

Snowmobilers Join Governor in Historic Announcement

Guarantees Registration Fees Will Be Dedicated to Trail Maintenance

State Funding for Local Trail Improvements Nearly Doubled

July 10, 2008, Albany, NY --- The New York Snowmobile Association (NYSSA), the volunteer organization representing more than 100,000 New York snowmobilers throughout the Empire State, praised Governor David Paterson for his announcement that the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) will put in place new procedures to help ensure that funds paid to the state for snowmobile registration fees in a given year will be spent specifically on trail maintenance and other related program activities. As a result, the state will be able to nearly double the amount of funding it is projected to provide for local snowmobile trail maintenance grants from \$2.87 million in 2007-08 to \$5.34 million in 2008-09.

"We commend Governor Paterson for taking this action to guarantee that monies dedicated from snowmobile registration fees will be spent specifically on snowmobile trail maintenance and safety," said Mike Fischer, President of New York State Snowmobile Association (www.nyssnowassoc.org). "This is great news for the state's 100,000 snowmobilers and the upstate businesses that rely on the \$1 billion snowmobiling adds to the state's economy."

The amount of funding provided each year for local snowmobile trail maintenance grants is determined based upon projected revenues from snowmobile registration fees. Previously, the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) set grant levels and reimbursements in the fall of each fiscal year based on its initial revenue estimates. If income from registration fees came in higher than projected, grant payments were not enhanced to reflect this increase.

Under the new procedures announced by Governor Paterson and NYSSA today, at the end of each fiscal year, OPRHP will reevaluate the amount of revenue the state has received from snowmobile registration fees. Surplus funds will then be dedicated to trail maintenance efforts through additional grant payments. This will help ensure that, going forward, money from these registration fees will be spent in a way that specifically benefits snowmobilers.

Based on a review of revenues collected in previous years, as well as the current balance in the account built up during the past, OPRHP projects that it can nearly double its 2008-09 local trail maintenance grant payments to \$5.34 million. This represents an increase of nearly \$2.5 million or over 85 percent. Over the next several years, the remaining excess balance will be spent down – solely on trail maintenance activities and related program activities.

Governor Paterson also announced other actions to ensure that increased funding will be available for local grants. Currently, OPRHP and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) are authorized to spend \$1.1 million annually from the Snowmobile Trail Development and Maintenance Account on activities those agencies undertake to help maintain approximately 2,500 miles of state-owned snowmobile trails. Over the next

three years, Parks and DEC will reduce the amount of funding they are authorized to draw from this account by a cumulative total of \$1 million (\$200,000 in 2008-09, \$400,000 in 2009-10, and \$400,000 in 2010-11). This money will be used instead to help fund local trail grants and reimbursements.

However, state officials confirm that reducing the amount that OPRHP and DEC are authorized to draw off the account will not have any adverse impact on the maintenance of state-owned trails. Through increased efficiencies and the identification of other financial resources, these agencies will still be able to maintain the high quality of New York's state-owned trail system even after this change in funding structure.

"NYSSA has been very concerned about the projected funding levels for the upcoming season's trail fund grants. We are pleased the Governor recognized the serious negative implications a shortfall in funding would have caused and the impact it would have had on the snowmobiling public. We'd also like to thank the many state legislators who supported us, including Assemblywoman RoAnn Destito and Senators Joe Griffo and Darrel Aubertine," said Fischer.

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Rory P. Whelan
P. 518-462-0603
C. 516-848-7158