



FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Teresa Wenum
406-758-5218

Snowmobile Season Opens on the Flathead National Forest

The Flathead National Forest offers several popular snowmobile areas with groomed and ungroomed trails. Snowmobile access information maps and groomed trail maps are available at any ranger district office or the Forest Supervisor's Office in Kalispell. The maps outline snowmobile routes and areas by ranger district and the groomed trails accessing state and Forest Service lands in the Flathead area.

The Flathead Snowmobile Association and the Cutbank Snowgoers groom several trail systems on the Flathead National Forest including the popular Canyon Creek system in the North Fork of the Flathead; the designated routes to Desert Mountain on the Hungry Horse Ranger District; the Crane Mountain trail system on the Swan Lake Ranger District; and the Skyland/Challenge trail system east of Marias Pass.

The available snowmobile maps also provide information on area restrictions. The Great Bear, Bob Marshall and Mission Mountain Wilderness Areas and the Jewel Basin Hiking Area are closed to snowmobiling. Snowmobiling in the Coram Experimental Forest near Hungry Horse is restricted to designated routes. The Firefighter Mountain area along the east side of Hungry Horse Reservoir is closed to all motorized use year-round and the east side reservoir road, #38, is closed to snowmobiling past Hoke Creek, 37 miles from Martin City.

Most areas are open to snowmobiling on the Tally Lake Ranger District except the LeBeau Research Natural Area, west of Upper Stillwater Lake, the Round Meadow cross-country ski area, the Little Wolf fire area, west and south of Star Meadow, and a small area around Tally Lake.

When riding in the North Fork of the Flathead on the Glacier View Ranger District, snowmobilers need to remain on designated routes and within designated open play areas. The Skyland/Challenge snowmobile area near Marias Pass is open December 1 through May 15 and connects to routes on the Lewis and Clark National Forest. When accessing the Lewis and Clark, riders must remain on the designated "open connections".

Within the next couple of months, salvage logging operations may start in areas burned in the 2003 fires. For safety, some snowmobile areas now open for riding may close or have temporary restrictions while logging operations take place.

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As a reminder, riders can't operate a snowmobile on any road that is passable by motor vehicles, that includes plowed and unplowed roads if vehicles can still use the road.

When riding on public lands, your snowmobile must be registered with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Out-of-state riders need a temporary snowmobile use permit available from Fish, Wildlife and Parks offices or through area license vendors.

For more information contact the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks or visit their website at <http://fwp.state.mt.us/parks/recreation.asp>.

For safety tips and the current avalanche forecast, check the Glacier Country Avalanche Center web page at <http://www.glacieravalanche.org>

For more information on current snowmobile conditions, open areas and restrictions, contact the local ranger district offices:

Hungry Horse/Glacier View 406/387-3800

Swan Lake 406/837-7500

Tally Lake 406/863-5400

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