



State Senator
Rick Gudex

District 18

December 10, 2013

To: The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Small Business, and Tourism
From: Sen. Rick Gudex
Re: **Senate Bill 343**

This bill is the result of several years of negotiation, compromise, and hard work on behalf of many different groups and people, especially those inside the snowmobile community.

Snowmobiling is a huge economic driver in Wisconsin. Some estimates put the impact at over \$1 billion annually, thanks to the dollars injected into local economies through tourism, and because of the 25,000 miles of scenic beauty our trails provide each year. And the taxpayers of Wisconsin spend nothing to make this happen – it is all funded through licenses, fees, and gas taxes paid by the snowmobilers themselves.

But we have a problem: the snowmobile fund is underfunded, and has been for years. As a result, the reimbursements for keeping Wisconsin's snowmobile trails open and groomed aren't keeping up with the needs.

Assembly Bill 407 was written specifically to solve this problem.

It will hopefully also solve a second problem: the lack of volunteer manpower available through the snowmobile clubs to keep that 25,000 miles maintained. While the snowmobile fund helps pay the cost of trail maintenance, volunteer snowmobilers provide the labor. Snowmobile clubs need to continue attracting new members to keep this sport thriving.

That is why the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC) has asked for the two-tier "CAP/STEP" system. Under the bill, snowmobilers will pay \$35 for a trail pass. That money will go directly into the snowmobile fund. Or, snowmobilers can choose to pay \$15 for the trail pass, and join an AWSC-certified snowmobile club. The idea is **to let snowmobilers choose where their money goes**: all to the state fund, or some to a local club that does the work maintaining local trails.

I realize that this bill creates a fee increase. Under the bill, resident snowmobilers will be paying probably \$35 more per snow machine per year. I'm sensitive to that. I didn't run for office to raise taxes and fees.

But the bottom line is, the snowmobile fund is in trouble, and therefore so are Wisconsin's snowmobile trails. More importantly, **snowmobilers themselves are asking for this**. They've been asking for this for several years now, knowing very well what it would mean to the sport. Wisconsin's snowmobilers want to keep their sport strong, without relying on the state or on the taxpayers to do it for them. I say we should let them do that.

At the end of the day, this bill will simply help snowmobilers do what they are asking us for, and what they are already doing: providing great snowmobile trails for themselves and for thousands of others. I urge your support.



MARY CZAJA

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 35th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

(608) 266-7694
Toll-Free: (888) 534-0035
Rep.Czaja@legis.wi.gov

P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708-8952

SB 343/AB 407 – Snowmobile Registration and Trail Aids
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Small Business and Tourism
Testimony by State Rep. Mary Czaja
December 10th, 2013

Thank you, Chairman Moulton and members of the Senate Tourism Committee for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 343 today.

Wisconsin is the nation's leader in snowmobiling. According to the Department of Tourism, snowmobiling generates an estimated \$1.2 in economic impact to the state. Snowmobiling was founded in Wisconsin; in fact next time you're up in the Eagle River area, make sure to stop at the International Snowmobile Hall of Fame. It is a proud heritage for our state, and riders from across the country come to enjoy our trails and fill our lodging, restaurants, and local taverns.

However, the simple reality is – a trail system of this size and magnitude does require money. Wisconsin maintains the most extensive trail system in the country, with over 25,000 miles of trails. The trails require grooming, brushing, signage, and infrastructure maintenance on bridges and roadways. This work is not glamorous, but for decades local club member volunteers and county staff have proudly maintained a trail system that is unrivaled anywhere else in the USA.

They perform incredible work without the support of any state GPR dollars. I will say that again – no state general funds are used to support the snowmobile program. Rather, the program is funded by registration fees and registration renewals on snowmobiles, a portion of the gas tax formula, and out-of-state riders who currently must purchase an annual trail sticker pass in order to use Wisconsin's trails (their snowmobile is registered in another state). The DNR is responsible for administering these funds.

The funds generated from these three revenue sources are seldom, if ever, enough to cover the required county trail maintenance, project requests, and supplemental aid that are needed to keep the program running. The trend has been especially troubling in recent years – in fact, for Fiscal Year 2014 the DNR now estimates there will be no funds available for project grants.

The fund shortfall has been particularly troubling over the last decade, as snowfall amounts have varied widely, and in a few instances winter has come and gone with hardly any snow at all. This causes snowmobile program funds to fluctuate, as registrations drop and fewer out of state riders plan Wisconsin trips. The impact is particularly brutal in northern Wisconsin, where many mom-and-pop businesses rely on the snowmobile season just to be able to keep their doors open.

Local clubs have done their best to make up the shortfalls and have organized amazing fundraisers, in some instances generating tens of thousands of additional dollars for operating expenses. However, there are only a very few clubs of the size and strength to be able to generate significant revenue that way, and even those locals have nearly exhausted their resources and volunteer manpower. This pattern is simply not sustainable.

So – what is the answer? As many on this committee are aware, this is far from a new issue to the Legislature. In fact, some version of this bill, SB 343, has been introduced in nearly every session since at least the year 2000. There has been no shortage of discussion or diversity of opinions on this issue, however, one thing has always been missing – a clear solution and compromise.

SB 343 is that compromise. In its simplest form, SB 343 provides an additional mechanism for generating the revenue needed for the snowmobile program to survive and maintain its independence from the state general fund. The creation of an annual state trail pass brings Wisconsin on par with other neighboring states, including Michigan and Minnesota. One key difference from past versions of this legislation is registration remains the same, at its current \$30.00 two-year cycle. This provides an element of stability to the fund, and ensures that there would be available funds even in years with low snowfall.

This bill also aims to strengthen local club membership for snowmobile riders, to encourage involvement and volunteerism within the clubs. It is the volunteers who ultimately make our trail system possible, and entire generations of older volunteers are entering their sunset years. Without new recruits and willing active participants, the system will be broken. By providing a discount on the trail pass for local club members, the legislation aims to bring new lifeblood into the clubs and to plan for the future.

SB 343 is supported by the Governor's Council on Snowmobile Recreation, and was recommended by their board on October 3rd, 2013. The bill is also supported by the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs, including dozens of local chapters and Alliances around the state. Recognizing the critical impact of snowmobiling on the tourism and hospitality industries in our state, the Wisconsin Tavern League and Wisconsin Hotel & Lodging Association also strongly support this legislation.

These snowmobilers and group of trail users are asking for the ability to help themselves. They love and support this sport, and without them winter in Wisconsin would never be the same. Please pass SB 343, and ensure that snowmobiling remains our proud tradition.

**HISTORICAL COSTS AND PAYMENTS
VILAS COUNTY SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRAM**

YEAR	EXPENCES	COSTS/MI	PAYMENTS	PRORATE	COMMENTS	ACTUAL
2012-2013	\$503,811.32	\$1,042.66	\$120,800.00	79%	Exceeded \$750/mi cap	61%
2011-2012	\$440,485.46	\$924.03	\$357,525.00	100%	Exceeded \$750/mi cap	81%
2010-2011	\$394,407.28	\$823.40	\$265,797.10	60.98%	Exceeded \$750/mi cap	67%
2009-2010	\$411,401.46	\$858.88	\$227,925.18	*82.5%	Exceeded \$750/mi cap	55%
2008-2009	\$436,454.86	\$915.00	\$279,237.05	**85.1%	Exceeded \$750/mi cap	64%
2007-2008	\$485,125.86	\$1,017.03	\$267,731.28	***62.2%	Exceeded \$750/mi cap	55%
2006-2007	\$323,745.70	\$725.24	\$323,745.70	100%		100%
2005-2006	\$440,008.18	\$996.17	\$331,275.00	93.70%	Exceeded \$750/mi. cap	75%
2004-2005	\$443,173.92	\$1,012.74	\$328,200.00	80%	Exceeded \$750/mi. cap	71%
2003-2004	\$430,379.06	\$983.50	\$294,460.29	80%	Exceeded \$750/mi. cap	68%
Average	\$422,797.98	\$917.33	\$297,321.84	84.81%		70%

2012-13 Estimated prorated of 60%, transfer from grant projects increased to 79%

* 2009-10 supplemental would be 66% State-wide, 13.10 request to Legislatures Joint Finance increased to 82.5%

**2008-09 supplemental would be 67% State-wide, 13.10 request to Legislatures Joint Finance increased to 85%

***2007-08 supplemental would be 55.6% State-wide, 13.10 request to Legislatures Joint Finance increased to 62.2%

The State snowmobile trail maintenance contract guarantees the first \$250/mile to Counties/clubs. Costs beyond the \$250/mile and up to \$750/mile are eligible for supplemental. Supplemental cap is 2x maintenance. Due to insufficient funds, total eligible is capped at \$750/mile maximum.

"ACTUAL" column reflects payments compared to actual expenses often beyond \$750/mile cap.

Expenses are incurred and clubs wait for reimbursement until after the season. Costs are grooming, signing and brushing trails. Grooming rate is comparable to being paid mileage on a vehicle (do not claim additional for fuel, repairs, operator, etc.)

Borrowing funds through 13.10 transfers reduces funds available for infrastructure (bridge/trail rehabilitation).

Reducing the number of trails only increases the pressure on the remaining trails, therefore increasing grooming.

We have not raised the maintenance since 1997 when we went from \$200/mile to \$250/mile.

Cannot increase the \$/hour rate for grooming without raising the \$250/mile to \$300/mile and supplemental cap of \$600/mile to \$900/mile (2x maintenance) or it would further burden the supplemental program and further decreasing prorated.

Snowmobile Account FY '06 thru FY '15

Finance Committee of the Snowmobile Recreation Council Meeting Sunday July 21, 2013

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	EST. 2013	Estimated 2014 2015	
	Amounts in Millions								\$ 4.5		
1	BEGINNING CASH BALANCE									\$ 0.7	\$ 0.9
	AVAILABLE CASH BALANCE										
	REVENUES								\$ 4.0	\$ 3.7	\$ 3.7
2	Registration Revenues (1)	\$ 4.5	\$ 3.9	\$ 4.5	\$ 4.8	\$ 4.4	\$ 4.8	\$ 3.4	\$ 4.5	\$ 4.8	\$ 4.8
3	Gas Tax for Aids	\$ 4.6	\$ 4.5	\$ 4.5	\$ 4.6	\$ 4.8	\$ 4.9	\$ 5.1	\$ -	TBD	TBD
4	Stewardship Development/Maintenance Aids	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		
5	Total Revenues	\$ 9.1	\$ 8.4	\$ 9.0	\$ 9.4	\$ 9.2	\$ 9.7	\$ 8.5	\$ 8.5	\$ 8.5	\$ 8.5
	EXPENDITURES										
	Trail and Project Aids								\$ 4.5	\$ 4.7	\$ 4.7
6	Maintenance Aids	\$ 4.8	\$ 4.5	\$ 4.8	\$ 4.9	\$ 4.9	\$ 4.3	\$ 4.6	\$ 1.0	\$ 2.3	\$ 2.3
7	Supplemental Aids	\$ 1.9	\$ 2.0	\$ 1.0	\$ 2.4	\$ 2.1	\$ 2.4	\$ 2.2	\$ 1.0	\$ -	TBD
8	Project Grants	\$ 1.5	\$ 1.5	\$ 1.2	\$ 1.3	\$ 1.3	\$ 1.0	\$ 1.3	\$ 1.0	\$ -	TBD
9	Total Trail and Project Aids	\$ 8.2	\$ 8.0	\$ 7.0	\$ 8.7	\$ 8.3	\$ 7.7	\$ 8.0	\$ 6.5	\$ 7.0	\$ 7.0
	OTHER								\$ 0.3	\$ 0.4	\$ 0.4
10	Local Law Enforcement Assistance	\$ 0.4	\$ 0.3	\$ 0.3	\$ 0.4	\$ 0.4	\$ 0.4	\$ 0.4	\$ 0.8	\$ 0.9	\$ 0.9
11	DNR Operating Expenses	\$ 0.8	\$ 0.8	\$ 1.0	\$ 1.0	\$ 1.1	\$ 1.0	\$ 0.8	\$ 1.1	\$ 1.3	\$ 1.3
12	Total Other	\$ 1.2	\$ 1.1	\$ 1.3	\$ 1.4	\$ 1.5	\$ 1.4	\$ 1.2	\$ 1.1	\$ 1.3	\$ 1.3
13	Total Expenditures	\$ 9.4	\$ 9.1	\$ 8.3	\$ 10.1	\$ 9.8	\$ 9.1	\$ 9.2	\$ 7.6	\$ 8.3	\$ 8.3
14	Net Income/Loss	\$ (0.3)	\$ (0.7)	\$ 0.7	\$ (0.7)	\$ (0.6)	\$ 0.6	\$ (0.7)	\$ 0.9	\$ 0.2	\$ 0.2
	OUTSTANDING OBLIGATIONS								\$ (3.5)	\$ -	\$ -
15	Outstanding Encumbrances								\$ (0.6)	\$ -	\$ -
16	Pending Grants								\$ (0.6)	\$ -	\$ -
17	Supplemental Trail Pass								\$ 0.7	\$ 0.9	\$ 1.0
18	Available Cash Balance										

(1) Includes miscellaneous revenues

Registered User Snowmobiling Fees in Midwestern States

State	Trail Miles	Registered Snowmobiles	Registration Fee	Trail Pass Required	Annual Trail Pass Fee	Registered User Avg Annual Cost/Yr
Wisconsin (Current Law)	25,000	234,778	\$30.00/2 yrs	Non-Registered Users Only	N/A for WI registered snowmobiles \$35.00 for snowmobiles registered in another state	\$15.00
Wisconsin (AB 407)	25,000	234,778	\$30.00/2 yrs	For all users	Non-Club Member Registered Trail Pass: \$35.00 Club Member Registered Trail Pass \$15.00 Non-Registered, Non Club Member Trail Pass \$50.00 No Trail Pass required for Vintage Models	Non-Club Member: \$50.00 Club Member \$30.00 (+ ≈ \$20 club fee)
Michigan	6,400	205,808	\$30.00/3 yrs	For all users	\$45.00	\$55.00
Minnesota	21,000	253,885	\$78.50/3 yrs or \$48.50/3 years	Two options for MN registered: Trail use and non-trail use Pass required for all snowmobiles registered in another state	Registration and Trail Use have been combined into one decal as of July 1, 2012. Non-registered users \$36.00	\$26.16 or \$16.16
Iowa	8,000	28,265	\$17.75/yr	For all users	\$17.75	\$35.50
Illinois	2,500	34,000 (est)	\$30.00/3 yrs	Non-Registered Users Only	\$25.00	\$10.00
Indiana	195	10,000 (est)	\$30.00/3 yrs	No, recognizes registration from other states	n/a	\$10.00

My name is Gary Hilgendorf.

I am a resident of Tomahawk, located in Lincoln County. I am also a member of the Knight Owls Snowmobile Club, and in years past I have acted as trail boss, vice president, and president. I am currently a trail grooming machine operator and have been for over 40 years.

Currently I am President of the Lincoln County Snowmobile Counsel, and an AWSC Representative for Lincoln County.

Our club had overseen the development and maintenance of 90 miles of trails, though only 48 of those miles are included in the funded trail system. In addition, our club recently took over 40 more miles of trails that were once maintained by the County, but because it was not cost-effective for the County to continue it made the decision to end its involvement in this stretch of trail. In total, we are responsible for 130 miles of trails.

I imagine the County could not handle the financial burden of supplying manpower, fuel and other expenses, nor did it see the benefit of providing and maintaining expensive grooming machines.

We were already stretched to the limit with respect to our original 90 miles of trails. Money is tight, the number of volunteers working on the trails was already low, but we made the decision to also accept the additional 40 miles because that is a vital link in our local system and all snowmobilers, including non-club members would suffer from its absence. Businesses that rely on our local trails would also suffer.

We spend an average of \$41,000.00 each season on our local trails. 88 miles x the reimbursement rate of \$250 per mile = \$22,000, leaving the club to make up the deficit each year even though ALL snowmobilers enjoy our trails. We are in constant fundraising mode. In 2013 alone, we've conducted 15 events to help us come close to covering our shortfalls.

Currently two of the 7 clubs in Lincoln County are very close to disbanding due to lack of enough funding and lack of members. If those or any other clubs go under it would cause a serious break in our system, affecting state corridors.

In closing, when you hear snowmobilers state that without snowmobile clubs there wouldn't be any trails for our state, realize that it would be nearly impossible for state or local government to undertake the time and expense of providing trails. Know that people like me and my fellow club members love our sport and love what we do in providing trails for our families, our communities and even for those snowmobilers who don't belong to clubs or contribute their time or money. However, my fellow club members have been stretched to the breaking point.

Assembly Bill 407 is exactly what we need to address our manpower and financial struggles. I thank Representative Czaja and Senator Gudex for recognizing the crisis and introducing legislation to address it, and I thank you for your consideration.

TIM CALHOUN
6792 GREIL RD
TOMAHAWK, WI 54487
Your address

11-11-13

Representative Mary Czaja

Room 15 West
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952
Madison WI 53708

Dear Representative Czaja

This letter is to urge you to continue your support for the Snowmobile Trail Program and Assembly Bill 407, that you authored.

I am personally concerned that the snowmobile clubs cannot continue to maintain the trails with funding rates that have not increased in over 10 years.

Thank you for all you do as our representative in Madison.

Sincerely,



SIGNED

TIM CALHOUN

Printed Name



State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Scott Walker, Governor
Cathy Stepp, Secretary

101 S. Webster St.
Box 7921
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7921
Telephone 608-266-2621
FAX 608-267-3579
TTY Access via relay - 711

December 10, 2013

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, SMALL BUSINESS AND TOURISM SENATE BILL 343

Good morning Senator Moulton and members of the Committee. We appreciate the opportunity to testify for information only on Senate Bill 343.

I would like to provide you with a little background on the current situation, and how SB 343 would make modifications to the current registration system.

Current situation

- Snowmobile registration is \$30 for 2 years.
- Snowmobiles exempt from registration in Wisconsin because they are registered in another state (generally non-residents) must display a trail pass on their sleds that costs \$35.
- The Snowmobile supplemental maintenance account receives \$32 for each NR trail pass sold.
- Snowmobiles registered in Wisconsin are not required to display a trail pass.

Changes proposed by SB343 as amended

- Snowmobile registration remains unchanged at \$30 for 2 years.
- This bill requires all sleds to display a trail pass when riding Wisconsin trails.
- It provides for a free trail pass for sleds 30 years or older.
- The fee is \$15 for riders who are members of snowmobile clubs.
- A snowmobile club is defined as:
 - An association organized in Wisconsin
 - The members are also members of the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC)
 - It must meet at least 3 times per year
 - Have at least 10 members, and
 - Promote responsible snowmobiling.
- The fee is \$35 for non-club members per sled.
- The fee for non-residents increases to \$50 annually.
- The Snowmobile supplemental maintenance account receives \$49.25 for each NR trail pass sold due to the increase in the NR trail pass fee.
- It provides for a \$5 late fee for all trail passes issued on or after December 1 annually.

October 14, 2013

Overview:

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism was asked to present an opinion on AB407. This bill relates to snowmobile registration, trail use requirements and funding for supplemental trail aids.

Action:

Staff asked several key industry stakeholders for their opinion on the bill:

- Cindy Burzinski, Director of Vilas County Tourism and member of the Governor's Council on Tourism. Cindy spoke with people in Vilas, Oneida and Iron Counties. Every person said that this bill was extremely important to them and their clubs. *"I'm giving 100% support to this bill."*
- Conrad Heeg, Executive Director of Eagle River Chamber of Commerce. AB407 would provide the snowmobile clubs with additional funding they severely need to maintain a pristine trail system. *"I am giving 101% support to this bill and sure hope it can happen as drafted."*
- Lee Van Zealand, President of Winnebago Motorsports (several locations selling outdoor recreation equipment in the Fox Valley) and a member of the board of Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs. *"The bill will provide nearly \$5 million additional funding for trail maintenance and development. The Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs voted 9-1 in favor of this bill."*
- James Bolin, Executive Director of Cable Chamber of Commerce and member of the Governor's Council on Tourism. Overall very supportive of this bill in Bayfield County because the trails system needs financial support to keep it one of the best in the country. The only small issue is that the Bayfield Snowmobile Alliance is very cautious because a fee increase may push out-of-state snowmobilers to Michigan or a competitor.



Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs AWSC

529 Trail Side Drive, Suite 100 – DeForest, WI 53532
Phone: 800.232.4108 / 608.846.5530 Fax: 608.846.5534
Web: www.awsc.org E-mail: awsc@awsc.org

SENATE BILL 343

Good morning. I am before you today to help explain the importance of the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs and the local clubs that belong to it as well as some of the struggles that they face.

My name is Alexis Butler, I am 19 years old, and I am a member of the Sinissippi Trail Hawks Snowmobile Club in Hustisford, WI. I may be young, but I have been a part of the snowmobile community since I was a small child, as my family has always been actively involved.

This past year, I served as the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs' Miss Snowflake. Miss Snowflake is an ambassador position within the association that travels across the state to promote safe, responsible snowmobiling while encouraging others to join a club. It was my job to educate the public about snowmobiling and the AWSC. It was my responsibility to be the main contact for public relations throughout the year. Throughout my 7,800 miles of travel across Wisconsin this year, I have learned a lot and met a lot of interesting people along the way. But more importantly, I had the opportunity to meet people from many different clubs who all expressed a common theme to me: they face a struggle to keep volunteers, and a struggle to pay for all of the maintenance costs. Some are breaking even with all of the costs associated with keeping a snowmobile trail running, but most are keeping these trails open by paying out of their own pockets.

My club has about 40 members, but only 10 of those are active in our club. Club members are all volunteers. They take on the responsibility of marking trails, grooming trails, and maintaining trails to ensure that everyone enjoys the snowmobile season. With over 200,000 snowmobiles on the trails in Wisconsin, you can see just how important clubs are. Without their dedication, without the thousands of volunteer hours, snowmobiling would not exist in Wisconsin.

In Dodge County last year, we had one of the best snow seasons that I can remember. This is significant. Not only do snowmobilers benefit from a great snow season, but so do businesses. Local businesses were shocked by how much snowmobiling can affect them. Many approached club members and exclaimed how one stretch of great snow, which brought snowmobilers visiting from across the Midwest, served to be the most profitable time their businesses had ever experienced.

At the same time, I have heard from many areas across the state that they continue to have issues with uneducated riders, making it more challenging for clubs to keep trails. Whether it be trespassing or not obeying speed zones, club members take on the responsibility of working with landowners when such unfortunate events happen to try to keep the trails safe and available. Many times we had difficulties obtaining permission from landowners due to people disobeying the laws. Most of the time, these riders are not club members. They do not understand how important it is to respect the trails they ride, what it took to acquire landowners' permission and that next year, that trail may not be there.

Clubs all across the state are searching for ways to raise funds and work together in order to cover the expensive costs of running groomers, brushing trails, placing signs, and more. For instance, Sauk County hosts one evening each spring that it dedicates to fundraising. The club members hold the event at a local venue and invite residents from the area. This is their one chance to make enough money to cover expenses within the county. They have many 50/50 raffles, large prize raffles, and cash raffles. They must have a lot of help to make sure that this event runs smoothly and guarantees some relief to the clubs.

Other clubs and counties are not even this lucky. Many do not have the manpower needed to run an event like this. Instead, they rely on smaller, dedicated crowds that go above and beyond to volunteer for their local club. In some instances, they are only able to host a local breakfast or brat fry, which is not always guaranteed to be profitable. Others host chicken barbeque dinners and feature musical entertainment to try to get more people to attend. There are many unique ideas out there that clubs are using to try to stay ahead of the bills, but sadly, many times they fall behind. Clubs continue to struggle with limited volunteers and resources to bring in income in order to fund and maintain the sport that so many people in Wisconsin love and enjoy.

It was surprising to me this year to find the number of clubs that, despite their own troubles and hardships, give back to their communities. They still understand the importance of community and charity. There was an event in Hayward that raised money for the American Heart Association in memory of Kaye Johnson. It was a vintage sled ride, and it was one of the most incredible experiences I have ever been a part of. People from across the northern part of the state came together to give back. The support was unbelievable. I also attended an event in Columbus, where the sole purpose of the event was to raise money for food pantries. Every penny that was raised at the White Elephant Auction was immediately donated to those in need. This generosity and kindness can be found in clubs all around Wisconsin.

Snowmobile clubs need help. They are the vital pieces to providing Wisconsin's trail system. 100% volunteer work ensures that over 200,000 snowmobiles hit the trails and safely enjoy the trails that they ride. Not only does this combine for the perfect family sport, but it also greatly impacts Wisconsin Tourism and the economy. Without snowmobile clubs, there would be no snowmobile trails, and therefore, no snowmobiling in Wisconsin. Senate Bill 343 is a pivotal part in ensuring the existence of the clubs for many years to come.

Thank you for your time.

Senate Bill 343

Testimony of David Newman

Senate Agriculture, Small Business & Tourism Committee

December 10, 2013

My name is Dave Newman, and I reside in Unity, WI located in Clack County.

I am the Vice President of the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC) and on behalf of the AWSC's 23,000 members, I would like to thank Chairman Moulton for holding today's hearing on SB 343, Sen. Gudex for authoring this measure and Rep. Czaja for sponsoring the Assembly companion.

Within the AWSC, I also serve as the chair of the AWSC's Environmental Committee, which monitors land access issues both in Wisconsin and across the country. When issues come up that affect snowmobile access we notify our membership and let them know how to comment to the agency involved. I have also taken on the role of educating snowmobile clubs on what they need to do to be in compliance with tax and legal obligations.

I am also a member of the Governor's Snowmobile Recreation Council. At our last meeting in October the council voted to support this bill. This represents the first time the Snowmobile Recreation Council and the AWSC has agreed on proposed legislation in a long time.

Here are just a couple of examples of what the AWSC does for snowmobiling. For the past 44 years the AWSC has been representing snowmobiling and the nearly 600 snowmobile clubs in Wisconsin.

We have been the watchdog of the snowmobile program and we monitor all legislation or rules that could have an effect on snowmobiling in Wisconsin. We have legal representation that we call upon anytime a club might have legal issues and needs assistance. We also publish a monthly magazine that allows us to communicate with each individual member and educate them on what goes into making the statewide trail system and on safety-related issues. Last year we worked with Discover Wisconsin to produce one of their TV shows about the importance of club membership and what the clubs do to make snowmobiling what it is in Wisconsin. We also have a youth group that promotes youth involvement and helps develop our future leaders.

Every year the AWSC holds its Fall Workshop where hundreds of snowmobile club members get together for a weekend and are presented with information and instruction on a wide variety of topics that they can take back to their local clubs.

The AWSC is a 501(c)3, not-for-profit organization that charges \$10 annual dues per member which is what it costs to service and administer each membership. Across the state, clubs charge their own membership fees which our research shows cost on the average \$20 per year. Some snowmobilers belong to multiple clubs. Some of these club dues are used for club activities but for the most part are used to supplement the cost of trail maintenance.

Our Wisconsin snowmobile clubs are being stretched to their limits when it comes to funding and their volunteer workforce. The government cannot provide these trails, and without club members volunteering their time, the 25,000 miles of snowmobile trails would not exist. It is time to fix the problems and we cannot afford to wait any longer for the legislature to act. The AWSC clubs realize this and our Directors, representing each of the 72 counties, voted unanimously to support this bill at our November 3rd meeting.

I know you will be hearing from other club members about their financial and manpower needs. But I would like to take a minute to tell you about my small club of 25 families. Before the season begins, we have to acquire permission from the 44 landowners that own the property our 23 miles of trail crosses. In the fall 5 or 6 of us will spend 70 – 80 hours signing and brushing the trails to make them safe and accessible. Then in the spring we need to go out and remove the signs before the farmers start to work their land. We not only donate our time, we also donate the use of our pickup trucks, ATVs, chain saws and other equipment and the gas that is used in them. Depending on the amount of snowfall during the season, I and one other member will volunteer up to 100 hours, grooming the trails so that they can be enjoyed by all snowmobilers. Many of our club's members that do not help work on the trails, do help sell raffle tickets and work at our pancake breakfast and vintage show to raise additional funds for the club.

The revenue that comes from snowmobile registrations and gas tax from those sleds goes in to a fund that is paid back to the clubs through their county for work done on funded trails. The amount of funds available is often not enough to cover the increasing cost of equipment and fuel.

The CAP/STEP initiative is modeled after successful programs that have been in place for several years in New Hampshire and New York. They have found that one of the major benefits of this type of program is it gives them an avenue to communicate with the vast majority of snowmobilers in the state. It now gives them a way to educate them on safety concerns, the laws that govern snowmobiling, riding protocol, landowner concerns and introduce them to the clubs that make their riding possible. While motivating volunteers continues to be a challenge at the club level, each and every club now has a much larger pool to mine volunteers from. I am confident that Wisconsin can benefit by implementing the same type of program here.

I would encourage you to please support SB 343. Thank you.

SENATE BILL 343

My name is Mike Giese and I am a Member of the Wolff's Pack S.C. of Neenah. I serve as the Clubs Trail Chairman. I am also the Winnebago Co. Snowmobile Alliance Director.

Our Club has approximately 25 members with four primary members that do the lion's share of the work, averaging 100 to 200+ hours of donated labor per person annually. We are responsible for 18 miles of the funded corridor 28 trail.

Our club struggles financially and in order to make ends meet we get involved in several fundraisers throughout the year. We sell brats, roast corn, sell raffle tickets and still had to rely on no-interest loans from club members to manage our annual trail maintenance expenditures. Many of the things that we do to keep costs down is to rely on relationships within our community that allow us usage of their heavy equipment. I personally store the groomer, drag and other equipment at my property free of charge.

In 2012, our club purchased a 1989 grooming unit and used club labor to refurbish the unit. Without the special skill sets of our dedicated members, we could have never afforded to stay in operation.

We do all of these activities to help bring snowmobile trails to our friends, our families and to the general public. Our financial burdens continue to increase on an annual basis and I am not sure how much longer we can sustain these financial and physical activities without burning out the existing members of our club.

There have been other clubs in our area that have succumbed to these burdens and are no longer active. With each club that fails, neighboring clubs must take on even more responsibility. I fear that without change our club along with many other clubs throughout the state will not be able to survive.

I am proud of our 40+ year heritage of bringing trails to the public and fear that this legacy is in jeopardy and won't be able to continue into the future. The cooperation of our very gracious landowners across the state is critical to the success of Wisconsin's great snowmobile trail network. Failures of clubs will result in the closure of trails and any lapse in landowner access would be very difficult to regain in the future.

I believe Clubs like ours are vital to the trail system that brings in Millions or even more than one Billion tourism dollars annually.

In closing I ask this committee to pass this legislation and to urge your fellow legislators to help a snowmobile community in crisis.

Thank You for this opportunity to testify.

Michael Holden
706 Western Ave.
Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085

My name is Mike Holden and I am a member of the Sheboygan Falls Snowmobile Association. I am proud to be a charter member of this snowmobile club, which my father help found back in 1971. Since then I have been extremely involved in marking 8 mile of trails, grooming 35 miles of trails, teaching an annual snowmobile safety class, and helping with numerous fund raisers. In its early years my club had over 110 members, we currently have only 50. Last month I celebrated my 69th birthday. While I am not ready to retire from the things I do, it sure would be great to be able to step back a bit. Unfortunately there aren't many younger members in my club willing to step forward to help. Many of our members are older. Small clubs like mine, continue to struggle with paying for the high costs of trail and groomer maintenance. In our area where snow can be limited, it is costly to keep our 1990 Tucker running. We need help.

I am also the President of the Northern Kettle Moraine Snowmobile Association, which is the association that represents the 15 clubs in Sheboygan County. Several of these clubs are in the same position as my home club; their membership is aging and they are having a hard time finding volunteers to help with trails, grooming & fund raising.

In April of this year, my wife and I, along with three of the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs youth were invited to attend the New York State Snowmobile Association Forum at Lake Placid. We were there to do a presentation on the Wisconsin youth program (KAOS – Kids and Adults On Sleds) which is a youth leadership training program. While attending this Forum, I had the opportunity to meet with New York State Snowmobile Association President, Gary Boderick as well as several other association members and asked many questions about their registration program, which is similar to what we are asking you to approve. The main questions were: Did your program work, did it do what you wanted, did it help your volunteer shortage, and would you do it again?

I learned that yes they would pursue this registration program again. It DID bring more money into the program for trails. Their club membership increased dramatically. With an increase in membership, their volunteer base also increased significantly. My conclusion, their program worked for them it can also work here in Wisconsin.

Please vote to recommend passage of SB343 to the full Senate, and vote to pass it once it gets to the floor of the Senate.

Thank you

Wisconsin County Forests Association

Elroy Zemke
President
Rothschild, Wisconsin

Jane Severt, Executive Director
3243 Golf Course Road
P.O. Box 70
Rhineland, WI 54501

Norman Bickford
Vice President
Webster, Wisconsin

November 12, 2013

Beverly Larson
Treasurer
Wonevok, Wisconsin

Assembly Committee on Tourism
Representative Kaufert, Chair
Room 15 North
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Louis Winkler
Director
Gillett, Wisconsin

William Walker
Director
Marinette, Wisconsin

Regarding: 2013 AB407

Tom Rudolph
Director
Rhineland, Wisconsin

Representative Kaufert and Members of the Assembly Committee on Tourism,
Please accept the following comments from Wisconsin County Forests Association
(WCFA) regarding 2013 AB407.

Mike Roiger
Director
Medford, Wisconsin

WCFA represents the forestry interests of Wisconsin's 29 counties with county forests established under state statutes §28.10 and §28.11. Collectively these 29 counties manage nearly 2.4 million acres of forests, the largest public ownership in our state. Our member counties offer countless recreation opportunities on lands open to public use for a wide variety of activities.

Ed Kelley
Director
Florence, Wisconsin

Many of our County Forest Administrators, or members of their staffs, serve as snowmobile trail coordinators in their respective counties. County trail coordinators are aware of funding issues within Wisconsin's snowmobile program and acknowledge the need for increased program dollars. We appreciate the work done by Representative Czaja to address this need given the challenging fiscal environment and variety of opinions and interests among various groups.

Graham Rankin
Director
Irma, Wisconsin

WCFA requested some changes be made to initial legislation; those have been incorporated into amendments to AB407. Therefore, as indicated in an October 17, 2013 letter to Representative Czaja we are offering support for the proposed legislation.

Paul Lokken, Sr.
Director
Eau Claire, Wisconsin

County Forest Administrators would like to express their continued concern with having discounted trail use stickers available to members of AWSC. However, they fully recognize the need for increased funding to Wisconsin's snowmobile program and therefore support the legislation as proposed.

John Robinson
Director
Superior, Wisconsin

Tom Thompson, Jr.
Director
Mercer, Wisconsin

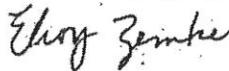
L.H. "Skip" Fiedler
Director
Minong, Wisconsin

Phil Schneider
Director
Sheldon, Wisconsin

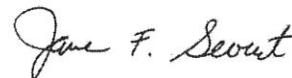
Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. If we can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Joe Waichulis
Director
Thorp, Wisconsin

Sincerely,



Elroy Zemke, President
Wisconsin County Forests Association



Jane Severt, Executive Director
Wisconsin County Forests Association

Michael Luedeke
Director-at-Large
Spooner, Wisconsin

Henry Schienebeck
Director-at-Large
Butternut, Wisconsin

Telephone: 715-282-5951
E-mail: wafa@frontier.com
Website: www.wisconsincountyforests.com