



Flathead National Forest

Media Release

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Individuals Cited for Snowmobile Incursions

The Flathead National Forest has recently issued 17 citations to individuals that were operating snowmobiles in non-motorized areas of the forest, including the Mission Mountains Wilderness.

On Sunday, February 3, eight individuals were operating snowmobiles in Sondreson Meadows, an area closed to winter motorized use located in the North Fork Area, north of Columbia Falls. According to Forest Service law enforcement officers, the group knowingly entered the non-motorized area. The individuals, from Columbia Falls and Kalispell, were cited.

Nine individuals were cited on Saturday, February 9 for operating snowmobiles in the Mission Mountains Wilderness. The group consisted of individuals from the local area, including West Glacier, Kalispell and Lakeside.

The maximum fine for operating a snowmobile in a non-motorized area varies from \$200 to \$5000, with additional penalties dependent on the situation and the discretion of the U.S. Magistrate.

Swan Lake District Ranger Steve Brady said, “We are disappointed that some snowmobile riders are being disrespectful and irresponsible by entering areas that are closed to snowmobile travel.” Brady continued, “We ask that riders focus their snowmobile travel in the many designated open areas and respect the areas closed to motorized use.”

Brady encourages snowmobilers to obtain the 2008 Over Snow Vehicle Use Maps that identify areas available for snowmobile travel. The maps are free from any local Forest Service Office and are available by visiting www.fs.fed.us/r1/flathead. It is the rider’s responsibility to know where the open snowmobile terrain is on the ground.

The Flathead National Forest offers almost 800,000 acres open to snowmobiling. Designated wilderness, such as the Bob Marshall, Great Bear and Mission Mountains Wildernesses, and the Jewel Basin Hiking Area are not open to snowmobiling, or any motorized use. These areas have been closed to motorized use, including snowmobiles, from their inception in the mid-1960s to the 1980s.

The forest plans to continue monitoring snowmobile activity, trends and incursions. Anyone with information regarding illegal snowmobile activity is encouraged to contact Forest Service law enforcement at 758-5277 or 387- 3839.

All winter recreationists are reminded to be prepared for winter conditions, and always stay current with the local weather conditions and avalanche danger. Updated avalanche danger and information, including an avalanche awareness class schedule, is available at www.glacieravalanche.org.