



## ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY SNOWMOBILE ASSOCIATION

*Dedicated to the Preservation of Snowmobiling*

P.O. Box 421 Canton, NY 13617

### Satellite STEP Signage Plan

**County Organization:** St. Lawrence County Snowmobile Association

**Member Clubs:** Boondockers, Childwold SnoPackers, Colton SnoSkippers, Cranberry Lake Mountaineers, Dairyland Snowmobile Club, Edwards Snowmobile Club, Grasse River Groomers, Hermon Sledders, Heuvelton Punchlock Travellers, and Tri-Town Trailblazers.

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**Goal:** to achieve understanding of and conformity to the NYS OPRHP trail signing guidelines booklet through a county-wide STEP Signage program

#### Strategies of the Plan:

- Secure volunteers from member clubs to serve as trained “safe trails advisors.” Per LOU each member club has a Trail Coordinator. This person or a capable designated alternate will be on the Advisor Roster for training and assignment as A Safe Trail Advisor (STA). This should result in a 10+ team and we will assess the need to add or subtract based on inspection coverages as determined by the Plan Manager.
- Plan Manager will review all reports for completeness and correctness prior to forwarding to the SLCSA Board and NYSSA Trail Coordinator for file.
- SLSCA will contact the NYSSA Trail Coordinator to schedule STEP Signage training for all advisors.
- PM and Alternate will provide STA/host club partnering assignments as early in season or prior to season as possible for maximum benefit. Target dates for completion of Initial Trail Advisement is 30 Jan of each season. If low snow is present, PM can modify Advisement to road crossings and critical areas.

- All Assigned Advisors will complete program tasks according to training program guidelines. Reports will be presented to SLCSA Board via E mail through the PM. All with major inconsistencies are reported to PM, SLCSA Board, and NYSSA Trails Coordinator immediately
- Documentation/signing information forms are completed and filed according to training program guidelines. Copies to be given to SLCSA Secretary for file.
- Additional Strategies of SLCSA:
  - To provide better Destination Signage to improve the riding experience.
  - Strives to provide a uniform signing package in and out of the “State Land” and still stay within the limits of its VSA.
  - Utilize STA’s to investigate any unsafe trail reports to get “boots on the ground” and assistance on the way if needed.

STA’s from outside the County will not be assigned to clubs in a County that has established and approved Satellite STEP Signage Plan. Volunteers participating in a County Satellite STEP program would not be assigned a club outside the County, unless they agree to such an assignment (thus becomes a statewide STA).

STEP is an educational program, but this year NYSSA is including a process to follow regarding deficiencies and the enforcement if not corrected. Please see attached **NYSSA STEP Trail Inspection Inconsistent Trail Signage Procedure Sequence** for greater detail. Information generated from STEP remains with NYSSA and its member clubs, but also with Parks. Consistent trail signing statewide is something all club volunteers should comprehend and agree with. STEP is a program that should help clubs to achieve this goal. At the same time, education of the OPRHP trail signing guidelines can serve to reduce risks facing clubs in maintaining and signing their trails.

SLCSA end goal is to provide a user friendly, safe trail system for all rider groups. STA’s will work with and advise all areas to ensure these trails are up to standard in a friendly and professional manner, as we are in this together. Deficiencies will be promptly addressed by corrections or trail modifications / temporary closures until such time conditions can be remedied.

Teamwork makes the Dream Work

SLCSA Board  
1-15-2017

## NYSSA STEP Trail Inspection Inconsistent Trail Signage Procedure Sequence

### A: Purpose:

In regard to snowmobile trail safety signage, NYS Law reads:

*“Snowmobile trail maintenance entities (clubs and municipalities which maintain trails) play an important role in the trail system. As general guidelines, to further promote the proper and safe operation of snowmobiles and the other purposes as set forth in section 21.01 of this article (Parks & Rec Law, Title D, Section 21), snowmobile trail maintenance entities should strive to: clearly mark and delineate state designated snowmobile trails for which they are responsible; encourage riders to participate in available snowmobile educational programs to make riders aware of the inherent risks associated with the sport; equip trail maintenance vehicles that they operate with such warning implements or devices as specified by law; hold training sessions each season, for operators of trail maintenance equipment concerning the proper operation of such vehicles; provide education for all other personnel charged with trail maintenance, inspection or patrol duties as to methods to be used for summoning aid in emergencies; and maintain for public use trail area information showing the following: (a) the location of state designated trails; and (b) the status of each trail as open or closed. Nothing in this section shall create a legal duty or obligation beyond that which may already exist.”*

Acknowledging that the New York State snowmobile clubs are to strive to sign their respective trail systems using the NYS OPRHP Snowmobile Trail Signing Handbook as a guideline tool and that the club, NYSSA, as well as SLEDNY, help to educate snowmobile club volunteers to the guidelines in place by making available educational sessions on signing and groomer operation classes, NYSSA and SLEDNY use the existing Safe Trails Education Program (STEP) to assist the clubs in meeting the common goal of having the safest trails possible. STEP classes are held throughout the State each year where clubs are encouraged to send members to learn what the guidelines mean and how they help volunteers better comprehend signing snowmobile trails with safety in mind. STEP classes offer additional training to those volunteers who have attended the class to be considered a “STEP Adviser”, one who is interested and able to go out on trail inspections to help better educate club volunteers with any signing issues that they may have while working with the club representatives on-hand to correct any signage that does not follow the guidelines. Groomer operator training classes are separately offered statewide for club equipment operators to attend.

This procedure was developed to enrich the safety of the snowmobile trail system maintained by New York State Trail Maintenance Entities (TMEs) and to accompany the STEP program’s procedures already in place. This process is applicable for noted unsigned situations discovered during a scheduled NYSSA STEP inspection by an official STEP Adviser. This will include situations where the NYS OPRHP Snowmobile Trail Signing Handbook guidelines were simply not followed (such as no signage or improper signage that creates a confusing situation for the snowmobile operator,) as well as situations where signage is absent due to occurrences beyond the control of the responsible TME (such as a storm or vandalism) that results in an area of trail not being adequately marked. Correcting the signage on areas of trails that are inconsistent with the guidelines as noted above, is the goal of the notifications, as clubs should be willing to attend to them in a reasonable period of time. NYSSA and SLEDNY are not responsible for signing trails, but due to the reasons stated above, along with the fact that the snowmobile trail liability insurance is issued through NYSSA, it is in the best interest of NYSSA and SLEDNY to provide education and to encourage the TMEs to properly sign for the safest possible trails for the snowmobile community to use and enjoy.

## B: Procedure:

When a STEP Adviser finds trail signage to be severely inconsistent with the guidelines, they contact NYSSA Trail Coordinator (TC) within 48 hours of such observation of missing Stop signs and/or Stop Ahead signs, missing object marker signs, missing signs alerting riders to any significant changes in the direction or character of the trail, or other instances such as impassable bridges/culverts or downed trees or limbs blocking the trail. The TC will contact the respective NYSSA District Director (if one is in place) AND the club within 48 hours of each notification provided by the STEP Adviser. The TC will also contact OPRHP and the Sponsor to immediately notify them of the issue of signage that is inconsistent with the guidelines, as OPRHP and the Sponsors are the agencies charged with oversight to the Snowmobile Trail Fund Program, which includes trail signage. The club must respond to the NYSSA TC within 48 hours of its intent to correct the identified issue(s) within 7 days or ask for an appeal of the STEP Adviser's findings. Failure of the club to respond to the TC within 48 hours of that 1<sup>st</sup> notification will result in the 2<sup>nd</sup> notification action automatically going into effect (see 2<sup>nd</sup> Notification below). Any subsequent actions (or inactions) by the club after the notification process either full compliance with the guidelines, or continued inconsistency(ies) with the guidelines, will be passed onto the District Director involved, OPRHP and the Sponsor.

**NOTE:** All TMEs always have the option and are always invited to ride along with the STEP Advisers when any inspections take place and correct any deficiencies when they are discovered.

## C: Process

1. **First Notification: Action:** Warning is given to the club to correct the signing within seven (7) days of the club's notification. A verbal and/or written warning from the NYSSA Trail Coordinator (TC) of the signing inconsistency(ies) will be sent to each of the club's officers (those that are on file with NYSSA Office), with a directive to correct the signing issues(s) within seven (7) days. The TC will also provide an explanation of the consequences to the club if corrective action is not taken, along with formal documentation (electronic or written) of the trail signing observations that are inconsistent with the guidelines. This will also include the Inconsistent Trail Signage Procedure Sequence document. A follow-up trail inspection will be completed by the same STEP Adviser, if available, along with a second STEP Adviser, if possible.
2. **Second Notification: ACTION:** After the follow-up inspection, if the identified issue(s) was not corrected, barring any unseen circumstances, NYSSA will revoke the club's privilege to issue membership vouchers (required for registration discount) for 30 days from the date of the 2nd notification, and provides the club with seven (7) days to correct the identified signing issue(s). In addition, notification will be sent to NYS OPRHP, requesting that they send a copy to the club's Sponsor(s) of the non-compliant club's continued trail signage that is inconsistent with the guidelines. It should be noted that this notification must be for the same issue(s) that was not corrected after the first notification. The STEP Adviser will provide the 2nd notification of the same issues(s) to the NYSSA Trail Coordinator (TC) within 48 hours. The TC will then notify the club's officers within 48 hours. The club will have 48 hours to respond to the TC of their intent to correct these continued issues or request an appeal of the STEP inspection findings. A re-inspection by the original STEP Adviser, if available, will be planned along with the TC (as noted above, club representatives are invited and encouraged to accompany on the re-

inspection). NOTE: If club does not respond to the TC, a recommendation to initiate the 3rd notification's action will be made (see 3rd notification below).

- 3. Third Notification: ACTION:** After the 2nd re-inspection is conducted and the issue(s) was not corrected, NYSSA will take action and revoke the club's privilege of issuing membership vouchers (required for registration discount) by suspending the club's ability to produce vouchers for one calendar year from the date of the first notification. Also, the possibility exists that the club's "membership in good standing" status within NYSSA could be revoked by the NYSSA Board of Directors. It will be clearly stated that such a revocation would put the club at risk of losing all benefits provided through NYSSA, including the possibility of placing the club outside of the NYSSA trail liability insurance policy coverage. In addition, this final notification will be sent to NYS OPRHP noting the change in the club's status, requesting they send a copy to the club's Sponsor(s), notifying them that the club has disregarded opportunities to correct these trail signage issue(s) and as a result, what action was taken by the NYSSA Board of Directors.

Further, NYSSA will recommend that OPRHP and the Sponsor suspend the club as a Trail Maintenance Entity (TME) in the following season and all of the funded trails associated with that club being transferred to a neighboring club that is willing to maintain them as safe, signed trails. The club will be notified of its possible loss of rights to operate as a NYSSA club affiliate, which would take place at the next NYSSA Board of Directors meeting, where the Board will decide by a majority vote to take action against the club. The club will have the opportunity to address the NYSSA Board directly at the meeting prior to the vote, to explain why the club did not follow the signing guidelines initially, and why the club did not address the notifications they received. This will be the club's opportunity to appeal to the NYSSA Board prior to this action being taken. The NYSSA Board will take the information provided by the club, if any, along with the STEP Adviser(s) documentation and the Trail Coordinator's documented review of the process with the club under advisement when they vote on the final action. It should be noted that this must be for the same trail signing issue(s) that was not corrected throughout steps 1 and 2.

- 4.** In order for the club to be reinstated as a "NYSSA member-club in good standing" after the one (1) year suspension or any other actions taken by the NYSSA Board, a re-inspection by a NYSSA STEP Adviser, NYSSA Trail Coordinator and club official proving that the signing issue(s) were corrected, must be completed. If lack of snow or if the process takes the inspections past the season ending dates, the process will continue into the next season where a scheduled re-inspection will take place before the official opening of the club's trails to determine if the deficiencies were satisfactorily corrected. That proof will be given to the NYSSA Board of Directors to vote on reinstatement, if the 3<sup>rd</sup> notification process was enacted.

Notification of the club's reinstatement as a "NYSSA member-club in good standing" will be forwarded to OPRHP requesting that they notify the club's Sponsor(s) right away of status change.

**NOTE TO DIRECTORS:** A simplified directive of this procedure process will be included as a priority item in the LOU. **APPROVED** by far majority at the Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014 NYSSA Board of Directors meeting, Syracuse, NY.