



## Flathead National Forest

## Media Release

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### **Enjoy Snowmobiling on the Flathead National Forest**

### **Please Ride Responsibly and Know the Snow Before You Go!**

Snowmobile season is in full swing, and late season snowmobiling on the Flathead National Forest will continue as a recent court order from the United States District Court affirmed a US Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinion related to the Winter Motorized Recreation Plan (Amendment 24) of the Flathead National Forest Land Management and Resource Plan.

The general snowmobile season on approximately 800,000 acres of the Flathead National Forest is through March 31. Four areas will continue to remain open for late season snowmobiling into April and May. Over-snow access is also available, as conditions permit, on open roads unless the road is plowed or drivable by conventional motorized vehicles.

Late season snowmobiling is allowed in the following areas as conditions permit:

- Groomed routes in the Canyon Creek area through April 14,
- Sixmile area through April 30,
- Challenge/Skyland area through May 14, and
- Lost Johnny area through May 31.

Designated wilderness, such as the Bob Marshall, Great Bear and Mission Mountains Wildernesses, and the Jewel Basin Hiking Area are not open to snowmobiling. These areas have been closed to motorized use, including snowmobiles, from their inception in the mid-1960s through the 1970s.

Hungry Horse –Glacier View District Ranger Jimmy DeHerrera said, “Snowmobilers are encouraged to get a free Flathead National Forest Over-Snow-Vehicle-Use Map to determine where and when snowmobiling is allowed across the forest.” The maps provide information about

routes and groomed trails. The open and closed areas are clearly marked, in addition to information about snowmobile seasons. It is the rider's responsibility to know where open snowmobile terrain is on the ground. The maps are available at any Flathead National Forest Office.

The Forest conducts snowmobile-use monitoring efforts through aerial flights and the work of Forest snow rangers and law enforcement officers. Snow rangers work with snowmobilers, including local and regional clubs, to communicate responsible riding on the forest. **Responsible riders are encouraged to communicate any illegal activity to their local Forest Service office.**

The January 2010 order from the United States District Court for the District of Montana determined the Biological Opinion prepared by the US Fish and Wildlife Service complied with the Endangered Species Act. This order allows snowmobiling within designated late season areas on the Flathead National Forest to continue according to the Winter Motorized Recreation Plan (Amendment 24) to the Flathead National Forest Land Management Plan. The recent court order lifted an injunction requested by Swan View Coalition and Friends of the Wild Swan that prohibited late season snowmobiling on the forest.

All backcountry recreationists are reminded to stay current with local weather conditions and avalanche danger. The Flathead National Forest issues avalanche advisories for Northwest Montana on Tuesday and Friday mornings until April. Advisories include information about snowpack conditions, weather forecasts, and hazard evaluations. Visit [www.glacieravalanche.org](http://www.glacieravalanche.org) or call 406-257-8402 for these advisories. Anyone traveling in the backcountry will always need to make their own time and site specific avalanche hazard evaluations.

For more information about snowmobiling on the Flathead National Forest, please contact your local Forest Service office.

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