

St Lawrence County Snowmobile Association Grooming Policy and Program Plan

Name of Grooming Area/Club: _____

Date Reviewed: _____

Grooming Coordinator: _____

One of the most visible and costly efforts undertaken by a snowmobile association is a trail-grooming program. Our trail program has grown dramatically over the last several years. Association members have the responsibility of operating and maintaining their equipment. **(Treat your equipment as if it were your own. Take pride in what you do and prevent unnecessary damage to them. Leave the machine in a clean condition for the next operator.)** Your main responsibility and priority is the maintenance of State Funded Trails our association has been awarded.

While there is no perfect way to manage grooming operations, basic guidelines help the management of trail grooming equipment and operations. What equipment to purchase, who will operate it, how will it be scheduled, where it will be stored, and how it will be maintained are all critically important decisions that must be made to properly manage grooming equipment. While some of these decisions are far-removed from the grooming equipment operator, a basic understanding of the “big picture” helps facilitate a better, more effective grooming operation.

Good quality grooming doesn't just happen by chance and will not be assured simply because new, fancy, or expensive equipment has been acquired for the grooming program. Successful grooming programs require a great deal of communication, education, planning and management.

SLCSA would like to take this time to “THANK” all our volunteers for the dedication and hard work you put in to maintaining our trails. Without you, we would not have the excellent trail system we have today!

By agreement of the St Lawrence County Snowmobile Association, Inc. and the executive board the following policies and procedures have been established:

Purpose

It is the purpose of this Grooming Policy and Program document to state the goals and objectives of the association's grooming program, list the topics and policies that all association members involved with grooming need to understand, and provide details that explains what each grooming person needs to do. It is the listing of topics, policies, and details that forms the basis of grooming program equipment operators training that is the responsibility of the **St Lawrence County Snowmobile Association, Inc.**

Goals and Objectives

Meet the legal mandate of the association in providing annual training to those members participating in grooming of county trails.

Provide leadership and guidance of members in the association's grooming program by stating program procedures, guidelines, rules, policies, and other expectations that currently are part of the grooming program.

Determine the procedures and tasks experienced grooming members must complete to maintain their current status.

Determine procedures and tasks for other members that are not currently part of the association's grooming program and encourage other members to help.

Given the equipment available, a tentative schedule of grooming responsibilities and machine team assignments will be made each fall prior to operator training.

Preserve Trail Grooming Quality thru long term planning and goals.

Review

The Association's Grooming Program is subject to review each year in the fall, before annual training of experienced and inexperienced groomer operators.

Program Management

The Association's grooming program is to be managed by St Lawrence County Snowmobile Association Executive board and implemented by Groomer Coordinator for each area.

Program Management will complete the following:

- Schedule equipment pre-season maintenance in the spring and fall. (Scheduled Maintenance Records will increase the value of our equipment when we are ready to sell it.)
- Solicit from the membership those members that want to continue serving as an equipment operator and secure new operators that want to enter the Grooming Program.
- Schedule training of all equipment operators following the training guidelines as issued in the Grooming Program Plan.
- Determine equipment operator teams.
- Design a grooming territory responsibility for each grooming team. Review the grooming territory each fall along with the grooming program and submit a tentative weekly grooming schedule for each piece of your equipment at fall meeting.
- Seek Executive Board and/or association approval for those things deemed necessary for the smooth operation of the Grooming Program.
- Collect all paperwork from each grooming machine including maintenance records and activity logs. Enter activity log data into appropriate work logs as necessary to meet funding program mandates. Review maintenance logs to determine if operators completed tasks as expected and determine if major equipment repair is necessary. Review how to fill out paperwork each year at fall meeting.
- Make recommendations to the association of grooming equipment revisions.
- Work with Trail Coordinator to submit a work plan for trail development or maintenance to verify permissions needed to complete work and for budget approval.
- Work with Trail Coordinator to submit to the Executive Board; budget plans for trail work and maintenance of equipment that would need association approval for the next year's budget at the April annual meeting. (Anything over \$250 needs approval).

Drug/Alcohol Policy

All areas have a Zero Tolerance regarding the use of alcohol or drugs when on duty. All areas also specify a period of time prior to a grooming shift where alcohol cannot be consumed to prevent operators from showing up for their shift under the influence of or impaired by alcohol or drugs. Some areas go as far as to not allow groomer operators to run their shift if they have a hangover since the Grooming Coordinators believe this also constitutes an "impaired" and therefore unsafe situation. Zero Tolerance means there is no second chance. Operators are terminated for their first infraction since the safety risks and liability associated with impaired groomer operators can be extremely significant.

Passenger in the Groomer Policy

While some areas routinely groom with two people in the grooming tractor (a driver and an assistant), other areas prohibit the operator from carrying passengers not involved with the grooming operation. The most important aspect of whether or not to allow passengers is a safety issue. First, is the operator competent enough to not be distracted by a passenger? Second, the Grooming Coordinator should know beforehand that there is a passenger so, in the event of an emergency, rescuers know how many people they need to retrieve. SLCSA agrees any member in good standing can be a second passenger in the groomer.

Communications

Communications are so important to the success of any grooming program that many areas have established formal communication policies and procedures. All are based on the need to communicate, communicate, and communicate some more! Operators must communicate the condition of equipment to other operators and the Coordinator. They must communicate the condition of the trails they have been over to relief operators and the Coordinator. They must communicate anything (weather, large groups, trail conditions, hazards, neighbor areas that have not been groomed, etc.) they even slightly suspect to be pertinent to the overall grooming program to the Coordinator. They must communicate to someone (dispatcher, family, or Coordinator) when they depart on a grooming run, their planned route, as well as their safe return. And when in doubt, they must feel safe to ASK, because there is no dumb question!

Grooming programs should invest in good communications equipment-whether cell phones, satellite phones, or two-way radios-to help ensure successful and effective communications within the program.

Grooming Teams

Attach a current list of groomers that will be operating equipment for the current year in your area. A sample list will be given for your area showing Name, Address, Phone Number, Email, Social Security Number, and classes that they have attended such as AANR, Chainsaw Class, Groomer Certification, Etc. This list should be updated yearly.

Area 1: Black Lake- (Dairyland)

Area 2: Heuvelton- (Punchlock Traveler's)

Area 3: Edwards/Russell- (Edward's Snowmobile Club)

Area 4: Clare/Degrasse

Area 5: Cranberry/Wanakena/Star Lake- (Cranberry Lake Mountaineer's)

Area 6: Childwold- (Childwold Snopacker's)

Area 7: Seveys Corners/Shurtleff's

Area 8: Colton

Area 9: Parishville

Area 10: Tritown- (Tritown Trailblazers)

Area 11: Madrid/Morley- (Grasse River Groomers)

Groomer Team Coordinator Responsibilities

Be the primary contact for each operator assigned to the machine.

Respond when contacted by the operator in the event of a breakdown, an accident or a trail condition that cannot be resolved by the operator.

Organize groomer team to follow thru with grooming program management requests.

Becoming a Groomer Operator

Any association member in good standing may become a groomer operator. A groomer operator has to make a commitment to be available as part of a regular grooming schedule and to assist in repairs when that becomes necessary.

Groomer Operator Requirements

New Operators:

- When possible attend the state-sponsored groomer operator safety course as a groomer operator.
- Become a grooming partner to work with an experienced groomer operator to learn how to groom snowmobile trails and take care of the equipment.
- Accompany an experienced groomer operator in the machine a minimum of 40 hours while it is grooming club trails until being deemed able to operate the machine alone as judged by the experienced groomer operator.
- Attend spring and fall preseason equipment maintenance work details.
- Attend the club sponsored annual groomer operator training held before the season begins.
- Attend the Chainsaw Safety Class
- Groomers operating on state land or easements must attend the State AANR Class.

Experienced Operators:

- Attend spring and fall preseason equipment maintenance work details.
- Attend the club sponsored annual groomer operator training held before the season begins.
- Attend the state-sponsored groomer operator safety course if possible once every three calendar years.

Grooming Schedule

Each fall prior to the beginning of the grooming season, the grooming team coordinators will meet to determine appropriate groomer territory assignments for the year.

Scheduling is an important part of grooming. It will be up to each team coordinator to determine a specific grooming time schedule for their specific machine. This grooming schedule will be submitted to executive board before grooming season starts each year. This will help each groomer know schedules for other areas around them. Once the grooming commitment is made, it is important to follow through. Keep in mind that, weather, changes in traffic patterns and equipment repair can upset the best laid plans. If this occurs contact the SLCSA coordinator and the closest coordinator to cover your territory until machine is operational.

Groomer operators should avoid grooming in the territory assigned to another machine unless requested by the team coordinator to do so. If you see an area that has not been groomed contact your groomer coordinator so they can contact that area to see if they need help.

Groomer Operator Responsibilities

Each groomer operator is responsible for following the procedures listed in each category below each and every time a machine is taken onto the trails.

- Pre-Grooming Checklist
- Groomer trail operation procedures
- Amount of snow in drag
- Road crossings
- Bridge crossings
- Post-Grooming Checklist
- Work with Trail Coordinator for signing of trails (NYSSA asked us to add this to groomer responsibilities but SLCSA feels that the groomers have enough responsibility and trail coordinators and local clubs should help groomers with signing.)

Meeting Oncoming Traffic

It is New York State Law that the groomer always has the right of way. It is essential to stay on the trail base at all times with the grooming equipment. Meeting oncoming traffic on a narrow trail: the groomer slows down, and if necessary comes to a stop. Allow traffic to go around you. If needed, maneuver the groomer to make room for traffic “only” if you know the snow base will support the equipment.

Recommended Equipment

First Aid Kit	Spare Batteries	Fire Extinguisher
Foil Blanket	Weatherproof Matches	Chains
Flares	Hydraulic Hoses/Fittings	Pry Bar
Warm Spare Clothing	Tools	Paper/Pen
Towels	Snow Scraper	Plate for Jack
Hand Cleaner	Hi-Lift Jack	Tree Strap
Oil	Extra Fuel	Extra Trail Signs/Stakes
Sledge Hammer	Colored Plastic Tape	Butane Torch/Heater
4 Reflective Traffic Cones	Drinking Water	High Energy Food

Repairs

Invariably when using equipment that is under the stress and strain of trail grooming, repairs will be required. Repairs are not the normal routine maintenance activities that every groomer operator needs to know and follow. Repairs result from breakdowns; repairs need immediate attention.

Repairs are the responsibility of the entire grooming team, not the team coordinator. Each groomer operator is expected to assist whenever possible to complete repairs.

If a breakdown occurs that does not disable the groomer, report the breakdown as soon as possible to the team leader so that repairs can be done quickly.

Disabling Breakdowns

If a breakdown disables the groomer so that it cannot be moved back to its place of storage, the groomer operator needs to follow these guidelines:

Secure the area around the machine so that snowmobile traffic does not hit the disabled machine. Use cones and caution tape provided in the groomer to mark the presence of the disabled machine. Be sure these markings carry far enough in each direction approaching the groomer so that snowmobile operators will be able to react to safely get around the machine.

Use the camera to document the condition of the disabling breakdown scene.

Contact the team coordinator and/or designated association members. Provide them with information on location, your condition, obstructions to snowmobile traffic flow on the trail around the groomer, and advice on whether repairs can be made at the current location or if the machine needs to be moved to a location to either be repaired or transported.

Stops

A **planned stop** is one to make checks on the exterior of the groomer or to inspect the trail to determine if drag settings are being effective. Planned stops need to be made in locations where snowmobile traffic can easily see the machine and its drag, and can easily pass the groomer while it is stopped.

An **unplanned stop** is one that is unexpected, and results from either a disabling breakdown or an accident. The operator needs to do all it can to maneuver the groomer as far off the trail as possible and follow the procedures listed above.

Groomer involved in an accident

First responsibility is to the condition of the other parties. Use the cell phone to contact emergency response personnel (including law enforcement) and the team coordinator. Give accurate information of the location and an assessment of the condition of the other parties.

Once the accident has been resolved, use the camera to document the accident scene. Get information such as name and address of the other party in the accident.

Groomer comes upon an accident scene

First responsibility is to the condition of those involved in the accident. Be ready to provide whatever assistance as necessary. When the accident scene has been secured or your services are no longer needed, use the camera to document the accident scene.

Observations of trail conditions

As the groomer operator, you could be the first person to identify areas in the trail that need the club's attention. Examples are missing signs and blown down trees. It is up to the groomer operator to take the first mitigating action. Each groomer carries extra signs and a chain saw to be used when necessary. If the condition is one that cannot be taken care of by the groomer operator, then contact the team leader as soon as possible. A groomer should use their best judgment and training when operating a chainsaw alone or with an assistant.

Groomer Operator Dismissal Policy

Dismissal of a groomer operator from the Association may be recommended by the Executive Committee after due process has been followed concerning the accusations and the right of the accused to appeal the decision. The recommendation will then be presented to the Association at a regular or special meeting for their vote. This vote must be carried by two thirds of the members present. **Reasons for expulsion are:**

- **ABSOLUTELY NO ALCOHOL-Before or during your operating the groomer-None to be carried in the groomer.**
- **Misuse of Equipment**
- **Multiple acts detrimental to the AANR**
- **Violations of by-laws**
- **Willful misconduct against SLCSA and its members in good standing**
- **Conviction of violating snowmobile laws of DEC Parks, State Laws, Town and Village Ordinance.**

Appendix:

SAMPLE FORMS

The attached sample forms will be used to help Grooming Coordinators and operators with the important task of record keeping. We know you already have a lot of forms for trail reimbursement. These additional forms have a specific purpose to organize grooming schedules, equipment maintenance records to help with resale, and groomer operator training records that are becoming more recognized and may be required in the future.

- Tentative Weekly Grooming Schedule for 2008-2009 season for machine in your area
- Daily Grooming Log
- Monthly Maintenance Records-(Includes pre-season maintenance spring and fall)
- Grooming Equipment Maintenance Records
- List of Grooming Operators (Last years list will be provided to update)
- Groomer Operator Training Record
- Work Plan for any Trail Development or Maintenance