



Flathead National Forest

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Flathead National Forest Cites Snowmobilers Riding in Prohibited Areas

KALISPELL, MONTANA - January 27, 2015 – Snowmobiling on the National Forest System can create exciting adventures for recreationists and provide access to incredible landscapes. However, when snowmobilers venture into closed or unauthorized areas it can be damaging to habitat and wilderness characteristics.

Law Enforcement Officers from the Flathead National Forest recently observed snowmobile tracks leading up to and entering the wilderness area while patrolling the Mission Mountain Wilderness boundary on snowmobile. Later several snowmobiles exited the Mission Mountain Wilderness area. Seven violation notices were issued to the snowmobilers for possessing or using a motor vehicle or motorized equipment in a National Forest Wilderness. The violation notices carried a \$325 penalty, though the violations have a maximum penalty of up to \$5000 for an individual or \$10,000 for an organization or imprisonment for not more than six months or both. Four of the snowmobilers are from Kalispell and the other three are from the Polson area.

Forest Service Law Enforcement also issued violation notices to two snowmobile operators who violated the Badger - Two Medicine closure area on the Lewis and Clark National Forest. One individual from Raymond, Alberta stated he knew the area had been closed in the past but that someone told him it was no longer closed to snowmobiles. The individual was cited for operating a snowmobile in violation of the Motor Vehicle Use Map. Another individual from Cut Bank, Montana drove his snowmobile past two blaze orange boundary signs advising that the area was closed to motor vehicles. The individual stated he was unaware the area was closed to motorized vehicles. Forest Service Law Enforcement contacted the individual inside the closure area and cited him for operating a snowmobile in violation of the Motor Vehicle Use Map. Both citations included a \$175 fine.

Snowmobilers have a responsibility to know where they can and cannot operate on Forest Service land. The Forest Service provides free of charge an official Over Snow Vehicle Use Map available at all offices and details exactly where you can legally recreate. Individuals are also encouraged to call their local Forest Service office for current travel information.

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