

## Snowmobile Grant Program

### Snowmobile Grant Fact Sheet

Welcome to the Montana Snowmobile Program! This unique program, which is comprised of several different elements, is administered by Montana State Parks. The program's funding sources include snowmobile registration fees, gasoline taxes, dealer registration fees, the groomed trail pass, and nonresident permit fees. One of the main components of the program is the snowmobile grant program.

Grants from this program finance the grooming of almost 4,000 miles of trails. Snowmobile grants are distributed through a peer-reviewed grant application process based on historic funding levels and other factors. FWP relies on its Snowmobile Advisory Committee to advise Montana State Parks on distribution of program funds and all matters related to snowmobiling. The Parks Division also enjoys a close working relationship with the Montana Snowmobile Association, an organization of individuals, local snowmobile clubs and businesses interested in promoting snowmobiling in Montana.

The Montana Legislature passed legislation that sets aside 15/28 of 1% of the Distributor's Gasoline License Tax for the snowmobile program. A Montana resident registration fee is required on all snowmobiles used on public lands. That fee can provide a one-time only registration for the period of time a person owns a snowmobile. Along with the permanent registration a Montana resident must also have a groomed trail pass to access any of the groomed snowmobile trails. In addition, nonresidents must purchase a temporary use permit for snowmobiles used on public lands in Montana.

Grants are awarded to 26 private snowmobile clubs in western-and central Montana. These clubs perform snowmobile trail grooming primarily managed by the Forest Service. The goal of the program is to provide safe and enjoyable winter recreation for motorized enthusiasts through trail grooming, trail signing, ethics-and safety education, and other related pursuits. Montana State Parks, in cooperation with volunteer instructors, provides safety-and-ethics education for all snowmobilers.

Because grooming on public lands can only take place with the cooperation and assistance of the land managing agency, new snowmobile clubs wishing to access Montana Snowmobile Program grants, or clubs wishing to expand existing trail systems should first take their proposals to the U.S. Forest Service or appropriate land managing agency for review. In all likelihood, new clubs or new proposals will take a considerable time (perhaps several years) to go through the review and approval process. Until approved by the land managing agency, Montana State Parks, and the Montana Snowmobile Advisory Committee, new clubs or proposals do not have access to grant funding.

Here we list some of the more important technical and regulatory aspects of the program for your review and consideration. However, please be sure you review this entire snowmobile website and understand all of the Montana Snowmobile Program rules and regulations before you begin the application process; it could save you considerable time and money.

1. Eligible applicants include snowmobile clubs and organizations, but not individuals.

2. Although grants of up to \$75,000 have been awarded, most clubs generally receive grants of less than \$20,000 annually.
3. No matching funds are required to apply for a snowmobile grant. However, most clubs spend a considerable amount of money over their annual grant awards.
4. The program relies on the cooperation of land-managing agencies, private landowners, and some municipalities. The majority of groomed trails are located on properties managed by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.
5. The Snowmobile Advisory Committee, comprised of private snowmobilers and representatives of state and federal agencies, advises Montana State Parks on the expenditure of program funds including snowmobile grants awarded for the maintenance of snowmobile trails.
6. The following are some examples of eligible projects.
  - A. Operation of trails-related environmental protection, safety and ethics education.
  - B. Trail projects on routes legally designated or otherwise appropriately approved by the land-managing agency.
  - C. Maintenance and rehabilitation of existing trails open to snowmobile use.
  - D. On federal lands, grants will only be approved for trails legally designated by the appropriate federal agency, and included in official forest plans, resource area plans, or travel plans.
  - E. Development of trailside and trailhead facilities on existing snowmobile trails.
  - F. Providing features to assist disabled individuals on existing snowmobile trails.
  - G. Signs and other traffic control devices on existing snowmobile trails.
  - H. Equipment necessary for grooming of snowmobile trails.
  - I. Eligible projects include the development, operation, or maintenance of a current MEPA-approved snowmobile trail system. Some examples of good projects are these: grooming of snowmobile trails, construction of groomer maintenance sheds, construction of a trail bridge, installation of snowmobile trail signs, and plowing of snowmobile trailhead parking lots.