



## THE TRACK

### SNO VOYAGEUR'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

March 2021

**We have a new email address: [snovoyaguersinfo@gmail.com](mailto:snovoyaguersinfo@gmail.com)**

Welcome to our first newsletter. We hope to be able to send one out at least quarterly in throughout the year with updates on the work our club volunteers and the Board of Directors are doing.

Current Board members for our club are:

President - Jeremy Girard

Vice-President - Craig Mayhew

Treasurer - David Emms

Secretary - Marianne de Bretan-Berg

Trails Ambassador/Landowner Liaison - Warren Harris,

Social Media Coordinator - Janne Haapalainen

Assistant Trails Manager/Volunteer Coordinator - Paul Ineson

Clubhouse - Greg Emms

Groomer Operator Manager - Steve Blow

There will be a new election of these positions at our ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING to be held May 4, 2021 at 7 p.m. at the clubhouse on Snow Valley Road, Midhurst (Covid restrictions pending). Attendance and voting is limited to club members and volunteers with 20 hours of volunteering.

The Board would also like to welcome and thank our new volunteers. Your help is very much appreciated and we really couldn't do the great job we do without all of the many hours you put in. Volunteer help is invaluable and we are always in need of more volunteers. It's a great way to meet people and to get to know all of the different things that go into making the trails ready for riding. Please contact us through our main email address [snovoyageursinfo@gmail.com](mailto:snovoyageursinfo@gmail.com) if you wish to join our crew – no experience needed! We will train you!

**Groomers:** Several new groomer staff have been hired and trained and were out grooming the trails almost every night with what little snow we have had. Temperatures have been a challenge as well in both January when they were too high to freeze the ground and during the multiple thaws in February and March, which turned the packed snow into ice. The machines have needed some repairs and routine preventative maintenance and we have a great crew of volunteers who are capable of doing this work.

**Trails:** We have seen a tremendous increase in volume of riders on the trails this year. All you have to do is try to buy new equipment and you will quickly learn the shelves are bare. This is great news for our sport but with novice riders comes the responsibility to help them learn the ways of our trails.

We continue to have a lot of difficulty keeping sledders off private property and out of the farmers' fields. This has been and continues to be our biggest problem throughout the province. Landowners are getting fed-up with sledders driving off the trails and destroying the underlying winter plants and irrigation systems. In some cases, we have already lost permission to the point where the only option is riding the ditch or the road. It's about landowner respect. More signs have been erected and the majority of sledders obey the rules. The extremely small number of trespassing riders are really jeopardizing our sport.

Off-trail riding has become such a problem in the province that the OFSC has produced an advertising campaign to spread the word. Hopefully, this will see a change in attitude. You can visit the OFSC media campaign here:

<https://www.ofsc.on.ca/2021/03/04/ofsc-asks-snowmobilers-to-play-key-role-in-anti-trespass-initiatives/>

Several trails had to be rerouted last fall for a variety of reasons, either landowners have revoked their permission or land is being developed.

There has been a lot of concern about the number of non-sledding people on the multi-use trails. People who walk or toboggan on these trails may not be aware of the danger of sleds driving through, so we ask all sledders to stay alert and vigilant when using multi-use trails. We are hoping to work with Simcoe County to provide education to all users.

**Financial Report:** We have had some major expenditures this season. We had to put a new heating system in the groomer shed. While this might seem a luxury,

heat is required to keep the equipment running as well as for our people working on the groomers and the other equipment in the shed.

The groomers have had some on-going mechanical issues that required repairs. Hopefully, we won't have as many issues next season. We have a great crew of people who work together and help "rescue" groomer operators who get stranded deep on the trails. Hats off to all these very special people who work behind the scenes that many riders are never aware of the work they do, mostly at night and in the wee hours of the morning when it is bitterly cold.

Every year, as part of our responsibilities, we have to compensate landowners for damage to their crops either from groomers or off-trail riding.

**Social Media:** We have seen a huge increase in traffic on Facebook. This really promotes our club. We get a lot of "likes" and sharing, especially when we post updates on grooming, volunteer work and trail conditions. This is a great way to increase our membership. Be sure to share the posts of our sponsors.

Through our Facebook posts, 2 people riding the trails have been reunited with a wallet and bag carrying important medical equipment. So, this proves that these posts reach a large audience.

We cannot run the club without the generous support of our sponsors. They buy a piece of all those boards you see on the trails. We try to show our support for their companies by giving them a shout-out on FB. Please like and share those posts when you see them and frequent their businesses any time you can.

**Clubhouse and Outhouses:** The clubhouse remained closed for the duration of the lockdown and Stay at Home orders. Parking was still available at this location. Outhouses/Portajohns were still open and "use at your own risk as they are not sanitized in between use" signs were placed on the outside of the door. (The many female riders thank Sno Voyageurs for providing this service.)

**COVID-19 impact on snowmobiling:** There has been a lot of posts on social media regarding the impact of restrictions on snowmobiling. People were still able to ride the trails within their local health unit area. Unlike our friends to the north, we were very happy that they didn't close our trails and while this season was short due to lack of snow and warm temperatures, there was still some pretty awesome riding opportunities.

**Trail Patrols:** OPP were out on the trails this season, checking for permits, license and insurance and checking exhaust systems for after-market cans which are prohibited. They were also on the lookout for people driving sleds when impaired by alcohol or legal/illegal substances is prohibited.

Sno Voyageurs thanks the OPP for keeping our trails safe and ensuring riders are purchasing their permits.

We also have a number of volunteers who patrol the trails, educate riders and help out in too many ways to list here. Your help is invaluable and we are grateful!

**Volunteer Recognition:** It takes a lot of people to make our club run efficiently for our members and many more to make the trails some of the best around. Sno Voyageurs is responsible for 180 km of trails in Simcoe County. We were incredibly lucky this year to have some really dedicated and tireless volunteers. We can always use more. If you have some spare time, there are many opportunities: trail maintenance, prep and dismantling to name a few. In just a few short weeks, we will be starting to dismantle the stakes and signage and close off trails that have gates. Then we will start all over in September. It's a great way to meet new people and to learn about what goes into making the trails accessible and functional for riders. We can't say enough good about all our volunteers! If you would like to help out please email us at [snovoyeursinfo@gmail.com](mailto:snovoyeursinfo@gmail.com).

As this season draws to a close, we would be remiss if we did not recognize the current Board of Directors, some of whom will not be running in the upcoming elections, preferring to step back and take a well-needed rest. Our President, Jeremy Girard, will be stepping down as will Craig Mayhew, Vice President. We thank Jeremy and Craig for providing the leadership necessary to keep this club running and for the countless hours they have spent over the past 2 years.

Special mention goes out to our other tireless Board members: David Emms, Trail Manager/Treasurer and jack of all trades, Warren Harris, Trail Ambassador (who tries to keep our landowners happy), Janne Haapalainen, our Social Media guru who did an amazing job with all our social media, Paul Ineson, Assistant Trails Manager/Volunteer Coordinator, our transplanted leader from somewhere south of here, who is also a jack of all trades; Steve Blow, Groomer Operator Manager, who got our groomer operators organized, out on the trails and dealt with all of the issues we had this year with the patience of Job even though he is fairly new

to the group, and Greg Emms, Clubhouse Manager, who ensures the clubhouse is in good running order for when we can use it again.

Lots of headaches but we are grateful for their leadership and guidance in training new volunteers and keeping morale up! As the 2<sup>nd</sup> newest Board member, I can tell you these gentlemen, and the great group of volunteers we have are second to none and have made this COVID season of sledding one of the best in recent years!

That's it for this time! As always, if you have suggestions, questions or concerns, or would like to try volunteering with us, please contact the club at [snovoyageursinfo@gmail.com](mailto:snovoyageursinfo@gmail.com).

Wishing you happy trails,  
Marianne de Bretan-Berg  
Secretary/Newsletter Coordinator