



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Outdoor Enthusiasts Hit Their Stride

JAMES L. SEWARD January 2, 2009

Now that we are firmly entrenched in winter, it's time for many people to head outdoors and embrace the season. Despite the cold temperatures, many individuals who live in upstate New York look forward to the snow and cold conditions for so many reasons.

Many great adventures await residents of this region, and they can start right here in our own backyard. Skiing, snowmobiling, hiking, and ice fishing are just of the activities so many of us enjoy. These outdoor pursuits are not unique to our region, but certainly can be enjoyed to their fullest right here. I have worked very hard in recent years to protect the rights of sportsmen and ensure that these interests will continue to be available for generations to come.

One group that has come under pressure recently is snowmobilers. The state's bureaucrats have done all they can to make it more difficult to enjoy this great pastime. First, budget officials raided the trail fund last year. I was outraged and angry when I found out about it, and quickly threw my support behind legislation to return the funds to snowmobile clubs across the state that use the money to make sure trails are well groomed and safe for use. The legislation also requires the commissioner of parks, recreation and historic preservation to submit a detailed report to the legislature accounting for all funds to be disbursed from the trail fund each fiscal year.

Snowmobiling generates over \$875 million in economic activity for New York State each year. Many local businesses in the 51st senatorial district and across upstate New York rely heavily on snowmobiling related tourism to make it through the winter season. Quite often the snowmobiling season can be cut short due to the weather, and state officials shouldn't make things even more difficult on small businessmen who rely on this important tourist activity to survive.

This is not the first time the state legislature has come to the aid of snowmobilers and related businesses. In 2005, I was a co-sponsor of legislation that created the 'Snowmobile Rights and Responsibilities Act' to promote new safety and trail maintenance guidelines. The law was designed to increase club membership and thus increase participation in trail maintenance. I was also a co-sponsor of legislation (S.7500) that would establish a non-trail snowmobile registration for snowmobiles that would be used solely for the purpose of gaining access to hunting and fishing areas. I have also asked the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) to revisit its decision to cap the mileage of the state's snowmobile trails.

If you are heading out on the trails make sure safety is a top priority. New York is a leader in snowmobile education and offers operator training for snowmobilers of all ages beginning at age 10. Courses are taught by experienced snowmobilers who volunteer their time to make the sport safer. Successful completion of the course results in the award of a New York State Snowmobile Safety Certificate.

Youth ages 14 through 17 years old may operate a snowmobile, on lands upon which snowmobiling is allowed, without adult or other supervision if they have completed a snowmobile safety training course recognized by the State of New York. If youths ages 14

through 17 years have not completed the training course, they may operate snowmobiles if accompanied by persons at least 18 years of age. Youths ages 10 through 13 may operate snowmobiles, on lands upon which snowmobiling is allowed if they have completed a snowmobile safety training course recognized by the State of New York and are accompanied by a person who is at least 18 years of age. Children less than 10 years old or less than age 14 without a safety certificate may operate a snowmobile only on lands owned or leased by their parents or guardians.

Stay safe and enjoy the great outdoors!

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