



# NEWS RELEASE

## *Lolo National Forest*

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## Snowmobile Grooming and Avalanche Advisories Underway

Missoula, MT. – Recent snowfall has allowed the Missoula Snowgoers to begin grooming the snowmobile trail system in the Lolo Pass area on the Missoula and Powell ranger districts. The West Central Montana Avalanche Center has also begun issuing advisories.

The grooming of the trail system by the Snowgoers is permitted by the Lolo and Nez Perce Clearwater National Forests and supported by the Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks.

Under the Special Use permit administered by the Forest Service, the Missoula Snowgoers may begin grooming any time after December, 1 each year. Typically the Lolo Pass and Elk Meadows areas are groomed first and the remainder of the system groomed as snow accumulates at the lower elevations.

Although some trails will not yet be groomed due to lack of snow at lower elevations, all gates providing access to the snowmobile trail system are closed to prevent vehicle access and ensure the roads/trails are available for snowmobiling. If trail restrictions are necessary for administrative use, maps with the trail restrictions will be posted at affected trailheads, the Lolo Pass Visitor Center, and the Lolo Hot Springs Resort. The maps will be updated as restrictions change.

One change this year for use of snowmobile groomed trail has been put in place by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks: Those using the groomed snowmobile trails must purchase a Groomed Snowmobile Trail Pass. The pass is required for Montana Residents to recreate on groomed snowmobile trail systems in Montana. Passes can be purchased from local vendors or on-line. More information, a list of vendors and steps for online purchase can be found at: <http://stateparks.mt.gov/recreation/snowmobileProgram.html>

The **West Central Montana Avalanche Center** <http://www.missoulaavalanche.org> has also started operations, with three advisories a week planned --Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. The advisories are posted at [missoulaavalanche.org](http://missoulaavalanche.org). The Avalanche Center, in cooperation with the West Central Montana Avalanche Foundation and the Lochsa Powell Ranger District, will also once again have a beacon park in place near the Lolo Pass Visitors Center for those wanting to test and practice using their avalanche beacons <http://www.missoulaavalanche.org/beacon-training>. The beacon park will be available for use weeklong.

Winter recreation passes will be required to park at the Lolo Pass Visitors Center. Day and season passes will be available at the Visitor Center during normal hours of operation: Thursday through Monday from 0730 – 4:15 Pacific Time. After regular hours, only day passes will be available at the Visitor Center. Season and day passes will be available at Lolo Hot Springs, The Trailhead, Outdoor Supply and Rental in Trempers shopping center, as well as the Lolo National Forest Supervisors Office at Fort Missoula.

For additional information or questions please contact Carl Anderson at (406) 329-3976.