

MAKING OF A TRAIL



100 MILE SNOW SAFARI, INC.

FOREST COUNTY, WISCONSIN

PREFACE

The Wisconsin Snowmobile Advisory Council is charged with the duty of distributing over \$2,000,000 in funds to the various counties for their use in providing and maintaining Snowmobile Trails. This duty should not be entered into lightly as it is very simple to distribute monies, but difficult to be assured that the funds will be properly spent.

The short booklet that follows is an effort of the 100 Mile Snow Safari, Inc. to impress upon the Council what an immense undertaking the establishing of a good Snowmobile Trail is, no matter where it is located. Therefore, in all candor, we ask that the Council give careful consideration to the requirements and conditions that need to be met to establish a trail. We further ask that the Council take testimony from those people in the State who have made successful trails so that a sound format can be developed for distribution of the \$2,000,000.

"The Making of a Trail"

Many people believe a functional snowmobile trail just happens. Nothing could be further from the truth. Even here in the Northern reaches of Wisconsin, with miles of logging roads and abandoned railroad right of ways, the exceptional trails have many hours of planning and hard work behind them. The trail we are going to look at is the 100 Mile Snow Safari, located in Forest County, Wisconsin.

Back in 1970 several people in the area visualized a Safari Trail that would accomplish several things:

- A. Provide a marked, safe trail for visiting and local snowmobilers.
- B. Stimulate a winter industry for the local business people.
- C. Allow people to view areas of our region not before accessible without snowmobiles.

With this in mind, we started to accomplish the means to make such a trail.

The first year the trail was selected and then marked with ribbon hung on trees and brush. The person marking the trail walked the one hundred seventeen miles of abandoned railroad grades, forest roads, logging trails and some township roads that were not used in the winter snow months for automobile traffic. The various property owners were contacted

for verbal permission to allow the Safari trail to cross their lands.

After the trail was laid out, a meeting of the business establishments on route was called and the businessmen were told about the trail and asked to be trail sponsors. The fee for such sponsorship was set at \$25.00 per year. The monies were to be used to develop the trail, pay for maps, and to purchase patches to be resold to the riders of the Safari. Unknowingly, the problems of developing a trail were just beginning and as we look back now, we are sure there would be no 100 Mile Snow Safari trail today if all the problems to be encountered could have been foreseen at the conception of the trail.

Approximately twenty-five sponsors were solicited and volunteers from the sponsoring group, as well as other interested parties, then spent several hundred hours brushing, building small bridges, falling trees, and picking deadfalls off the trail to make it passable. By late December the trail was ready to be traveled, maps distributed, and trail check-in points established. When the first snowmobiles started to use the trail, our troubles began.

Many of the trail marking ribbons had blown or been pulled from the trees. This led to lost snowmobilers, many different trail routes being ridden, and in general a thoroughly disorganized trail ride. But through it all the 2500-plus machines and riders who took the 1970-71 Safari trail ride seemed to enjoy and appreciate the ride.

After the season was over we sat down to analyze the trail and where improvements should and had to be made to eliminate the problems of the first year. The areas for concern were these that could affect safety, cause damage to terrain or person, or posed

a problem due to other land use requirements. Because of our investigation we found that approximately twenty-five miles of trail would have to be relocated. From our ribbon experience we knew that a better permanent signing would have to be accomplished the full length of the trail. Also, a major problem was winter trail maintenance to eliminate the mogels caused by machine usage or drifting snow. And last, but most importantly, a better community relationship would benefit all concerned in the Forest County area.

Therefore, during the summer of 1971, we made approximately 2500 standard trail and direction markers. Many of these markers were put up during the summer months while others were done after the first snow fall, with snowmobiles. Aluminum nails were used so as not to cause damage to someone's chain saw at a later date. The new trail areas were cut, brushed, the entire trail was rid of windfall. While doing this, the litter from last year was removed and there was very little found that could be contributed to snowmobilers. Maps were reprinted and trail location points clearly marked to aid the snowmobiler. And in the interest of better community relations, it was determined to sponsor a "thank you" dinner after the season was over.

Trail maintenance was a big problem, the cost of maintenance even a bigger problem. In an attempt to improve trail conditions, thirty uniform drags were made and each trail sponsor was to purchase a drag and was assigned a section of trail to maintain through the coming season. The 100 Mile Snow Safari was then incorporated under Wisconsin Statute, this in an effort to provide a better trail sponsoring group. Under the incorporation the Board of Directors included at least one director from each business community. This director was to bring any problems to the attention of the Board and the director was

also charged with the responsibility of seeing that the trails were maintained in his area.

We now thought that we were ready for the 1971-72 snowmobiling season. The trail was no sooner opened, after the first good snowfall, and the problems began to arise again. One of the problems was an almost doubling of the number of riders and machines taking the Safari trail. Due to logging operations it was necessary to re-route sections of the trail, trail maintenance problems had been underestimated, and an even greater number of new riders multiplied our already critical problems. In addition, a severe financial problem arose in trying to correct the trail problems with only forty-three sponsors contributing \$25.00 each.

It was necessary for the club officers to hold almost weekly sessions and the board of directors to meet bi-monthly; in addition general membership meetings were held to try and resolve the critical areas. Members in several instances paid for machine hire of equipment to improve the trail from their own pockets. For some of the sponsors the winter's snowmobiling consisted of attempting to groom 15 to 20 miles of trail for twenty hours each week at the sponsor's own expense. Hundreds of hours of labor were contributed in an attempt to provide safe snowmobiling for riders coming from all over the State of Wisconsin.

Unfortunately, in late February the trail, in spite of hundreds of dollars spent and over 1500 hours of donated labor, was so rough as to be almost impassable. As if this problem wasn't severe enough to overcome, thirty inches of new snow fell in a 5 day period. The trail was almost impossible to reopen as snowmobiles would overheat in a short period of time attempting to break through drifts two to seven feet deep. An

emergency meeting was called and a determination made by the Board of Directors that it was time to either get into the snowmobile trail business or get out. A call was made to Halvorson, Inc., Duluth, Minnesota, asking for a demonstration of the only known piece of equipment made for trail grooming. A demonstration was arranged for later in the week and after viewing the demonstration a special general meeting of the 100 Mile Snow Safari, Inc. was called. The decision was made to purchase the tractor and trail groomer from Halvorson Inc. for the sum of \$11,200.00, \$11,200.00 being spent by a group with a \$700.00 bank balance to provide a snowmobile trail for hundreds of people none of us knew, from areas of the State of Wisconsin outside of Forest County. Fund-raising ideas were starting to take shape and several of these were put into action within several days. We are happy to report that our efforts were successful, and the response from so many people, so gratifying, that we were able to meet our first payment obligation in May of 1972.

The trail groomer allowed us to furnish a very good trail for the remaining part of the 1971-72 snowmobile season. The groomer, however, presented another problem, as it is 84 inches wide and weighs approximately 6000 pounds. In many areas our trails were not wide enough and our bridges inadequate. These problems have to be corrected before the next season.

As we have looked back over the year, we find "The Making of a Trail" to be no simple matter. However, in appreciation of all the help given us by so many, we held our first annual "thank you" dinner for over 120 people who contributed so much and asked so very little. Needless to say, the dinner was a complete success.

For the 1972-73 season we will require new bridges, wider trails, and trail re-routing in several areas, more and better trail marking, new and improved maps, and the need of additional monies to maintain the trail. We also feel that we have a tremendous responsibility to provide the finest trail for snowmobiling but at the same time respect and protect the rights of others. With this latter point in mind the 100 Mile Snow Safari took a strong stand on the use of ORV'S and sent a resolution to the Forest Supervisor, Rhinelander, Wisconsin. Simply stated our resolution states "That where ORV'S cause a conflict of interest, constitute a safety hazard, or could create an environmental problem, the use of ORV'S should be restricted." In our area we have a 150 to 200 inch snowfall and this restricts the usage of a snowmobile to developed trails and therefore, we feel that snowmobiles cause little or no damage in our area. To further emphasize our convictions the 100 Mile Snow Safari trail is designated as a winter snow use trail only. We also do not feel that the snowmobile or the snowmobiler is all that perfect and that many changes in controls, restriction and attitudes might be a healthy improvement for all concerned.

The Making of a Trail is never done as we continually see where improvements could and must be made. However, the 100 Mile Snow Safari, Inc. will continually strive to provide the snowmobiler with the finest, safest, sanest trail in Wisconsin, if not in the Nation. For next year the wheels are already in motion. To the trail we have added more communities, Crandon and Newald. The trail now links the following Forest County communities: Wabeno, Carter, Township of Freedom, Laona, Crandon, Cavour, Newald, and Armstrong Creek. The trail will be widened and improved in the best interest of all. Our estimated budget for 1972-73 is just under \$10,000.00, all this from the idea of "Making a Trail" from several

people just three short years ago. People we ask you to check with to determine if we have started to "Make a Trail" are:

Mr. Lowell Patterson - District Ranger
Laona, Wisconsin

Forest Republican - Crandon, Wisconsin

Mr. Richard Connor, Jr. - Connor Industries
Laona, Wisconsin

State Bank of Wabeno - Wabeno, Wisconsin

State Bank of Laona - Laona, Wisconsin

Crandon National Bank - Crandon, Wisconsin

Mr. William Connors - Connors Lumbering Co.
Wabeno, Wisconsin

Schlafke Baking Co. - Wabeno, Wisconsin

Mr. Ken Conway - County Clerk - Crandon
Wisconsin

and the over 6700 snowmobilers who have taken
the 100 Mile Snow Safari.

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we have started to "Make a Trail" any;

Mr. Lowell Patterson - District Ranger
Laona, Wisconsin
Forest Republican - Crandon, Wisconsin
Mr. Richard Connor, Jr. - Connor Industries
Laona, Wisconsin
State Bank of Waubesa, Wisconsin
State Bank of Laona, Wisconsin
Crandon National Bank - Crandon, Wisconsin
Mr. W. J. Connor, Insurance Co.

SUMMARY

From the preceding booklet one can see
that to establish a trail is no simple matter,
nor is there any cut and dried solution to all
the considerations that must be met. We hope
that the booklet will be of help not only to
the Wisconsin Snowmobile Council, but to all
other groups that intend to undertake the
development of a snowmobile trail. We hope
that in some small way we have contributed
information that will lead to safer, and
better snowmobiling in the State of Wisconsin.