

Snowdrifters Inc. Snowmobile Club

A brief history (in no particular order), written in 2003.

The club was originally formed as the Ely Snowdrifters back in the early 60's. The club was made up of people dedicated to snowmobiling, and was very local to that area.

By the late 70's, the club had grown. In an effort to serve more people and miles of trails, the club was incorporated as the Snowdrifters Inc. in Johnson County. At this point, they began to receive funding from the IDNR. The club is located in Region 9, between Cedar Rapids and Iowa City.

The club is organized around a President, Vice-President, Secretary and a Treasurer. Currently serving in these positions are President, Jim Schmidt, Vice-President, Chris Handley, Secretary, Chris Roe and Treasurer, Mel Rinehart.

We also have a 5-member Board of Directors. The President serves a 1-year term, and can serve 2 terms consecutively. The Vice-President will become the President when their term is up. The Secretary and Treasurer have no limits to their terms; although, a year or two is typical.

In 1994, after repeated rejections of our requests to receive grooming equipment, the club decided to raise money to purchase a groomer of their own. In 1995, we purchased (and restored without state funding) a 1969 Bombardier SV200, which came from the Backbone State Park area. It is still in limited use today. Because of its age it usually spends more time "down" than actually grooming, as do most "groomers" from that era.

With "Being below the snow line" no longer an issue; we, like most clubs, are hoping the "Equipment Gods" will smile on us, and assign us a new groomer. We could surely use one.

The Snowdrifters have approximately 130 miles of trails that are located primarily in Johnson County. They also go into Linn and Washington counties. The trail system connects the towns of Sutliff, Solon, Ely, Western, Shueyville, North Liberty, Tiffin, Cosgrove, Windom, and Kalona. Our trails also go through the Lake Macbride State Park, and to the Coralville Reservoir area.

Currently, there are approximately 700 registered snowmobiles in Johnson County alone. Our trail system is also drawing riders from Cedar, and Iowa counties making a total of 5 counties served.

Our trails are diligently marked and numbered each year, and utilize trail area coordinators for organizing the clean up and marking. In addition, the club has also produced trail maps for several years. Club members actively seek sponsors to advertise on the map, and help

pay for the cost to keep it updated. This advertising serves to draw riders to local establishments that welcome snowmobilers, bringing more business to local sponsors. This helps make snowmobiling part of the economic picture.

The club also maintains a website for public information at www.iowa-snowdrifters.org. In addition, we produce a monthly newsletter for members, and utilize an email distro for member alerts and important information.

In the past, the club has used "Poker Runs", or "Fun Runs" to raise money. These "runs" are enjoyable. Unfortunately, they have sometimes caused difficulties in some of the towns with traffic, etc. We now focus on raising money in the off-season. In this way, everyone can ride when there's snow.

When the State swept our funding, the Snowdrifters sprang into action. Rather than go idle for a season, we held a raffle to raise money to continue operations. Within weeks, club members had worked a deal with Fast City in Oxford, Iowa (the owners are also members) to offer a choice (to the winner) between an ATV or a snowmobile. That worked very well. This type of drawing appealed to winter, as well as, summer enthusiasts. The object was to have the tickets sold by that following fall. The dedication of the club members to our own cause had all the tickets sold within 4 months.

Since the late 70's, the club has provided Certified Safety Instructors to assist with the snowmobile safety courses in our area.

The Snowdrifters give out annual scholarships to graduating high-school students in the area. This is our 6th year awarding educational scholarships. We have been awarding two \$250 scholarships per year.

The Snowdrifters also participate in the making our forests and wildlife habitat a better place for everyone. This is the 3rd year we've participated in the National Public Lands Day with the Federal Government. Since some of our trails are on federal land it is a good way to "give back" to our supporters. The club maintains some of the trails that run through forest area, as walking paths in the summer months, also.

This year we were nominated by the IDNR, in the group category, for the Keepers of the Land award. We were nominated for our "Outstanding work maintaining snowmobile trails in the Lake Macbride State Park". There were only 9 "groups" nominated in the state. Although we did not win the award, it was an honor to be nominated. It was a humbling experience to see the number of other volunteers, and the hours they donate. It is good to see so many others who are also dedicated to making our public lands better for everyone.

This fall was our 3rd year to host an Open House in October. For the last 2 years, we've included a swap meet. The event seems to be growing every year. We have new and used

equipment on display, club member's sleds on display, snowmobile videos playing, maps and snowmobile information as well as club shirts for sale. It's a good way to let the public know what we're all about. The swap meet and sleds on display help get everyone in the spirit for snowmobiling. The Open House also kicks off our annual membership drive.

We currently have about 90 memberships with 90% being family memberships. There are about 160 adults in the club at any one time.

The Snowdrifters donated labor and money to a variety of community and public interest projects over the years. Most recently, we provided \$1000 of materials, and the labor to replace roadbed planking on the bridge at the Sutliff Bridge County Park. This particular bridge is one of the last triple-span, truss-bridges still standing in Iowa. It is a popular summer destination and attraction for many people.

The club tries to stay proactive with trail placement. With all the development going on, it's important to anticipate problem areas and work toward moving the trails before issues develop. Keeping a good relationship with the local community leaders can make that easier. No landowner wants to help a group whose days they think "are numbered".

For the last three years we've issued press releases to the local media that include all of our activities (bridge work, scholarships, etc.). This positive exposure helps to put the "best face" on snowmobiling. Too many times the public only hears the negative that snowmobiling brings to an area. It's important to counter that inaccurate portrayal.

There is too much "disinformation" being spread regarding snowmobiles and snowmobiling. It is up to all of us who love this sport to take up our cause, and defend our sport for the good that we bring to others. With diminishing areas to ride in, misinformation being spread about the damage snowmobiling causes to areas and environmental groups targeting our sport, we all need to be more proactive about the good that our sport does. This can only be done with factual information, individual and club involvement. We all know what we do. It is time for the general public to find out the "real" story of our sport. The general public needs to know facts. The Snowdrifters are involved and dedicated to all aspects of making this sport even greater.