



New York State Snowmobile Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

December 5, 2007

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SNOWMOBILERS EAGERLY AWAIT THE SEASON

Early Snowfall Tempting Snowmobilers; Southern Tier Trails Not Yet Open.

Long Lake, NY – The recent “flurry” of lake-effect snowstorm activity across New York State has many snowmobilers optimistic about the upcoming season. In fact, after several years of below-normal snowfall, many are chomping at the bit to get out and ride. Not so fast, say leaders of the New York State Snowmobile Association (NYSSA), who urge snowmobilers to wait until the trails are open- and ready.

“Snowmobile trails on private land in New York generally can not open until after the end of the big-game hunting season,” says Jim Jennings, NYSSA Executive Director, adding that “even then the trails aren’t opened until the local clubs complete their pre-season preparations.” In the southern tier of NY, that means that many snowmobile trails won’t be open until the evening of December 18. Jennings advises snowmobilers to check with the local club to make sure trails are open before heading out to ride.

Dave Perkins, NYSSA Trails Coordinator, agrees. “The trails aren’t open until the clubs have removed fallen trees, cleared brush, and installed signs that direct snowmobilers safely along the route and away from hazards.” Perkins adds that with the heavy snow accumulation, snowmobilers should avoid the temptation to ride before the season officially begins.

Perkins also emphasizes that since more than 80% of the 11,000-plus miles of snowmobile trails in New York are on private property, riding before the official opening of the trail is trespassing. Many of the private landowners who allow access for snowmobile trails do not want snowmobilers interfering with deer hunting. Other landowners who have planted winter crops are concerned that early riding, before the ground has had a chance to freeze, will damage the crop and reduce yield come springtime. Respecting the wishes of landowners is critical, according to Perkins. “Landowners are the backbone of the NY snowmobile trail system,” he says, adding “without them there would be no trails.”

In New York State, snowmobile trails are maintained by local clubs that use volunteer labor to perform all of the thousands of man-hours necessary to get the trails ready for the season. Clearing trees that have fallen across the trails, cutting back overgrown brush, and installing trail signs are among the tasks that are underway all over the state. Trails are routinely re-routed as changes to the landscape happen during the off-season. For riders thinking of a little pre-season snowmobiling, heading out on unsigned trails might be an accident waiting to happen.

For his part, Jennings believes that common sense should overcome the snow fever, and offers the following points to help ensure safe snowmobiling:

- ❖ Most clubs do not open their trails until after the end of deer season. In the southern tier, that means after dusk on December 18.
- ❖ Even after the “official” start of the season, snowmobilers should always be aware of trail conditions before heading out to ride. Contact the local club where you plan to ride and make sure the trails are open.
- ❖ Take it easy while getting back in the swing of snowmobiling after a long summer’s wait. Many snowmobilers are anxious to try out newly purchased sleds, and should take time to adjust to handling a new machine.
- ❖ Riding before the trails are cleared and signed is risky business.
- ❖ Always respect landowners; stay on the trail and stay home if the trail is closed.
- ❖ Make sure that youthful operators have completed the required safety classes. In fact, it is a good idea for adult riders to brush up on snowmobile safety as well. Classes are scheduled across the state.

Snowmobilers may visit the NYSSA Website at www.nyssnowassoc.org/ for more information.

Respectfully,



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