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Snowmobile Trails Run 700 Miles

Snowmobilers bound for state parks, forests, and game areas this winter will find during the same areas and trails open to them as they did during last season, reports the Department of Natural Resources.

Awaiting snowmobilers on northern Michigan's state forest scene, are 33 marked trails which collectively span nearly 700 miles. The permanent trails, nine of them in the upper peninsula and 24 in northern lower Michigan, do not come under snow depth

restrictions for snowmobiling, as is the rule at state parks and game areas.

More than 500 miles of the state forest trails are located in the northern Lower Peninsula.

UNDER A MAJOR new development, Heath International, Inc., of Richmond, has volunteered to man crews and special equipment to keep those routes in top condition for snowmobiling use and safety this winter.

The firm has also agreed to maintain a snowmobile trail at Hartwick Pines State Park this season.

Its trail-grooming effort has been worked out in cooperation with the DNR. Estimates indicate that Heath International's trail maintenance program in northern lower Michigan this winter will amount to more than \$100,000 in initial equipment costs and an additional \$50,000 in operating expenses.

DNR field foresters and other workers have opened the way for the firm's special maintenance equipment by clearing snowmobile trails to a width of 10 feet and by pruning the routes to a height of 10 feet. They have also posted directional signs and other markers on these state forest trails, in line with standards of the International Snowmobile Industry Association.

DESCRIPTIONS OF these routes and those in the Upper Peninsula are listed in free copies of this season's "Snowmobile Trails Directory" for state forests which may be obtained from the DNR's Forestry Division in Lansing. Its publications room in that same city and DNR field offices in northern Michigan, including one at Pontiac.

Free individual maps of each state forest trail are also available from those staff and field offices of the DNR.

Snowmobilers who enjoy more freedom of movement than trail riding offers can take to the open country of northern Michigan's state forest system, which covers about 3.7 million acres of backwood expanses. They must, however, steer clear of state forest campgrounds, natural areas, and other such sites which are posted against snowmobiling.

When and where snow depths build up to four inches, family-style snowmobiling will get under way at state parks in Michigan which, overall, show some 167,000 acres open to the non-competitive use of motor sleds this season.

MOST STATE parks — 68 of them — will offer cross-country trails for snowmobiling. However, in line with last season, such state park sites as dedicated natural areas, campgrounds, and outdoor centers are being posted as closed to snowmobilers to protect their special values and maintain the minimum safety standards for other winter recreationists.

This winter's snowmobiling areas will cover about 80,800 acres at 15 state parks in the upper peninsula, some 27,800 acres at 21 units in the northern Lower Peninsula, and

58,740 acres at 32 parks and recreation areas in southern Michigan.

These state parks are not included on the list because their layouts do not lend themselves to snowmobiling use. Harrisville, South Higgins Lake, Meigs, Mitchell, Ostego Lake, Traverse City, White Cloud, Wilson, Baraga, Fort Wilkins, and Palms Book.

Compared with the winter of 1969 - 70, snowmobiling use more than doubled last season at state parks under the DNR's "open-area" program which was introduced in the parks during late January. DNR park personnel credit the liberalized policy for easing trespass problems on private lands and they add that it worked favorably within state parks themselves.

WITH SNOWMOBILERS spread over more lands and limited to operating their machines when at least four inches of snow covered the ground, this general comment was common among park men as they summed up the open-area program:

"Once the snow had melted, it was very difficult to see that any machines were in the areas at all."

Snowmobilers are again urged this season to contact DNR personnel at state parks before they leave home to learn whether there is enough snow cover for them to run their machines in these public areas.

They are also reminded that vehicle entrance permits must be purchased for snowmobilers which are to be operated in sectors of state parks and recreation areas where these permits are normally required. The permits are also required of cars, pickups, and other vehicles which are used to transport snowmobilers into state parks and recreation areas.

LIMITED snowmobiling areas and trails will be opened at several state game areas on Jan. 1, provided there is enough snow cover then (four inches or more).

Within these state game areas, the DNR has again designated 10 cross-country tracts for snowmobilers, covering a total of 20,600 acres: Allegan, Shiawassee River, Dansville, Gourdneck, Minden City, Murphy Lake, and Rogue River.

About 60 miles of marked trails will be available for snowmobiling at the Barry, Shiawassee River, Flat River, Port Huron, and Rogue River state game areas in southern Michigan. Given enough of that white stuff after the first of the year, there also will be more than 200 miles of unplowed county roads for snowmobilers to use in 17 other southern state game areas.

As with all state forest lands, there is no use charge for snowmobiling on marked trails or within designated areas of state game areas. However, snowmobilers are required by law to keep their machines on designated trails and roads within southern game areas.

The strict rule is primarily aimed at protecting concentrations of deer and other animals from being disturbed by the sound and movement of snow machines, and at preventing snowmobile damage to wildlife food patches and other such game habitat.

The DNR's wildlife division in Lansing has a limited supply of free individual maps showing special snowmobile areas and trails within state game areas. Snowmobilers are urged to limit their requests for these maps to the particular areas where they plan to go.



WINTER'S FIRST freeze of inland waters may not be the "seal" of approval for outdoorsmen. It takes prolonged freezing temperatures to produce solid ice. Look for bluish ice as a safety sign. But beware of dark spots, honey-combed ice, squishy and broken spots around shore, inlets and outlets. (DNR)

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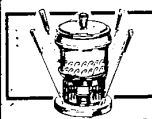
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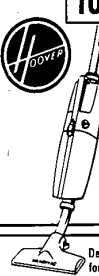
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