

## Written Testimony for LD 280- An Act to Increase Funding for Snowmobile Trails and Capital Equipment Grants

Senator Jim Dill, Representative Scott Landry and members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

My name is Eileen Lafland and I am the Eastern Region VP for the Maine Snowmobile Association. I represent over 70 snowmobile clubs in Hancock, Penobscot, Washington, and Piscataquis County. This area includes the high traffic areas in Greenville, Millinocket, Shin Pond/Mattagamon as well the Downeast Sunrise Trail from Ellsworth to Perry and every where else in these four counties on both sides of the Penobscot River. I have had this position with MSA and this area for over twenty years and feel I have a good sense of what snowmobile clubs need to survive and thrive.

In speaking with my clubs in person and via emails we are asking you to support this bill and vote to increase the registration fees as requested. As a user group we asking for an increase on ourselves, which is not common for people to ask to pay more. This increase is a drop in the bucket so to speak for clubs that are severely struggling to raise enough funds to keep our heads above water.

Snowmobiling is a large economic boost to the state of Maine as is documented in the Economic Impact Study dated Feb. 2020. As of this report we generated in excess of 606 Million dollars for the state. (the complete report can be accessed at [www.mesnow.com](http://www.mesnow.com) - An Economic Evaluation of Snowmobiling in Maine) The only money snowmobile clubs receive from the state is from the Dept. of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry's Snowmobile Trail Fund. This fund reimburses clubs a portion of their expenses because there is just not enough money which comes from registrations in the fund.

It is up to the clubs to raise any additional funds they need to make up that difference. This means suppers, dinners, fund raising auctions and any other fund-raising events they can hold. As we all know the past year due to COVID has curtailed ALL these events and clubs have not been able to open or raise any additional funds. I do know of some clubs in my region that may not re-open as they do not have any financial means to operate with. Snowmobile clubs have not been able to apply for any of the relief funds available to small businesses, so we are struggling! Even with reduced funds and not knowing if they can pay the bills has not stopped the clubs from doing trail work, clearing miles and miles of trails from severe weather and then having to go back out and clear them again and again after each storm. That is all money and time spent BEFORE the snow arrives, if it does. Then when snow does arrive, they are out grooming trails to make them safe for all to ride.

The Capital Equipment fund was started in 2002 as a way to assist clubs in purchasing grooming equipment for the over 14,000 miles of trails we have in this state. Again, this fund was the result of us, the user group, asking for a \$5 increase in registration money to start a program to assist in buying equipment. This fund has not seen an increase since its beginning, however equipment coasts have risen dramatically in this time, again causing clubs to find ways to raise more funds to cover the difference between what the Capital Equipment fund pays and what the actual cost is. The payouts each year are based on a point rating system and only a small portion of clubs that apply receive any funds.

By supporting this bill, you will assist clubs in their efforts to keep Maine snowmobile trails the best they can be. This in turn brings the instate and out of state riders who know when they are in Maine, they

will get quality riding on well groomed trails. Just take a ride to any of the state hot spots on a winter weekend and watch as hundreds and hundreds of sleds go by or into businesses yards to stay or eat. Look at the increase in gas tax revenue for the state in the winter months and you will see snowmobilers are here to ride and spend money. You could even just sit on an overpass on I-95, beside the road on Route 201 any other major highway in Maine on a Thursday or Friday in the winter and count the trucks and trailers headed to snowmobile. Make sure you have a counter that has high numbers though, because you won't be able to keep up!

Please show your support for the hundreds of **VOLUNTEERS (yes VOLUNTEERS they do not receive any compensation for the many hours of trail work they do,)** which make up the snowmobile club trail people in this state and support this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Written testimony submitted by Eileen Lafland, Maine Snowmobile Association

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