, nobody took a harder hit than your snowmobile club. As usual, all the clubs went out last fall and had the trails and groomers ready for you. As you are all well aware, this takes both time, graciously donated by countless volunteers, and

money! The "Time Bank" gets replenished every year by club volunteers, who donate precious hours, so that all of us can enjoy snowmobiling at home. The "Money Bank" is different, as most clubs run year to year. They sometimes overextend their monetary resources in the fall to get the trails ready, and then when the snow flies and the trail passes start to sell, the funds get replenished.

Well, we all know what happened last year, snow-wise. All of us were disappointed and frustrated, especially the dedicated club volunteers that had far more invested than most snowmobilers. Last year more than 50% of you saved a few dollars and waited for snow, which never came. For those that thought this was a small victory towards a lost season, I suppose you can rationalize it in your mind. But all those small gains at the individual level added up to huge setbacks for the trails and your club. It is more important

than ever to invest time and money in your club this year, to insure you will be able to ride your favorite trails and insure the future of our sport.

It's ironic that the new single-price trail pass structure was finally implemented this season, on the heels of one of the worst financial years for our clubs. This structure has been debated back and forth for many years at both the club level and SAM board meetings. SAM membership (a trail pass) is made up of two parts, club dues and SAM dues. Unlike the SAM dues, which are consistent, club dues varied.

Some clubs had early bird or family discounts or some other incentives. I don't want open a can of worms but in my opinion this "friendly" competitive price structure hurt a lot of clubs. Neighboring clubs could have a price difference of up to \$20 or more. Bargain shoppers would buy the cheapest trail pass, even though the majority of their riding would be on another club's trails.

The new global trail pass price, which includes club and SAM dues, is \$55 before



**The small investment by thousands of snowmobilers adds up fast, helping the clubs and SAM, all of which go right back into the trails.**



December 15th and \$70 after. The income breaks down to \$30 for SAM, \$5 for the Trail Preservation Fund, and \$20 for the clubs before December 15, and \$35 thereafter. For some, the new price could be a little more than last year, for others, it's cheaper.

To all of you pulling your hair out, let's put this in perspective. A \$55 investment towards the security of riding your favorite local trail, on a snowmobile that cost thousands of dollars, is most likely less than you paid for your riding gloves, and far less than your jacket or helmet. Think about this for a minute: If your club folds up and the trails close because of lack of capital, you don't get to ride. And not because of Mother Nature, but because of lack of support. That goes for every state in the Snowbelt. You truly need to join your club and support them, regardless of snow.

The small investment by thousands of snowmobilers adds up fast, helping the clubs and SAM, all of which go right back into the trails. It pays for grooming, repairs, bridges, trail preparation, markers, and so much more. So step-up this year, 'Tis the Season for Giving. Show support to your club for all those past and future rides. Buy your trail pass early, save money and invest in snowmobiling. I guarantee your gift will be enjoyed by you, your friends and your family. Until next time, "Keep the Rubber Side Down." 🐾

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# Cutting Edge: Cruise Control for a Drag

PHOTOS BY JIM RICHARD

**Story by Jim Richard**

**P**aul Richard is at it again! Remember a few years back he figured out how to make snow with a pressure washer and air compressor? (Check sled-mass.com if you forgot) Now he put cruise control on a drag! He designed and built his drag using SolidWorks 3D computer-aided design, and hooked it to a 1990 Subaru Sambar, a microtruck, which he restored and converted into a four-tracked snow-machine. How would you install cruise control on a drag? Enter Arduino, a popular off-the-shelf microcomputer that can do just about whatever you tell it to do, that's how. This is a three-part story. Part 1 is the restoration and installing the tracks. Part 2 is designing and building the drag. Part 3 is automating the drag with cruise control. With any meal, you want dessert first, so Part 3 is first!

Every groomer operator knows the wrong bite on the snow will slow you down. With too much, the tracks spin or the engine stalls. With too little, operator and machine time is wasted. So there's a constant battle fought between steering, throttle, and bite. Wouldn't eliminating just one of these factors make the job a lot easier? We don't have self-driving groomers yet but the self-adjusting drag is here!

Paul installed a "load cell" in the draw bar. The load cell converts the tension generated by the drag into an electrical signal analyzed by the Arduino. The tension is compared to the desired tension set by the operator. When the tension is less than desired, an electric actuator drops the blades. When the tension exceeds the setting, the blades are raised. A console in the cab displays the desired and resultant tension. Two joysticks control the blades and wheels as usual but

there is also a red button. Here is where it gets interesting!

As the groomer begins pulling, the blade joystick is used to set the desired resistance. Then the red button is pushed and the Arduino takes over. Now the operator needs only to manage steering and throttle. Should conditions dictate more or less pull, all the operator does is adjust the blade and push the button again. The Arduino also recognizes stopping and starting and adjusts accordingly. After all, when the groomer stops, the tension decreases, and if the blades were to drop, re-starting would be difficult, if not impossible.

The entire project was ready to roll last winter but we all know what happened. Even so, Paul worked throughout the summer improving the programming, electric controls and equipment. The Subaru appears to be capable of its expectations but the performance of the drag is yet to be seen.

Tune in next time for a report on the Subaru restoration and conversion, but you may see Paul on the trails before then! 🐾



PHOTO BY DAN GOULD



PHOTO BY DAN GOULD

# Rotax or No Trax

**Story by  
John Ruffo**

Over the past couple of years I have thought of building a “Main Rider.” This summer I got a call from a family friend, Tom Fanion, about a 1985 Ski-Doo Skandic. I hemmed-and-hawed about it. Do I really need one more sled? I figured why not, check it out, it can’t hurt, right?

I found it behind a shed under trees, with leaves and dirt all over the running boards. The hood was cracked, the motor seized, and the track was split so bad I couldn’t believe it was still attached. I took the gent up on the offer, seeing the price was right, which was free by the way.



PHOTO BY JOHN RUFFO

Once unloaded at home, I cleaned it up and soaked the cylinders in Marvel Mystery Oil. After literally three months I tried working the clutch back and forth to no success. The ol’ 377 was locked up tight. After toying around I got an extension and hammer and gave light love taps to each cylinder and finally had some movement. Soon after, it was firing time, and she did! Ran better than some rebuilt engines.

After some thought, I realized how much I actually liked this sled, as if there was ever any doubt. 1985 was the last year for the narrow front leaf-spring suspen-



sions, which for me says vintage. It's a long track, which was uncommon back then. The added traction and comfort are a plus. And finally, the jackshaft drivetrain is durable enough to handle more power and a better track. So, the build is on!

The original 139-inch track length has limited options, such as lug size, so I'm upgrading to 136, which has far more choices (touring, rip-saw, race, powder, etc). A quick swap to 2.52" drivers, and skid mods, and we are set.

Now the heartbeat. I need more ponies than the little 377 is capable of, especially with a newer track. Many engines came to mind, but 503 seemed most period-correct and most reliable. I always loved the look of the old Chaparrals and King Cats, with the iconic heads sticking out of the hood. I noticed the cooling fins on these engines were straight and abnormally big for a fan-cooled engine. A couple of old racers in Maine explained that they had great success with the free air mods on these mills. Off came the old fan shroud.

I quickly mocked the motor up, to see how it fit. With the engine in position, although loosely, I fabricated sheet metal and welded vents on the old hood to be used as a mold for a light fiberglass hood, looking somewhat like the classic TNT.

Now for exhaust. I've always wanted to build an exhaust that looked like the old P51 Mustang plane from WWII, with pipes hanging out on each side. But I'm also a fan of the classic pipe and can.

What about the paint? I'd admired the paint job on the hood of the '73 Ski-Doo free-air. The white hood, yellow sides, black in the front, complete with orange vents. I also like metallic yellow with classic red and orange, and a yellow stripe down the hood. Or maybe a WWII camo? The decision on the paint and exhaust will be based on feedback I got from the October vintage show at Sled Expo. Should be interesting!

Another mod for consideration is nerf bars. The old running boards do their job but often get clogged with snow. If I'm going to do nerf bars, might as well include anti-slip ribs along the outer rails, made from self-tapping screws to grip the bottom of my boots.

You may wonder why people like me ride vintage snowmobiles. In my eyes, I see characteristics from old mus-



PHOTO BY JOHN RUFFO

cle cars in these machines. There's an actual metal bumper that is chromed or polished aluminum, not plastic. The best part is that they are simple! That's one of the many reasons I chose this particular model year of snowmobile. It was the last of that classic design, before independent front suspension (IFS) and bumper covers became the norm. Matter of fact, I got the story title idea, Rotax or No Trax, from the old Chrysler rhyme, "Mopar or No Car."

Many of you who ride both new and vintage snowmobiles fully understand... while new sleds are nice and comfortable, the old bombers can be equally fun. You have direct control of these sleds, body English translates to handling without filters. They are small, light and nimble, able to travel goat trails, weaving in and out of the trees with ease. It's a completely different snowmobile experience and I love it. Until the test and tune phase of the build, see you on the trails! Be Bold Ride Old. 🐾

# CLUB NOTICE: Toys For Tots at December SAM Meeting

**S**AM clubs know the magic of Christmas giving. Last year you donated 120 toys and \$1,485 in cash for needy children! You made Christmas extra special for hundreds of families.

Let's go even bigger this year—Ho, Ho, Ho, Santa-size big. Please bring new, unwrapped gifts to the December SAM meeting. If your club wants to donate cash, make checks payable to the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts and write Toys for Tots in the memo. 🐾



PHOTO BY DAN GOULD

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## Legislative Corner

BY LARRY TUCKER

# Buy America!

**D**uring this past summer I took advantage of the warm weather and managed to complete several minor and major repairs to all my sleds, including the restoration of a 2004 Ski-Doo MXZ Blair Morgan Special Edition. The warm weather made these projects very enjoyable. But, the mums and pumpkins have started to appear, all the swimming pools are winterized, the leaf raking has begun, and our trail crews are out. What's next? Winter!

My thoughts, and the thoughts of many of you, are turning to our grooming fleets. We wonder about getting repairs done, what new equipment should we purchase and how will we pay for it? Most of the clubs have turned to the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) as an important component for funding their grooming equipment. My own club could never have put together the fleet that we have without the RTP program. So, is there anything new with the RTP program? Let's take a look and find out.

As it turns out, there is something new in the RTP program. A federal judge's ruling in January of this year has further stipulated that equipment being purchased with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funds, or in our case RTP funds, must comply with Federal "Buy America" requirements. Buy America requires that any project involving a purchase of machinery containing any percentage of steel must be able to certify that the steel component of the machine has been melted, formed and manufactured in the USA. Further examples of projects involving steel could be a town that might purchase a tractor, a snowmobile club that might purchase a groomer or a group putting up a steel bridge. The Buy America program does, however, allow for waivers and allow for an exemption if the value of the steel in the machine being purchased is less than \$2,500. Anyone needing additional information may refer to [www.fhwa.dot.gov/construction/contracts/buyam\\_qa.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/construction/contracts/buyam_qa.cfm) or call Amanda Lewis of the DCR at 413-586-8706.

A few clubs have already encountered this new stipulation. Let me relate what my club's experience has been. The Mill Valley Snowmobile Club put in a grant request for two new grooming drags. We solicited four quotes from drag manufacturers in both the USA and Canada. The process to obtain certification prior to proceeding with a purchase was taking far too long, so we decided to keep our money local and turned to a local fabricator to make the drags. But first we approached the steel wholesaler, who readily provided the necessary paperwork for compliance, putting us in the "go" position. Compliance was rather easy.

On another note, if you have not made your phone call to help move our SAM legislation, please take that extra minute and contact Senate President, Stanley Rosenberg at 617-722-1500 or [Stan.Rosenberg@masenate.gov](mailto:Stan.Rosenberg@masenate.gov) and simply ask him to help move our SAM bill #S1955 into law.


I would like to offer special thanks to all of you that help purchase, maintain and drive our grooming fleets. I hope to see you out on our snowmobile trails soon. Remember, all snowmobilers are members of the grooming team. 



PHOTO BY ED SKORUPSKI

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