

IOWA SNOWMOBILER

March 2018 • Volume 39 • Issue 7

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Dubuque this Month



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IOWA SNOWMOBILER

The Official Magazine of the Iowa
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RTP Funding Falls Short of Goal

Only One of Two Groomer Applications
Approved by IDOT Commission



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Sundown Mountain to Host National Race

Professional Riders to Return to Eastern
Iowa Ski Slope for Second Straight Year



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Recapping Brief Winter Storms Around Iowa

Trio of Weather Events Provides Adequate
Riding During Second Half of Season



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*The American Council of
Snowmobile Associations (ACSA)
is once again selling its fundraising
raffle calendars. Only 3,000
calendars have been printed for
2018, and winners for cash and
other prizes worth a combined
\$14,500 are drawn for each day. The
odds of winning are 1:8.*

*To purchase a calendar, contact Past
ISSA President Jim Willey at Jim.
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at info@snowmobilers.org.*



COVER: Past ISSA President Gary McVicker of Hampton rides the multi-purpose Iowa Great Lakes Trail en route to the University of Okoboji Winter Games the last Saturday in January.

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Support Sought for Single Sticker Measure

As I sit down to write this, I am finishing up a weekend of riding in Iowa. I was able to put on a lot of miles with friends and family, exactly what our sport is all about. It was February, and we finally had rideable snow in a good share of the state.

The registration and trail pass numbers have certainly reflected where the snow has fallen in Iowa this year. Because of the low snow, it has presented some challenges to the snowmobile program as well as to local club memberships.

As I talk to people from around the state, the frustration is clear. I understand and can relate. We are all in this together, and I applaud the efforts of the clubs to keep members involved. I have seen club posts on social media and in emails, keeping members informed on where there is snow to ride. They have organized club trips or have held their fun runs by other means of transportation.

The Review and Selection Committee (RSC) has kept a close eye on the registration and trail permit numbers to ensure we know what the available funds are expected to be and to make sure we have a good

plan for the future of the program.

The Iowa Legislature is back in session, and we need everyone to contact his or her legislator and let them know you support House File 628 to go to a single \$30 registration for Iowa residents and to no longer require Iowa residents to purchase a trail pass. This change will help RSC members provide a better and stable flow of funding to the clubs for grooming and trail projects. If the bill does not see enough support, we will see it fail to come out of committee and not move forward.

I hope everyone gets out and rides the trails in your area. I do encourage you to try a new area to ride somewhere in the state. I have had the chance recently to ride a couple areas I haven't ridden in years. Hopefully, the snow will continue to fall for a couple more weeks so I can get to a few more areas. It is always great to see the trails of different clubs across the state and visit sponsors of those clubs.



Chris Willey
ISSA
President

Recharge Your Batteries with a Snowmobile Vacation

I recently attended a Tourism planning event and learned that Americans love to take vacations, and they say vacations are important to them. Yet, more than 54 percent of all United States employees with vacation time leave a considerable amount of their vacation time unused! As a matter of fact, up to 25 percent of the employees interviewed reported that they did not take even half of their allowed time off.

These unused vacation days carry a significant economic impact, and since individuals don't recreate enough in the United States, it impacts on their productivity and creativity and can damage an employee's personal well-being and relationships with family and friends.

Knowing all of the above, why not use some of your vacation time to take a snowmobiling vacation? Throughout the winter, I often snowmobile on the weekends, when most people are out riding. Once in a while,

I am able to take somebody snowmobiling mid-week, and what an enjoyable time it is! The trails and riding areas are much less crowded, and I can easily get a seat at my favorite restaurant for breakfast in the morning.



Ed Klim
ISMA
President

In our culture, we have hyper-connectivity, which sociologists call 'work martyrdom.' Individuals who take their vacation time off have greater happiness at work and at home. Individuals who take their time off to go snowmobiling have even more fun and help support a great outdoor recreation activity that supports rural America.

The key to taking vacation time, according to the experts, is to plan for it. Studies show that 75 percent of the people who plan a vacation actually take it!! The most

Guest Column

effective remedy for us who want to use our vacation days is to plan for them. People who plan their vacation tend to take longer vacations and enjoy themselves more, while people who do not plan for vacations take significantly fewer days—from zero days to three days at the maximum.

I would recommend that many of us consider going on a five- to seven-day snowmobile vacation. There are some great trails and riding areas out there, and it makes sense to me to bring some family and friends along to build memories.

Rather than pack in a short vacation where you are tired at the end, enjoy a longer vacation and do things in a more relaxed fashion so you are mentally and physically rested and rejuvenated for when you return to work.

At the tourism seminar, I learned most bosses support individuals who take their vacations. The boss knows when you take a vacation, you come back happier and you are more efficient while you are working.

For the rest of this snowmobiling season and for next season, it's important that we all try to change our habits and take a few additional days off for snowmobiling! You can start by reviewing your calendar and put down some definite dates to take that snowmobile vacation. Holidays are a great time of year for snowmobiling, and it should be relatively easy to take an extra day before or after the holiday to take a longer snowmobiling vacation.

It is never too early to start planning your next snowmobile vacation. Block some days on your calendar and plan to go snowmobiling. As many of us know, there is not snow everywhere, but certainly snow can be readily available after a short drive.

Meeting with Other Outdoor Enthusiasts

In addition to the tourism seminar on vacations, this has been another busy couple of months at the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association (ISMA) office. Snow has fallen, and the trails are groomed for great riding. We have taken numerous

government officials out snowmobiling and have introduced them to our great winter activity.

This year, we are concentrating on taking managers of Visitor and Convention Bureaus and Chambers of Commerce out riding to promote snowmobile tourism. We attend their winter board meetings, talk about the many benefits of snowmobiling and take them for a short ride to experience the fun for themselves.

So far it has been a great experience. We create 'Miles of Smiles' and it is so easy to do! People love getting out in the winter and snowmobiling. If they have never been snowmobiling or if it has been a while since they have ridden, we provide safety training first and bring them warm clothing and gear to use.

I have also spent lots of time in Washington, D.C., meeting with members of the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR), a newly re-organized business group representing the outdoor recreation community. Snowmobiles, boats, RVs, ATVs, motorcycles, fishermen and women of all stripes, archery experts, horse people and more are represented. We meet to promote outdoor recreation activities and highlight our importance in today's world.

The ORR meets with representatives from campgrounds, ski resorts and trail managers and talk about the importance of having fun outdoors. We highlight the economic importance of outdoor recreation, and we want the government folks to know we pay taxes and help maintain rural America. We expect great things to come from this new coalition. Events are being planned for lawmakers in Washington, D.C., and beyond promoting our businesses.

We encourage snowmobilers or interested individuals to visit our website at www.gosnowmobiling.org and "follow" us on our Facebook page. This time of year, many people are sharing their snowmobiling photos from the weekends on our Facebook page. There are some truly amazing photos that can only be taken from a snowmobile in the winter and we got them!

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Campout Host Needed for this Summer

The ISSA is soliciting bids from its member clubs to host the 2018 Summer Campout, normally held in July.

As always, the ISSA provides \$200 in incentive money to the host club, and as much as \$600 in expenses can be reimbursed through the ISSA.

Last summer, the Butler County Snow Snoops of Region 4 stepped forward to host, and everyone had a great time at Camp Comfort near Greene. Events can be as simple or elaborate as desired.

If your club is interested in hosting this year's campout, please reach out to your ISSA Region Director or contact ISSA President Chris Willey at (563) 920-9010 or kioti79@gmail.com to submit a bid.



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From left, Jim and Becky Willey of the ISSA, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds and Bruce Trautman and Rhonda Fowler of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Governor Signs Safety Proclamation in January

Coinciding with International Snowmobile Safety Week, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds recognized Jan. 20-28 as Snowmobile Safety Awareness Week in Iowa by signing a safety proclamation Jan. 23 at the Capitol in Des Moines.

On hand for the ceremony were Past ISSA President Jim Willey and wife Becky Willey, chair of the ISSA's Eastern Iowa Tourism Committee, and Deputy Director Bruce Trautman and Snowmobile Safety Education Coordinator Rhonda Fowler of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR).

"During our time with the governor, we talked about the many positive aspects of snowmobiling in Iowa, including recreational value, economic impact, tourism and bringing business to Iowa when it is needed most...during the winter months," Jim Willey said. "We also discussed the upcoming legislative changes that the ISSA hopes the governor will be signing by the end of the legislative work this session."

Reynolds congratulated Iowa snowmobilers for the work they do providing recreational opportunities in Iowa and promoting positive economic impact. Her proclamation acknowledged that snowmobiling is a fun and exciting family activity enjoyed by over four million people across the United States and Canada.

In Iowa, there are approximately 22,000 registered snowmobiles in Iowa enjoying more than 8,000 miles of groomed snowmobile trails. Nearly 60 local snowmobile clubs throughout the state build, sign and maintain the local trails, partnering with local communities.

"Snowmobiling generates \$80 million in economic impact for Iowa each year, and \$27.9 million in personal income from more than 1,000 directly related jobs here," Willey said. "Snowmobiling is a safe and an enjoyable form of recreation when done properly and with respect."

The purpose of International Snowmobile Safety Week is to expose people to safe snowmobiling practices and to demonstrate how operating safely can prevent mishaps. The activities and promotions planned by snowmobile clubs across Iowa for the designated week and throughout the snowmobiling season stress safe and responsible snowmobiling.

Please Notify ISSA of Officer, Address Changes

If your club has elected new officers or if you have an address change, please email ISSA Membership Chair Brittany Paulus at bepaulus@outlook.com so we can keep our Club Directory current. Thank you.

Nominations due June 1; Forms Available Online

by ISSA Awards Committee

It's that time of year again to start thinking about who you want to nominate for the 2018 ISSA awards program. The awards committee challenges each of you to look around the room at your next club meeting or at your next event and pick one or two individuals who you want to be recognized for the work they have done, project they have led or for their unwavering commitment to the sport of snowmobiling.

The 2018 nomination forms will be made available on the ISSA website at www.iowasnowmobiler.com shortly. Please watch your email for announcements when they will be uploaded. Nominations are due by midnight on June 1 each year and may be submitted via email (preferred method) any time after you receive this notice or via U.S. Mail as long as they are postmarked as of June 1. Any nominations received at 12:01 a.m. or postmarked after June 1 will not be judged.

We do ask that you email nominations to both scott4@iowatelecom.net and suepaulus81@gmail.com. Hard copy nominations maybe mailed to ISSA Awards, c/o Mindy Scott, P.O. Box 435, Lone Tree, IA 52755.

Your nominations should include:

- Two photos of your nominee(s),

(digital preferred)

- Supporting documentation associated with questions asked (no older than 3 yrs).
- News articles, videos or other information pertinent to the nomination (no older than 3 yrs).

Letters of support from your club, community, etc. are welcome, but they are not required. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact either Mindy or Sue at the email addresses listed above.

Each year's award winners for Snowmobiler, Snowmobile Family, Youth Snowmobiler and Dealer of the Year are submitted to the American Council of Snowmobile Associations for consideration in its annual award program, which is held in conjunction with the International Snowmobile Congress each June.

The Groomer of the Year Recipient is submitted to Arctic Cat for consideration in their International Groomer Operator of the Year Award, which is presented during the International Snowmobile Hall of Fame ceremonies held in Eagle River, Wis., each September.

To assist in preparing your 2018 nomination, the judging criteria used for scoring awards is also available on the ISSA website.

Contact Your Legislator on Merging Trail Pass with Registration

A measure to merge the \$15 registration fee with the \$15 user permit fee required for residents to ride their snowmobiles in Iowa remained before the Senate Ways and Means Committee as of press time.

Passed by the Iowa House in 2017 and backed by the ISSA Board of Directors, the proposal calls for the consolidation of both stickers into one \$30 decal. The move is expected to capture those owners who only register their sleds. If approved, the legislation would also add another \$90,000 to the state snowmobile program coffers, money officials say is needed to maintain the 8,800-mile trail system in Iowa.

ISSA Lobbyists Mike Heller and Paula Feltner met with Sen. Randy Feenstra, R-Hull, chair of the Ways and Means Committee the second week of February, to see if they could get any movement on House File 628.

"He indicated that he would likely reassign the bill after next week's funnel deadline, and it is going to be crucial that members of his committee hear from snowmobilers that they are supportive of the measure," Heller wrote in his weekly update to the ISSA.

On Feb. 17, the ISSA distributed a 'Call to Action' email to its membership, asking all Iowa snowmobilers to contact their legislators, regardless if they are on the Ways and Means Committee or not.

"We need everyone to contact their legislators and let them know you support HF 628 to go to a single \$30 registration for Iowa residents and no longer require Iowa residents to purchase a trail pass," ISSA President Chris Willey wrote. "This change will help the ISSA provide a better and stable flow of funding to the clubs for grooming and trail projects."

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The ISSA's snowmobile simulator program will likely be disbanded in the wake of rising transportation costs and ongoing maintenance issues with the unit. At its Jan. 14 meeting, the ISSA Board of Directors voted to liquidate the equipment (chassis, platform, ATV and trailer) and to form an exploratory committee to find alternative, less expensive safety instructional tools. The committee indicated the snowmobile chassis may be donated to the Iowa State University Clean Snowmobile Challenge team, and it will look into purchasing virtual reality goggles to simulate trail riding, which would be cheaper to ship to club functions around the state.

Travel Plans Ahead for ISSA Officials

Officers and directors from the ISSA will be travelling this spring to represent Iowa snowmobiling interests on the national and international stage.

In April, local leaders fly to Washington, D.C., to participate in the American Council of Snowmobile Associations (ACSA) annual D.C. Fly-In. After that, they travel to Nova Scotia for the 50th Annual International Snowmobile Congress (ISC) in June.

Each event is filled with guest speakers and meetings related to the sport of snowmobiling. In D.C., participants will meet with their respective representatives on Capitol Hill, and at ISC, leaders from state, provincial and international snowmobile associations will gather to develop strategies on preserving access and funding for snowmobiling.

ISSA President Chris Willey (or his designee) will represent Iowa on the International Snowmobile Council as well as during meetings with the full ACSA board and the Midwest Chapter of ACSA.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March

- ISSA Board of Directors meeting March 11.
- Theisen's Snocross National, Sundown Mountain Resort, Dubuque, March 9-10.
- 2018 SAE Clean Snowmobile Challenge March 5-10, Keweenaw Research Center, Houghton, MI

April

- ISSA scholarship applications due April 15.
- ACSA D.C. Fly-In April 14-17.

May

- ISSA Board of Directors meeting TBD.
- Iowa snowmobile trail grant reimbursement requests and grant applications due May 1.

June

- ISSA award nominations due June 1.
- 50th Annual International Snowmobile Congress June 13-16 Nova Scotia

July

- ISSA Summer Campout TBD.



RTP Grant Funding Falls Short of Goal

Only One Groomer
Request Approved by
IDOT in January



by Cameron Hanson

The strategy to increase groomer purchase funding by applying for two federal trail grants last fall did not pay off as well as hoped for the Iowa State Snowmobile Trail Grant Program.

Meeting the Oct. 1 application deadline, the ISSA-managed program partnered with Franklin and Winnebago counties to sponsor two grant applications for Recreational Trails Program (RTP) dollars, but only one was awarded by the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) Commission on Jan. 9.

Following recommendations from the Iowa Trails Advisory Board, the \$200,000 grant request submitted on behalf of the Iowa River Riders from Franklin County was approved, while a similar \$198,000 request from Winnebago County on behalf of the North Iowa Sno-Jammers was denied.

Originally submitted under the 'diversified' category, the Franklin County application was moved by the IDOT Office of Systems Planning to the 'motorized' category and ended up competing with the Winnebago request, which was originally submitted in the motorized category.

The state snowmobile program had hoped to increase its federal grant dollars by applying for grants in separate categories, but that plan backfired, as the program was awarded less than the \$240,000 typically received when the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) was submitting the applications.

"It appears that (IDNR) involvement in this process still weighed heavily into the IDOT's decision," Past ISSA President Jim Willey noted at the Jan. 14 ISSA Board of Directors meeting. "After hearing for years they wanted more user groups to apply differently, that is apparently not the case."

Project Sponsors Required

The ISSA assumed control of the state snowmobile program following landmark legislation last year. The IDNR now plays a limited role, and ISSA officials knew going in the IDNR would no longer sponsor snowmobile grant applications for RTP funding.

Under current program rules in Iowa, the ISSA cannot submit RTP grant applications on its own. According to Craig Markley of the IDOT and as explained on the grant website, a non-profit organization needs to be co-sponsored by a public agency in order to be an eligible applicant for RTP funding in Iowa.

"One reason for this requirement is that federal funding programs require project sponsors to meet a high level of financial and accounting standards," Markley said. "This requirement also ensures that project sponsors have some permanence. If federal requirements for procurement, use, maintenance, inventory, etc., are not met—even many years later—the Iowa DOT is sure to have some opportunity to see repayment of federal funds."

With the IDNR no longer an option, the snowmobile trail grant program continues its search for a long-term application partner. Reverting to the county level, where past ISSA presidents Terry Durby (Winnebago) and Gary McVicker (Franklin) are county supervisors, was only supposed to be a work-around for the 2017 application period.

"With the DNR no longer serving as the sponsor for these projects, the ISSA will continue to have a need for an eligible

Trail Projects for 2017 RTP Grant Period

1. Des Moines River Trail\$250,000
2. Iowa DNR Off-Highway Vehicle Program\$295,370
3. Iowa State Parks Trail Repair Crew.....\$159,384
4. Raccoon Valley High Trestle Connector.....\$161,968
5. Support for Program and Bicycle Summit\$7,000
6. Dickinson County Tatonka Ska Trace.....\$344,048
7. Franklin County Maintenance Equipment...\$200,000

Source: Iowa Department of Transportation, January 2018

project sponsor to assist in accessing these funds,” Markley said.

Major Source of Groomer Funding

Created in 1991 by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), RTP is financed by a small percentage of the federal fuel taxes paid by off-road user groups. Iowa’s share of that pool comes to more than \$1 million annually with 2017’s total ringing up at \$1.4 million.

FHWA guidelines require grant funding be spread across three trail user groups: 30 percent motorized, 30 percent non-motorized and 40 percent diversified. The trails advisory committee grades the projects each year, and Past ISSA President Merv Hoermann represents snowmobiling interests on this volunteer board.

“Everyone needs to remember where the money comes from for all of the RTP funding. It is the gas tax paid by snowmobiles, OHVs and off-road vehicles, like jeeps,” said Durby, a former president of the American Council of Snowmobile Associations. “When a snowmobiler or other off-highway user buys approximately 5.5 gallons of gas, it generates about \$1 in federal gas tax. Of that dollar, only 11 cents is eligible for motorized projects.”

The state snowmobile program has been applying for federal grant money to purchase grooming equipment for the past 17 years, always in the motorized category. With the ISSA assuming control of the snowmobile trail grant program last fall, officials hoped to increase their federal grant funding by submitting two applications, one in the motorized category and another in the diversified category.

Durby, who serves as co-administrator of the snowmobile trail grant program in Iowa, felt the Franklin County application met the criteria for the diversified category as it called for maintenance equipment on the multi-purpose Rolling Prairie Trail from Coulter to Hansell along Highway 3. Markley said the application fit the motorized category instead.

“The form asks for the predominant user group for the project—motorized, non-motorized or diversified,” Markley explained. “Diversified would include multiple user groups. The applications are reviewed as either a motorized or non-motorized project. A snowmobile groomer purchase is reviewed as a motorized project.”

Durby said he disagreed with the IDOT’s interpretation of diversified versus motorized categories and cited the following FHWA guideline: “40 percent shall be used for recreational trail or related projects that facilitate diverse recreational trail use within a recreational trail corridor, trailside, or trailhead, regardless of whether the project is for diverse motorized use, for diverse

non-motorized use or to accommodate both motorized and non-motorized recreational trail use.”

“It’s pretty loose language, intentionally,” Durby said.

The reassignment of the Franklin County application to the motorized category will likely be discussed by ISSA officials at the 2018 International Snowmobile Congress in Nova Scotia June 13-16. FWHA representatives are normally in attendance at this annual off-season event.

Only Three Motorized Requests

Markley pointed out the “limited funding available” for all of the RTP requests. For the 2017 grant cycle, the IDOT received 19 applications: three for motorized and 16 for non-motorized trail users. The total requests amounted to \$7.7 million, or five and a half times the allocated money.

Two of the three motorized applications were approved for a total of \$495,370, and five of the 16 non-motorized requests were granted at a cost of \$922,400. See the list on page 9 for a complete breakdown.

“There are many good projects that don’t receive funding,” Markley noted.

In addition to the Franklin County request, the other motorized grant award was \$295,370 to the Iowa Off-Highway Vehicle Program for infrastructure improvements at OHV parks. With less than \$500,000 available in this category, no funding dollars were left for the Winnebago County application.

Serving on the advisory committee which grades the grant applications, Hoermann said all three motorized projects scored “very low,” and he said he had to defend the Franklin County application to fellow committee members.

“I got drilled pretty hard that day at that meeting. There were a lot of questions on how a motorized application can fall under diversified,” Hoermann said. “Members looked at it as a piece of equipment for motorized recreation and felt it should go to the motorized category. All equipment requests must now apparently fall under the motorized category.”

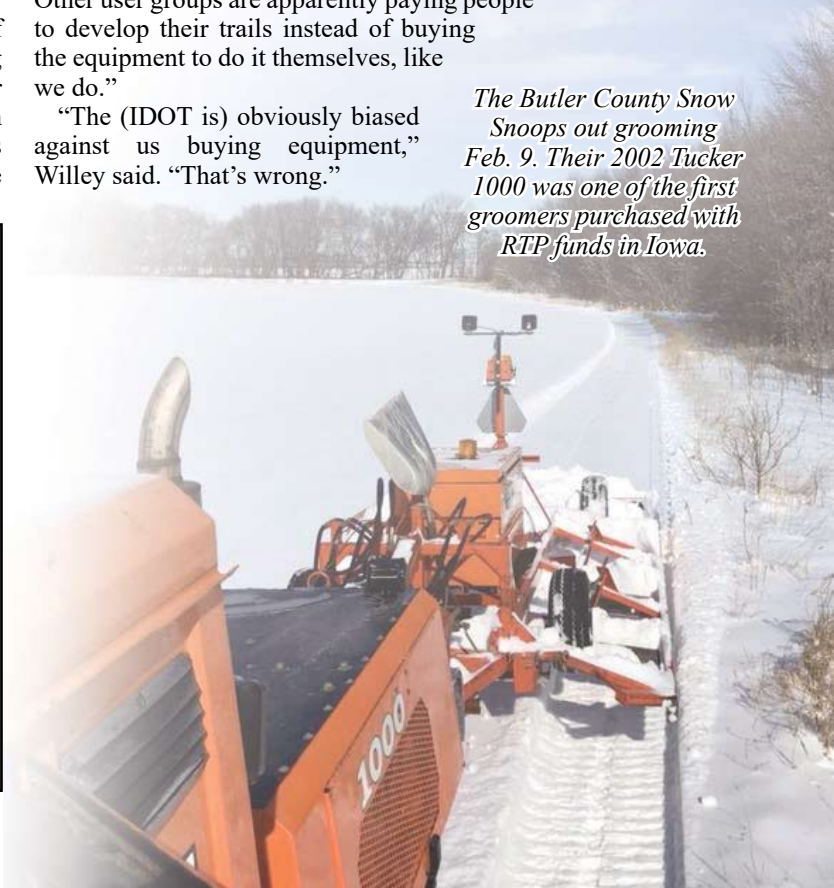
“It appears that any equipment request is the problem,” Durby said. “It seems that they are focused on funding trail development. Other user groups are apparently paying people to develop their trails instead of buying the equipment to do it themselves, like we do.”

“The (IDOT is) obviously biased against us buying equipment,” Willey said. “That’s wrong.”

The Butler County Snow Snoops out grooming Feb. 9. Their 2002 Tucker 1000 was one of the first groomers purchased with RTP funds in Iowa.

2018 Spina Bifida Donations

Saylorville Dam Snowmobile Association.....	\$2,200
Hancock County Snowmobile Association	\$2,017
Eastern Iowa Sledheads.....	\$500
Cedar Falls Sno Hawks	\$500
North Iowa Sno-Jammers.....	\$500
Driftrunners.....	\$500
Tri-County Snowmobile Association	\$376
Floyd County Groomers	\$300
Bremer County Sno-Knights.....	\$250
Snowdrifters.....	\$250
Central Iowa Snowmobilers.....	\$200
Trail Blaz-zers.....	\$200
Trails Unlimited	\$200
Team Iowa Snowmobilers.....	\$150
Snow Pioneers	\$100
Iowa River Riders	\$100
Butler County Snow Snoops.....	\$100





Professional Snocross Series Returns to Dubuque this Month

by Cameron Hanson

Midway through the 2018 campaign, perennial fan favorite Tucker Hibbert has been dominating the professional snocross circuit this winter and will likely take his points lead into the second weekend of March, when the International Series of Champions (ISOC) returns to an eastern Iowa ski slope.

Sponsored by Arctic Cat, Monster Energy and Ram Truck, Hibbert, 33, of Pelican Rapids, Minn., has won seven of the first eight races of the Amsoil Championship race season, including an impressive come-from-behind victory Jan. 20 at the Deadwood Snocross National in South Dakota.

In front of a sold-out crowd, Hibbert (68) recovered from an off-track incident that shuffled him back to 12th place to pass defending series champ Kody Kamm with two laps to go to claim the victory. With the crowd on its feet the entire race, Hibbert said racing before the packed house was “awesome.”

“I could hear the crowd cheering and getting louder with every pass,” he said.

“It’s always cool to feel that. Racing at

Deadwood is crazy because you’re battling so many things—sticky snow, tight track and lap traffic. It’s a place where you have to race so hard the entire time. It’s not pretty, but it makes for a great show for the fans.”

The Deadwood event was the third time this season Hibbert has swept both weekend Pro Finals. After a three-week break,

competitors returned to action Feb. 16-17 at Salamanca, N.Y. Hibbert said he knows what he needs to do to keep his points lead when the top-level series arrives in Dubuque March 9-10 for the Theisen’s Snocross National at Sundown Mountain Resort.

“The goals for the rest of the season are the same as always—keep making progress and keep getting better,” he said. “We’re focused on winning the championship and being in the position to do that means to keep improving every week.”

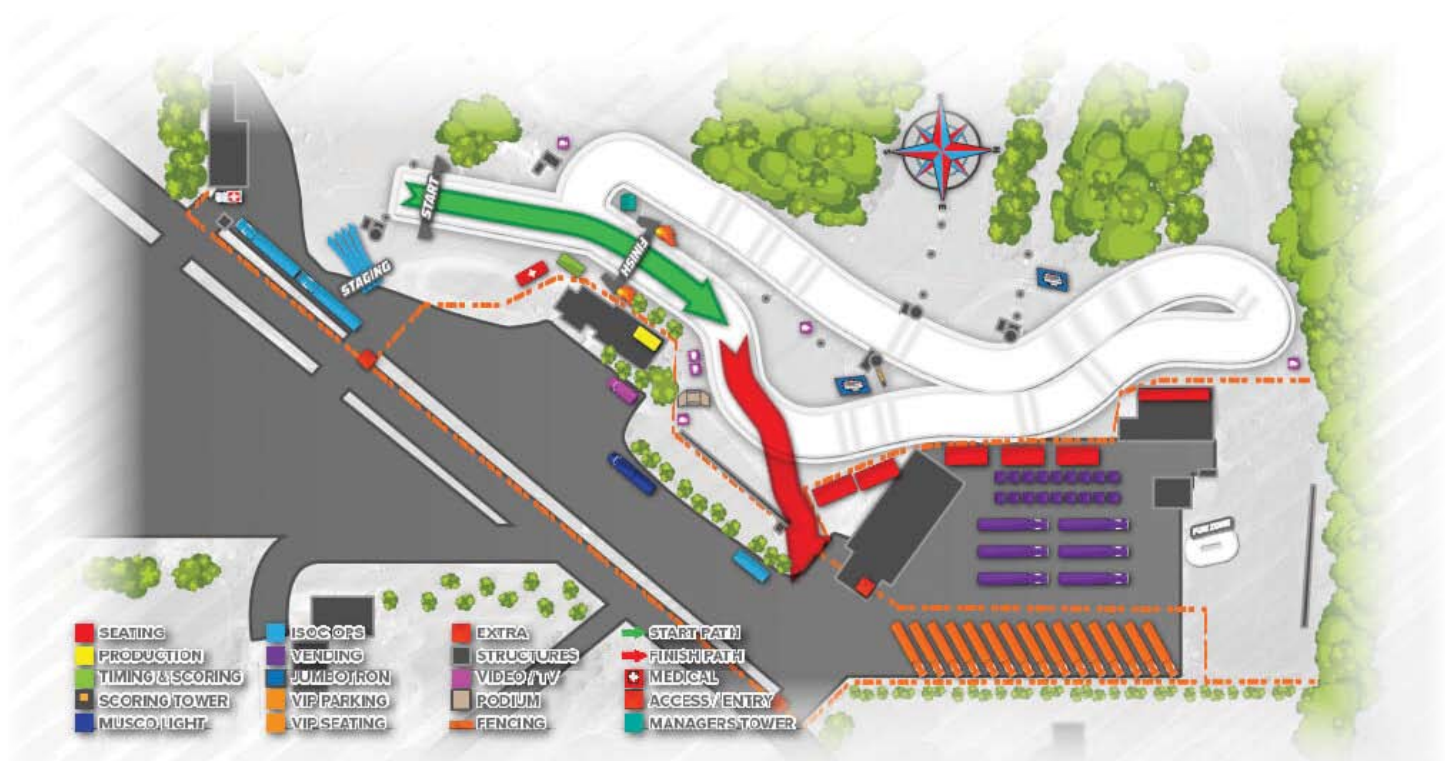
Track Improvements

As the second to last stop on the eight-venue circuit this winter, event organizers at Sundown will be ready for the race teams when they arrive later this month. Responding to feedback following last year’s inaugural event in Dubuque, they have reconfigured the track layout to improve the experience for racers and fans alike.

“We are very excited to have snocross back again for a second year,” said Mark Gordon, general manager at Sundown. “We listened to the fans, met with Theisen’s and ISOC officials several times over the summer and completely redesigned the track. The new course will bring the action much closer to the fans.”

At last year’s event, the track was pretty much confined to the northernmost ski run, which made for tight racing corners and limited visibility for spectators. The course this year will cross





the tops of at least three ski runs to increase the racing action and widen the viewpoint from the bleachers.

"The starting gate is now on the other end of our property, which means racing will be in front of all three of our lodges," Gordon said. "The racers will have a lot more room for passing, and we still have some, good steep terrain to make the course exciting."

Despite this winter's inconsistent weather patterns in Iowa, Sundown reports "excellent" snow depths on the mountain, and Gordon said track crews will be able to create "excellent course improvements" with the abundant snowcover.

Theisen's Back as Title Sponsor

With 23 locations across Iowa and Wisconsin, Theisen's is back on board as the title sponsor for the race; and according to Peter Theisen, marketing promotions specialist for the Dubuque-based home, farm and auto stores, company officials are enthused to bring an event of this magnitude to the tri-state area.

"We have worked closely with snocross and Sundown officials to make sure this is one of the top races on the circuit," he said. "We learned a lot from last year and have made some improvements that should make for a great fan experience. We are proud to have our name on this event and look forward to it for years to come."

Theisen described the sponsorship as "a no brainer for us." He said his family grew up riding snowmobiles, and his cousin, Matt Theisen, who had a "big hand" in getting everything lined up the first year, even raced a few years on the national cross-country circuit.

"We wanted to bring this great event to the area because we love snowmobiling and so do a lot of our customers," Peter Theisen said. "Having it in our own backyard at Sundown Mountain was just the cherry on top. It is great to have such a big event in Dubuque."

Volunteers Sought

The ISSA is also looking forward to the snocross race returning to Iowa this month. Past ISSA President Jim Willey, who lives nearby at Lake Delhi, volunteered at last year's event and was impressed by the show. "I was able to see firsthand the impact that having this event in Iowa has for Iowa snowmobile enthusiasts and the positive economic impact it creates," he said.

Tickets for the Dubuque snocross event are on sale now and are available at any Theisen's store or online at www.snocross.com. A complete schedule of events and a list of racing classes are also posted on that website. The weekend begins with practice laps Friday morning and ends Saturday evening with the second Pro Final.

The ISSA will once again be supporting the event and providing volunteers to assist with parking and logistics. A shuttle bus will be offered to accommodate fan access to the races. Please watch for signs for off-site parking.

"Parking this year will be much the same as last year," Gordon said. "Fans should park at the Northeast Iowa Community College campus in Peosta and be shuttled to the event on one of eight dedicated buses. Please note there is a \$10 parking fee."

If you are interested in volunteering at the event, contact ISSA President Chris Willey at (563) 920-9010 or koti79@gmail.com. Any ISSA member working a four-hour shift earns free admission to the races. Volunteers can also park at the Meadows Golf Course with a complimentary shuttle.



Tucker Hibbert swept both Pro Open Finals at Deadwood, S.D., in January. Photo courtesy Lissa Marsolek.

Storm Chasing Around Iowa

Winter Games Among Notable Events of Season's Better Half

Okoboji 2018 Snapshots



Youth Rides



Couch Cutter



Aerial Views



Parking Lot on Ice

by Cameron Hanson

The collective moaning from Iowa snowmobilers during the first half of this winter seemed to subside a little bit as the calendar closed in on February and a trio of snowstorms created a few more in-state riding opportunities during the second half.

The first major system arrived Jan. 22 and brought six to 12 inches of snow to northwest Iowa, just in time for the University of Okoboji Winter Games that weekend. On Feb. 5, another storm blanketed the Ames and Des Moines areas with six to eight inches; and just four days later, a third weather event brought another half foot of snow to the northern tier of the state.

Groomers sprang into action and worked with what they had to give local riders the most of their trail systems. In Region 1, the Clay County Sno Broncos wasted little time and were out grooming the ditches around Spencer on Jan. 23. Club president Doug Alger reported the heavy, wet snow was slowing the drag down some, but operators were still able get two-thirds of their trails done in time for the busy weekend planned to the north.

"With temps climbing into the high 20s to mid 30s the rest of the week, I hope we still have snow for the weekend," he said at the time.

As the host club for Winter Games, the Dickinson County Snowhawks were also out grooming. Trail Director Randy Magg agreed the Monday blizzard was "another million dollar storm" due to its timing ahead of the four-day winter celebration in the Iowa Great Lakes Region. Their area had similar fortunes in 2017.

Also in northwest Iowa, the O'Brien County Snowtrackers made it out with their groomer before a broken leaf spring on Jan. 26 halted operations. Still, long-time club member Zelda Buse Christensen of Archer, a 2012 recipient of the ISSA's Lifetime Achievement Award, said she was able to ride about 40 miles a day before warmer temps arrived by the weekend.

"I was just trying to use the precious snow while it lasted," she reported that Friday. "In some ditches, it was still very skimpy. It reached 40 degrees today, is barely freezing tonight and is supposed to be 40 again tomorrow. It's getting muddy, but I was able to put over 130 miles on my sled this week. Unbelievable!"

Off to the Iowa Great Lakes

Receiving trail reports by text and email and also following timely updates on social media, I was able to persuade Past ISSA President Gary McVicker of Hampton and Matt Wilde of Ankeny to join me for a day-trip to Okoboji for the Winter Games. Up to this point, I had just 30 miles on my sled for the year and was itching to squeeze the throttle. Both guys were on board for a little storm chasing to the northwest corner of the state.

The plan initially for Saturday was to unload at Algona and head west along Highway 18, but as articulated by Christensen earlier, the warmer temperatures during the week had hurt snowcover, so we had to trailer further west. We eventually disembarked from Dyno's truck stop on the north side of Spencer. Providing quick access to the trail, this convenient location also serves as the home of the Sno Broncos' groomer storage shed.



After fueling at the Sinclair station, we followed Highway 71 north into Milford and

picked up the multi-purpose Iowa Great Lakes Trail three miles south of Arnold's Park. After departing the rail trail, we followed tracks to Minnewashta Lake, crossed over to Upper Gar Lake and proceeded onto East and West Lake Okoboji. This area was clearly the place to be.

For the most part, the ice and snow had survived the warmer temps and provided plenty of good snowmobiling around the lake. At congested points, however—like the Highway 71 tunnel between east and west lake—water and slush were beginning to pool, which made things a little dicey, especially for those revelers in side-by-side utility vehicles.

After touring the various Winter Games activities on the lake—including broomball, live entertainment tents and ice racing—we decided to head east from Spirit Lake toward Superior for a late lunch. On our way off the lake, we encountered our third compliance checkpoint with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, which is always a welcome sight.

From Superior, we turned south to Terril before returning west to Milford and back down to the trailer at Spencer. We ended the



Departing Dyno's at Spencer

A little further north that same Saturday, the early February snow also paved the way for the Webster County Ice Breakers to host its ninth annual Marlin Benson Fun Run at Gowrie. Club secretary Nancy Lundgren reported 162 riders registered for the event and plenty of sponsors provided prizes for the evening.

"Thank you to all the riders, sponsors, stops and volunteers! It was a great fun run with tons of memories made and new friends gained," Lundgren posted on the club's Facebook page. "Marlin would be very happy with his legacy encouraging snowmobiling, education and safety! It was such an exciting day to have such a big run."

Also during the second weekend of February, the Butler County Snow Snoops pulled off its inaugural vintage ride from Dumont to Aredale in Region 4 on Feb. 11. Club president Seth Bram reported 25 vintage sleds participated in the 20-mile roundtrip cross-country ride. Another 15 newer sleds also joined in the fun.

"We didn't discriminate by age," Bram said. "As long as it looks like you just pulled it outta the barn with an inch of dust on it, you were welcome to ride it."

And, lastly, in the northeast corner of the state, the Allamakee Sno-Blazers of Region 5 hosted its second annual radar run and fundraiser dance at Green Valley Getaway in Waukon. Runs were offered in four classes, and in addition to the DJ afterwards, club members also raffled off a pair of guns, a TV and gift certificates.

Club president Brandon Fahey reported 45 snowmobilers registered for the radar runs, and overall, "the event was very successful for our club." In addition to supporting the club treasury, the Sno-Blazers' plans for the proceeds from the fundraiser include donations to the local sheriff's department and EMS unit.



First compliance checkpoint coming off of Upper Gar Lake

afternoon with 62 miles, doubling my season's output to this point and leaving with the satisfaction we had actually ridden in Iowa, albeit at the midpoint of the season. Little did we know at the time that additional opportunities to ride in Iowa would surface with the subsequent two storms in February.

First Snowmobile Iowa Ride

Thanks to those two ensuing snowfalls, the second weekend in February probably saw the most snowmobile-related activities of the season in Iowa, including the first Snowmobile Iowa ride in the two-year history of the program. After getting skunked on the first four Saturdays of 2018, organizers were able to finally host an event Feb. 10 in central Iowa.

Meeting at their trailhead near Slater, Saylorville Dam Snowmobile Club members led 15 Iowans on a 75-mile tour of their area, including parts of the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail. For club member Bruno Andreini, the event was quite satisfying. A past ISSA president, Andreini is credited with creating the Snowmobile Iowa concept, where clubs are encouraged to showcase their trail systems by hosting rides.

"I wasn't going to give up on this notion that easily," Andreini said. "We had perfect weather, and the comradery was superb as we led a group through our neck of the woods. My hat's off to this club on a job well done. I guess persistence pays off."



Snowmobile Iowa ride on the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail

Region 1

O'Brien County Snowtrackers

by Zelda Buse Christensen, Reporter

The last "news" that I sent in—mostly depicting a negative mood because of continued lack of snow—ended with these words: "So again we wait and hope...for some snow to ride in." But what happened Jan. 22? O'Brien County in northwest Iowa got an estimated 8 inches of real snow!

Club News

Not perfect snow, but pretty usable. I rode from 30 to 45 miles each of the next four days. At 20 degrees, the temperature was perfect till the fourth day, when it hit 40. It turned very cold again that night. Hoping to ride one more day after thawing started again, unfortunately I had to quit. Excessive thawing followed by re-freezing again changed the snow into white concrete, which my track was not penetrating enough to kick up needed snow underneath me.

After a week, we got another couple inches, so I could ride again. And then last night (Feb. 8), another two to three inches fell. With

sunshine, no wind and +5 degrees, I rode 40 miles today. My motto is to use it when we have it because it probably won't last!

And what about our groomer, which has been ready and waiting? Its initial run, on the big January snow, was intended to go from Primghar to Hartley. However, a couple miles

before Hartley, a suspension leaf spring broke, causing major problems. A farmer a few miles away (a former snowmobiler and club member) brought his tractor to pull the cripple out of the ditch. Then, with some unique cobbling, the groomer was able to pull the lifted drag carefully back to home base so it didn't have to be hauled. So now it is awaiting repairs, which could take a couple weeks to get.

Optimistically, I would say it is better to have some snow without a groomer than to have a groomer without any snow!

Keep thinking SNOW...we need more!

Region 5

Cresco Driftrunners

by Bob Martinek, Treasurer

Yes, hard to believe last magazine issue of the season! It was a season that never really came to Cresco. Oh, we did get snow (six to seven inches last night, Feb. 8) but never enough to officially open and showcase our trails.

Many people did travel north to do some riding, which I understand was very good. Also, we had one of our best club membership years in recent times with more than 137 members.

At this time, our only event we have left is our Landowner Appreciation Dinner, which we are planning for the end of March. Invites will be sent when details are final.

Otherwise, until next fall, Thank You!

Trails Unlimited

by Bud Winter, President

It took until February for us to get some snow in northeast Iowa, so let's see how much we end up with! It's been powder and the wind is most likely going to start to blow, but maybe some will stay put so we can at least run the groomer a little bit.

Our club has been able to stay active this winter even without the snow. We had a snow or no snow poker run Jan. 13 that had around 20 participants. They were an active group, and thankfully, as they made

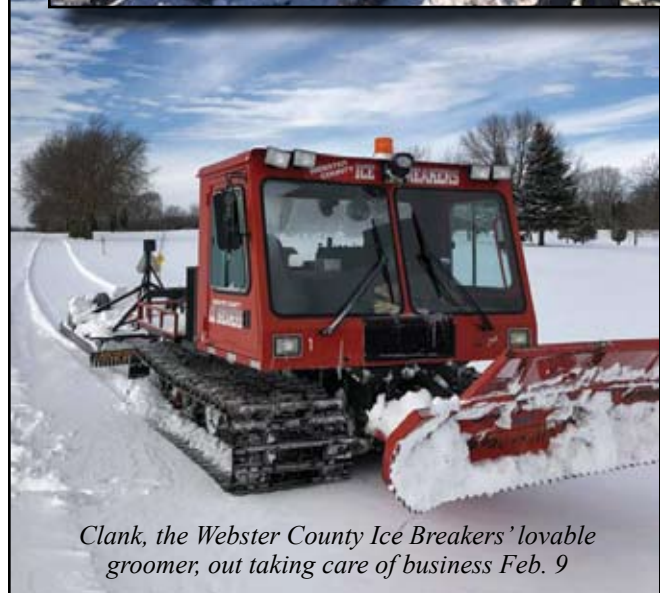


Following Clubs on Facebook

Allamakee Sno-Blazers Radar Runs at Green Valley Getaway Feb. 10



Butler County Snow Snoops Vintage Ride Feb. 11.



Clank, the Webster County Ice Breakers' lovable groomer, out taking care of business Feb. 9

their round at the different stops, they were able to sell a bunch of raffle tickets for our Tri-State Night Out raffle. That ended up doing very well overall, and our main gun raffle continues to do well also. This raffle concludes April 8 at our landowner's breakfast in Festina.

Jan. 27 was our club ride and pizza party, which of course ended up being only a pizza party. All things considered it was a good little club gathering, and hopefully next year, we'll be blessed to have some snow to have our ride also.

That's all for now. Hopefully, everyone is able to get their sleds out a little bit here while they can.

Region 9

Iowa Snowdrifters

by Ron Roe

Hello, everyone. Looks like the man has been listening to some of us and sent a load of the white gold. I think we had snow every night last week. I am not sure how much we got, but I know I had to plow most every day last week. I only plow for 2.5-3 hours each time so I shouldn't be saying a word after as long as we have waited for snow.

Our club hosted a ride Feb 10. We rode during the day and end up at Bobbers for a pizza party. There were music, food and drinks, and everyone had a good time. At least we got the snow in time for the ride. This was our last push for memberships this year. If the snow sticks around, we will be having more club rides.

We had our club meeting Thursday night. It was a snowy night and a lot of the members rode their snowmobiles to the meeting. That was good to see.

I can't believe this is the end of the letters for the season. Seems like we just got started. I might have set a new record for me in only missing one letter this season.

Hope everyone is enjoying the riding. There is plenty of time to get in some good riding through March if the snow holds out. I need to get checked off on our groomer so I am capable of operating it.

Well, this is all for the season. It is hard to think of summer coming. Now we will have to start thinking about taking down all the signs until next winter. Hope everyone has a good summer, and we'll be back in the fall.



Iowa Snowdrifters at Bobbers Grill, North Liberty



Clay County Sno Broncs grooming near Spencer Jan. 23



Webster County Ice Breakers Marlin Benson Memorial Fun Run Feb. 10.

2018 ISSA Club Challenge

Iowa Snowdrifters.....	\$500
Worth County Fence Stretchers	\$500
Tri-County Snowmobile Association	\$376
Central Iowa Snowmobilers.....	\$350
Snow Pioneers	\$350
Floyd County Groomers	\$300
Bremer County Sno-Knights.....	\$250
Cedar Falls Sno Hawks	\$250
Dickinson County Snowhawks	\$250
Howard County Stump Jumpers.....	\$250
Humboldt Sno-Skimmers.....	\$250
Team Iowa Snowmobilers.....	\$150
Iowa River Riders	\$100
Butler County Snow Snoops.....	\$100
Saylorville Dam Snowmobile Club.....	\$100

Proceeds benefit the ISSA's lobbying effort.

2018 ACSA Donations

Iowa Snowdrifters.....	\$250
Saylorville Dam Snowmobile Club.....	\$200
Central Iowa Snowmobilers.....	\$200
Floyd County Groomers.....	\$200
Team Iowa Snowmobilers.....	\$150
Iowa River Riders	\$100



Proceeds benefit snowmobile access nationwide. Contact your region director to make a donation.

Join the ISSA Today!

If you enjoy the sport of snowmobiling in Iowa, you are not alone. In 2017, more than 22,000 sleds registered with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and more than 50 clubs around the state maintained a 8,800-mile trail system.

The glue that bonds us together is the Iowa State Snowmobile Association and its network of 2,224 dedicated family members and associates. Since 1973, our organization has helped to maintain an expansive fleet of groomers and lobbied on behalf of snowmobile-friendly legislation.

Without the ISSA over the past 30 years, snowmobiles—for example—would have been held to a 15 mph speed limit, and

there would not have been any night riding, ditch riding nor access to state parks.

We continue to work to increase funding for trail maintenance and development, and in 2017, our organization assumed control of the state snowmobile trail grant program and of the entire groomer fleet. Our efforts continue, and your support would be greatly appreciated.

Fill out the form below and join the ISSA today.

With your paid annual membership, you will receive a free subscription to the *Iowa Snowmobiler* magazine, our official publication.

Iowa State Snowmobile Association 2018 Family/Single Membership Application

Please remit with payment.



I hereby apply for membership in the Iowa State Snowmobile Association. Check all that apply:

Single/Family (\$15) _____ Scholarship Donation \$ _____ Spina Bifida Association of Iowa Donation \$ _____ Legislative Action Fund Donation \$ _____

Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Children: _____ Snowmobile Club: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ County of Residence _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____ # registered snowmobiles _____

Your email address is very important as this will be how we can get information to you in a timely manner.

Included with your membership
is a subscription to this magazine.

____ Check here if you only want

digital version of magazine.

Membership year runs from

Jan. 1 thru Dec. 31.

Send your membership form and
dues today to Brittany Paulus at:

ISSA Membership

1924 270th Street

Marble Rock, IA 50653

bepaulus@outlook.com

Iowa State Snowmobile Association 2018 Associate Membership Application

Please remit with payment.



I hereby apply for membership in the Iowa State Snowmobile Association. Check all that apply:

____ Associate Membership (\$25)

Scholarship Donation \$ _____ Spina Bifida Association of Iowa Donation \$ _____ Legislative Action Fund Donation \$ _____

Name of Business or Dealership: _____ Contact Person: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____ Website: _____

Snowmobile Club/Region _____ Snowmobile Brand(s) (if applicable) _____

Anything you'd like to add to your listing in the magazine? _____

Included with membership is a
subscription to this magazine.

____ Check here if you only want

digital version of magazine.

Membership year runs from

Jan. 1 thru Dec. 31.

Send your membership form and
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(712) 299-1001

Clay County Sno Broncos

President: Doug Alger
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(712) 260-6855
eliteautodoug@gmail.com

Dickinson County SnowHawks

www.dickinsoncountysnowhawks.com
P.O. Box 504, Spirit Lake, IA 51360
President: Kevin Winters
P.O. Box 305, Lake Park, IA 51347
(712) 320-9530
kwinters9530@gmail.com

Lyon County Sno-Lyons

P.O. Box 576, Rock Rapids, IA 51246
President: Walt Dibbern
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