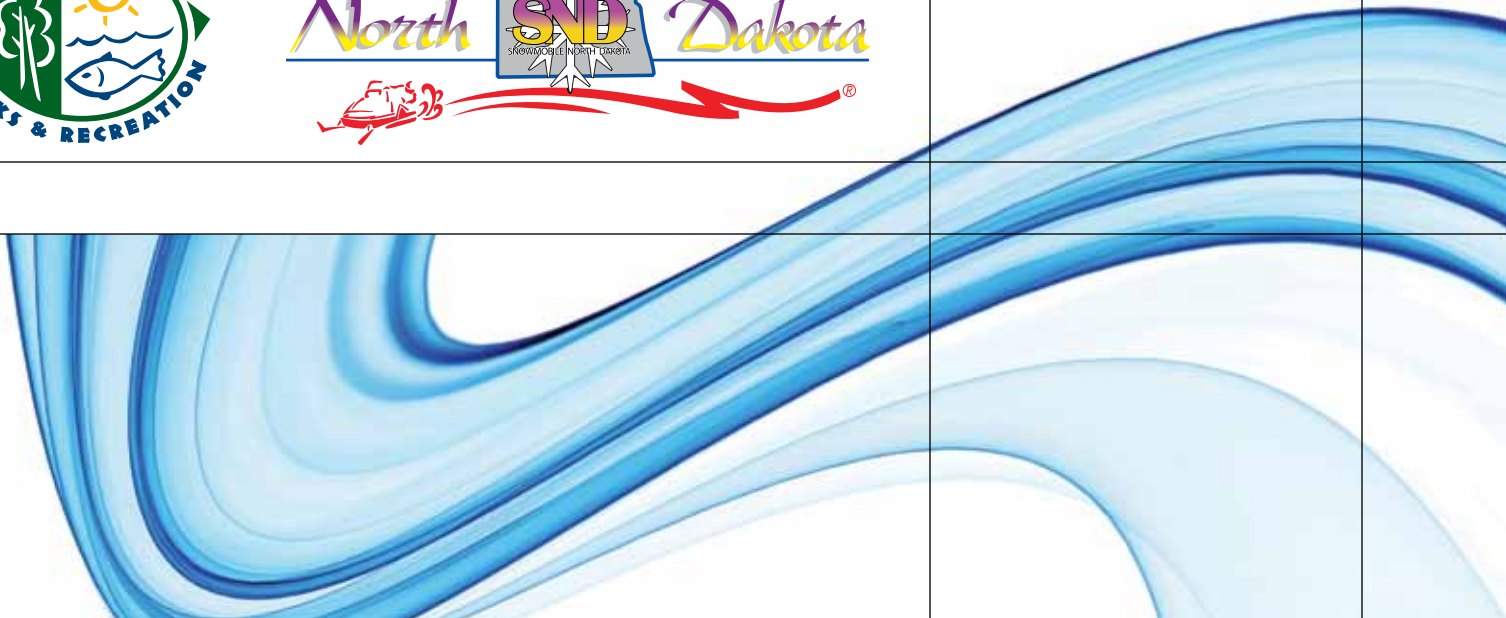


North Dakota Snowmobile Program Strategic Plan 2013-2017





North Dakota Snowmobile Program Strategic Plan 2013-2017

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Introduction

North Dakota Snowmobile Strategic Plan 2013-2017

The following is the third edition of a strategic plan for the snowmobile trail system for the state of North Dakota. The first was commissioned to provide a framework for the further development of the program from 2003-2008 and the second covered 2008-2012. This evolution of the strategic plan sets out a plan for the time frame 2013-2017.

The snowmobile program is statutorily established by the North Dakota Legislature and assigned to the North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department to administer. The recreation division is tasked with the snowmobile trail system which is funded by registrations of snowmobiles and a portion of the gas tax. Registration is required for both in state and out of state snowmobiles that use the state trail system and within road rights of way. The management of this program entails a number of functions, including safety education, out of state trail pass sales and trail management.

The North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department contracts with Snowmobile North Dakota, a nonprofit membership organization, to run the trail management portion. SND was established in 1974 and in addition to

the trail management component provides a number of member services. This organization is broken down into trail associations, which are charged with local trail administration and local clubs who hold events, do fund raising and hold membership drives.

Snowmobile North Dakota is governed by the 14 member board of directors and employs a program manager, trail inspector and various office staff. They host an annual convention, a state snowmobile ride, Sno-Dak News a seasonal magazine published October-March, and a number of other program products and services, but the majority of the work performed by the organization is to fulfill trail management contract with the North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department.

Market Analysis Methodology

North Dakota Snowmobile Strategic Plan 2013-2017



KEY STAFF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

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Snowmobiling enthusiasts' have a lot of great emotion and passion for their sport. In order to understand the current needs of snowmobile enthusiasts' and program management three methods were employed.

Survey of Registered Snowmobile Owners

In order to assess the needs of snowmobile registrants an online and mail survey was implemented. A random sampling of the over 18,000 in state registrants and out of state trail pass holders were provided a post card asking them to participate in an online survey or were mailed a paper survey. Care was taken to insure that duplication was eliminated. 392 responses were collected to provide a margin of error rate of less than five percent.

Survey of Stakeholders

There are a number of stakeholders in this program, trail administrators, club organizers and snowmobile dealers. This

survey was administered by telephone. Telephone interviews offer more specific answers that provided deeper analysis of the needs of the program. 37 surveys were administered randomly across three lists of stakeholders to attain a 50% response rate

Key Staff Interviews

In order to gather in depth program analysis interviews were conducted with staff members and Snowmobile North Dakota board members. These input gathering sessions were free flowing qualitative based research that explored a number of different aspects of the program and provided more in-depth discussions of the future direction of the program.

Key Findings

North Dakota Snowmobile Strategic Plan 2013-2017

Snowmobile Organization Membership

- 65.1% were not members of a state snowmobile organization
- 38% felt that snowmobile trails was the purpose of statewide snowmobile organizations
- 40% felt it was to promote snowmobiling was the purpose of statewide snowmobile organizations
- 22% of respondents felt that trails was the largest benefit of a snowmobile organizations
- 47.6% felt that \$20-\$30 was an appropriate amount to pay per year for dues to a statewide snowmobile organization
- 27.1% felt that \$10-\$20 was appropriate.

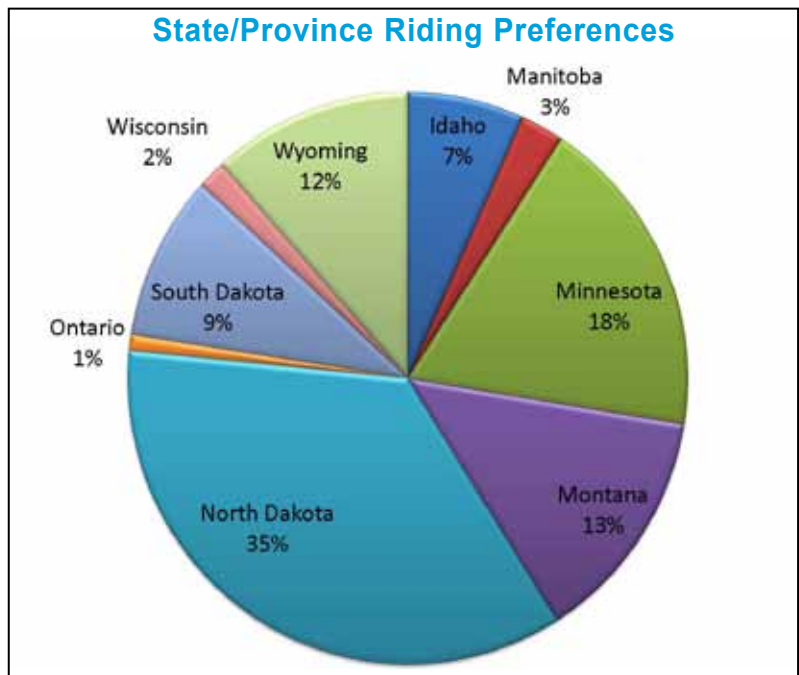
Safety Education

- 93% of households with children had 1-2 children between 12-18 years old who go snowmobiling during a typical season
- 94.2% of households with children had 1-2 children under 12 years old who go snowmobiling during a typical season
- 58.9% of children did not have a snowmobile certificate or operators license when they rode
- 86% of survey respondents felt that hands-on training was very important
- 77% felt that multimedia would not be able to replace hands on training.

Riding Preferences

- 68.9% did more than 60% of their riding in North Dakota
- 91.9% were satisfied or very satisfied with their encounters with law enforcement in North Dakota
- 61% will not travel more than 300 miles to snowmobile

State/Province Riding Preferences



Respondents felt on average that \$31.50 per year is a reasonable and appropriate snowmobile registration fee for North Dakota

94.2% of households with children had 1-2 children under 12 years old who go snowmobiling during a typical season

22% of respondents felt that trails was the largest benefit of state snowmobile organizations

More Key Findings

Riding Satisfaction

Snowmobile Trail System Characteristics by Importance & Rating of ND Trails & Other States' Trails

The Importance column is derived from the percentage of respondents who selected that characteristic as a response. The ND and Other columns represent the rating the respondent gave the states in that characteristic on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent. The chart is arranged in order of Importance.

Characteristic	Importance	ND	Other
Properly Placed Fuel Stops/Accommodations	14%	2.81	2.94
Open Play Areas	13%	2.59	3.07
Overall Recreation Quality	13%	2.73	3.19
Looped Trails	12%	2.96	3.21
Scenic Quality	11%	2.67	3.19
Trail Signage/Construction	9%	2.67	3.13
Warming Shelters	9%	2.72	2.84
Length of Trails	8%	3.03	3.38
Primitive Toilets	5%	2.56	2.81
Trash Receptacles	4%	2.51	2.76
Natural/Historical Significance	2%	2.7	3.04

ND Trail System Average Days Ridden & Ratings

The Avg Days column represents the number of days a respondent rode on that trail in a typical season. The Rating column represents the level of satisfaction the respondent had with that trail system on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent. The chart is arranged in order of Rating.

Trail System	Avg Days	Rating
North East	7.75	3.81
Mayville-Portland	8.55	3.75
Peace Garden	7.79	3.69
Southern Valley	9.72	3.69
North Central	12.76	3.62
Red River	11.44	3.56
Missouri Valley	10.36	3.49
Lake Region Valley	7.88	3.46
Sheyenne Valley	8.71	3.44
Sno Trails	14.36	3.35
East Central Valley	12.61	3.29
Sargent County	6.50	3.20
Cattail	7.00	3.05

More Key Findings

North Dakota Snowmobile Strategic Plan 2013-2017

Registration & Titling

- Respondents felt on average that \$31.50 per year is a reasonable and appropriate snowmobile registration fee for North Dakota
- Most frequently they felt \$20 per year was reasonable and appropriate.
- Of snowmobiles owned 11.6% were Touring, 31.6% were Mountain, 55% were Performance/Cross-country and 1.7% were Utility
- Of snowmobile purchases in the last two years 6.9% were Touring, 42% were Mountain, 50.7% were Performance/Cross-country and 0.3% were Utility
- 86.11% of the snowmobiles owned are titled
- 80.8% of the snowmobiles owned are registered
- 78.4% feel it is necessary for North Dakota to title snowmobiles
- Respondents register their sled or buy trail passes to support the trail system
- 64% also own an off highway vehicle

Demographic Information

- 22 days was the average number of days snowmobiling in North Dakota during a typical season
- The top three snowmobile magazines they read are Snow Goer, Snow Tech & SnoWest
- Snowmobile North Dakota & SnoWest were the top websites visited
- Although International Series of Champions & Sno-Cross Championship Racing were the most common race circuits follow, a vast majority of respondents didn't follow race circuits
- 52% households income was between \$50,000-\$100,000, 31.1% was over \$100,000
- 68.4% were over the age of 40
- 87.8% were male
- 26.7% viewed snowmobiling as a family oriented sport
- 96.6% were North Dakota residents

On average snowmobilers annually consumed or spend the following on snowmobile activities:

Gasoline Used
188.44 Gallons

Lodging
6.59 Nights

Parts
\$414.84

Apparel & Gear
\$350.37

Food & Drink
\$471.70

Travel
\$807.79

Vision Statement

North Dakota Snowmobile Strategic Plan 2013-2017



A vision statement is sometimes called a picture of your company in the future but it's so much more than that. Your vision statement is your inspiration.

To Generate Excitement for the Sport of Snowmobiling

Mission Statement

North Dakota Snowmobile Strategic Plan 2013-2017



A mission statement is a brief description of what company does everyday to fulfill its vision. It answers the question, Why do we exist and what is our purpose?

**To be the leader in
providing safe and
effective snowmobile
opportunities in
North Dakota**

Focus Area #1 – Trail Management

North Dakota Snowmobile Strategic Plan 2013-2017

North Dakota has approximately 2,800 miles of trail that is managed by Snowmobile North Dakota through a contract with the North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department. This work is performed by Snowmobile North Dakota and 14 groomers & 18 implements owned by the North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department. The groomer operators are paid employees but the remainder of the work is performed by volunteers. Trail administration is by far the biggest component of the program and the research indicates that providing trails are the overriding purpose of Snowmobile North Dakota. The concerns address in all the research focused around the preservation of the trail system.

Objectives

1. Develop materials for land owners to assist in procurement of easements that addresses more than just recreational immunity.
2. Devise a groomer replacement schedule more consistent with future funding.
3. Snowmobile North Dakota must increase their involvement in snowmobile events and activities to enhance volunteer recruitment.
4. Equip groomers with GPS tracking system to provide analytic repurposing and information dissemination.
5. Place priority on those segments of the trail system that are maintained and that are open most often.
6. Develop a system to insure maintenance on the groomers are current and completed properly.
7. Strengthen relationship with Tourism Division to promote snowmobile opportunities in North Dakota.

Focus Area #2 – Membership & Volunteer Recruitment

North Dakota Snowmobile Strategic Plan 2013-2017

There is relationship of mutual need between the North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department and Snowmobile North Dakota predicated on the management of the snowmobile trail system. The vast number of trails in the system necessitates the need for volunteers to operate as there is not enough fiscal resources in the program to allow for paid trail administrators. For Snowmobile North Dakota volunteer recruitment and training has proven to be a challenge and in order to successfully fulfill the obligations of the trail management contract Snowmobile North Dakota must be vigilant in its membership and volunteer recruitment efforts.

Objectives

Membership Recruitment

1. Develop a consistent cost of membership with the snowmobile clubs.
2. Implement a federation model of membership where by membership in the club gets membership in Snowmobile North Dakota and vice versa.
3. Develop a unilateral membership recruitment strategy that allow clubs and Snowmobile North Dakota to recruit new members.
4. Require a reporting system to insure that members signed up by the clubs are serviced by Snowmobile North Dakota.

Volunteer Recruitment

1. Provide leadership training to club and trail associations to develop more organizational resources.
2. Actively recognize the contributions of volunteers through awards & incentives.
3. Develop materials that help potential volunteers understand what and how they can get involved and the time commitment to expect.
4. Assist in providing event planning guidance to local organization for more family friendly events.

Focus Area #3 – Organizational Development

North Dakota Snowmobile Strategic Plan 2013-2017

A strong organizational structure for Snowmobile North Dakota is imperative for the future success of the program contract. The decentralized nature of the organization makes providing overall leadership for the different organizations a vital role for Snowmobile North Dakota. The organization needs to tighten up from top to bottom to eliminate inconsistencies and improve services.

Objectives

1. Employ a governance consultant to provide the board with training on roles and responsibilities of a board and officers.
2. Develop a strategy that makes Snowmobile North Dakota the cohesive organization for snowmobiling in North Dakota and an umbrella organization made up of clubs and trail associations.
3. Develop a new and existing board member education program to enhance transparency of the organization for effective decision making.
4. Allow the program manager to act in an executive capacity with the roles and responsibilities for the organization's operations.
5. Develop structure for the local associations to provide organizational effectiveness.
6. Provide leadership development for local club and association leaders to advance the skill sets of the organization.
7. Develop a more formalized organizational policies and procedures to reduce redundancies in decision making.
8. Devise strategies to consolidate local clubs to ease organizational management.
9. Require all Snowmobile North Dakota officers to attend state procurement training.

Focus Area #4 – Program Administration

North Dakota Snowmobile Strategic Plan 2013-2017

The trail program is funded by three primary sources, snowmobile registrations, a portion of the gas tax and the Recreational Trail Program (RTP). RTP is a federal grant program authorized by various transportation bills, most recently Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21). Most significantly in MAP-21 the number of programs was reduced, the Recreational Trails Program was retained in name and funding but the funding was made optional at the will of the state. This makes this funding vulnerable. Furthermore, due to the nature of the snow fall in North Dakota and its relationship to registrations and membership it is necessary that both Snowmobile North Dakota and the North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department need to implement strategies to effectively allocate program resources.

Objectives

1. Advocate for retaining the Recreational Trails Program as a state transportation funding priority.
2. Find efficiencies to limit expenditures on administrative costs to insure as much funding is put back into the trail system.
3. Implement a measurement system to identify metrics like trail systems usage, open rates, groomings, snowfall to guide future decisions on funding and resource allocation.
4. Investigate the development of a grant program for trail administration with requirements of matching local funds and weighted towards areas with higher ridership.
5. Produce an annual report of the program accomplishments and expenditures that is available to the public.
6. Work with the North Dakota Department of Transportation to collect more information in the registration process, such as email addresses and counties the registrant rides most often to be used for program administration, volunteer recruitment and promotion.

Focus Area #5 – Safety Education & Enforcement

North Dakota Snowmobile Strategic Plan 2013-2017

The North Dakota Parks & Recreation is legislatively responsible to provide safety certifications for those over the age of 12 that do not have a driver's license in order for them to ride. This responsibility has grown over the years to a safety program that advocates safe riding for both snowmobiles and off highway vehicles. Furthermore the agency has jurisdiction over and obligation for enforcing the snowmobile laws of North Dakota.

Objectives

Safety Education

1. Fill the need for safety training by businesses.
2. Advance models to allow for hands on training.
3. Develop a program to provide safety education for those under 12.
4. Produce Public Service Announcements for trail safety and certification needs.

Enforcement

1. Develop a grant program for local law enforcement agencies.
2. Further commit North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department resources to improve law enforcement presence.
3. Coordinate with local clubs to provide enforcement at more events than just statewide events.
4. Investigate holding statewide registration saturations.
5. Actively promote the agency's training program for local law on snowmobile laws.

Focus Area #6 – Legislative Recommendations

North Dakota Snowmobile Strategic Plan 2013-2017

As part of the North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department's oversight, it provides suggested legislative changes which are vetted through a number of channels prior to introduction. It is imperative that the agency actively weigh the political tides and the public pressure inherent with government against the appropriate need for the listed proposals to insure the integrity of the agency. Many of the recommendations will need the cooperation of other state agencies.

Snowmobile North Dakota has an expectation by its members to advocate for policies that further organizational objectives and benefit the trail program. Snowmobile North Dakota must also scrutinize proposals for their appropriate need and the credibility of the organization.

Objectives

1. Change the registration term from biennial to annual to reduce impacts of low snow years.
2. Investigate having North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department take over registration. Currently the North Dakota Department of Transportation is seeing significant increases in workload and \$5 of the registration is taken to fund the registration process which North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department could do to increase amount of registration dollars going into the program.
3. Eliminate excise taxes on snowmobiles to be competitive with surrounding states.
4. Require that dealers register snowmobile at the time of purchase.
5. Increase fines for various snowmobile violations.
6. Consider reducing the allowable riding age to include under 12 to enhance education opportunities to those our research is showed are riding anyway.



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