Snowmobiles in the Wilderness: A necessary prohibition

Each year, more and more people are riding snowmobiles into designated Wilderness areas, which is a concern for land managers, the public and many snowmobile groups. This may be happening for a variety of reasons: many snowmobilers may not know where the Wilderness boundaries are or may not realize the area is closed.

Wilderness...a special place

Established by Congress through the Wilderness Act of 1964, “Wilderness” is a special land designation within national forests and certain other federal lands. These areas were designated so that an untouched area of our wild lands could be maintained in a natural state. Also, they were set aside as places where people could get away from the sights and sounds of modern civilization and where elements of our cultural history could be preserved. Wilderness, as defined by the Act, “has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.”

The law prohibits the use of mechanized or motorized equipment, including snowmobiles, in Wilderness areas (36CFR261.16a). Local managers have no latitude in this matter, except in emergencies.

The law states that possession or use of motorized equipment in Wilderness areas is punishable by up to $500 and/or six months in jail (36CFR261.1b).

Yakima Nation Restrictions

Off-road vehicles, including snowmobiles are prohibited in all areas of the Yakama Nation Mount Adams Recreation Area. Snowmobiling on the sacred Pahto not only violates Yakama Nation laws, it shows disrespect to religious and cultural beliefs of Tribal members. Those who violate the rules will be subject to prosecution under the Revised Yakama Tribal Code, Sections 10.01.181, 10.01.183, and 10.07.109. All vehicles are subject to search per Section 50.54.01.

Follow rules to protect opportunities

Respecting Wilderness boundaries helps everyone. When recreationists take responsibility, they help ensure continued support of snowmobile programs and opportunities rather than potential closures and stronger enforcement.

You can help

Join us in safeguarding winter recreation:

- When riding in a new area, obtain a map.
- Familiarize yourself with Wilderness boundaries, and don’t cross them.
- Carry the message to clubs, groups and friends.

For more information about snowmobiling opportunities or Wilderness areas, please contact:

- Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (360) 902-8500
- Washington State Snowmobile Association (800) 784-9772
- North Cascades National Park (360) 854-7245
- Colville National Forest (509) 684-7000
- Gifford Pinchot National Forest (360) 891-5000
- Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (425) 783-6000
- Mt. Rainier National Park (877) 270-7155
- Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (509) 664-9200
- Olympic National Forest (360) 956-2402
- Umatilla National Forest (541) 278-3716


Follow rules to protect opportunities
Designated Wilderness Areas in Washington

On some maps you may see the term “wilderness” used loosely to describe undeveloped, roadless areas where there are no groomed snowmobile routes. This may cause some confusion because the term is not being used in the same way as the technical definition of Wilderness as described in this brochure.

CHECK YOUR MAPS

BE PREPARED
You may want to obtain a map from the landowner in the area you will be recreating. If you have questions, check with the landowner on locations of Wilderness boundaries.

= Wilderness Areas where Snowmobiles are Prohibited