

“What can my age group do to improve the quality of our snowmobile trail system?” by Anthony White

I was fortunate to be raised in a snowmobiling family. I started going on trail rides when I was two years old. This was a family event including my grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. I looked forward to the rides because they were a lot of fun. My parents also used these rides as a learning experience. On our rides, they always taught me to ride safely and respectfully. I still believe these are two ways we can all help improve the quality of our snowmobile trail system.

My family is a member of the Mille Lacs Trails Snowmobile Club. The organized clubs are a vital part of the snowmobile trail system. It is important for young people to join these clubs. As a member of a club, young people can help to maintain our current trails. They can also learn how difficult it was to get the trails started in Minnesota. This will help them to take care of the trails we are so lucky to have.

I believe we need to be thankful that private landowners allow trails to cross their lands. Without them, our trail systems would be very limited. In order for landowners to continue to allow us to cross their land, they must know that we will not harm their property. This means we need to stay on the marked trails. We don't know what is under the snow. They may have trees or expensive hay seed planted next to where we are riding. If even one person rides across this land, it could damage the growth of the plants. Also if one person leaves a track, others are more likely to follow. Another way I show respect to the land owners is at my job. I work at a local café and get to see these people. This gives me the opportunity to talk about snowmobiling with the landowners. I thank them for allowing us to ride across their land.

Another way to promote proper trail use is through education. My father, grandfather and uncle are certified snowmobile safety instructors. They helped me and several of my friends get our snowmobile safety certificates. It is this same group of friends that I still enjoy riding with today. When we ride, we follow our safety instruction and abide by the rules and regulations. We talk about our rides in school and have even brought new riders to the sport. My family had a foreign exchange student and I was able to take him on rides and show him the proper way to ride. I hope that when people see a group of young people out riding in a respectful manner, they realize how important it is to have a quality snowmobile trail system.

One thing that I feel gives snowmobilers a bad reputation and damages the trails is driving too fast and cornering too hard. When my friends and I ride, we do not exceed the speed limit. We also take the corners carefully making sure we don't dig ruts in the snow. Riding like this sets an example for other riders. When we have new people riding in our group, they see that it is fun to ride with a group in a safe and respectful manner.

I also help my snowmobile club with trail clean-up and signing in the fall. I think it is important for snowmobilers of all ages to help with this. If you have helped create something as wonderful as a snowmobile trail system, you will be less likely to damage it. My family also has a private trail system that our club uses for their vintage rides and treasure hunts. I have helped to clear and maintain these trails. It is very rewarding to have the club members ride on and enjoy the trails that I have helped create.

Snowmobile clubs, landowners and education are all key components to a thriving trail system. These are just a few of the things that young people and snowmobilers of all ages can do to help improve the quality of our snowmobile trail systems. This is something we can continue to work on so that we can all enjoy the wonderful sport of snowmobiling.

