



Clubs have stepped up, and they are doing a fantastic job of identifying necessary projects that will allow for the maximum number of trails to be open this winter. Vermont WILL be open for snowmobiling, there is no doubt about it!!

## **Snowmobile clubs all over Vermont are fervently working to ensure that their trail systems are open for the season.**

VAST Staff continues to work with all clubs providing them assistance in finding materials, funding, and coordinating the reconstruction effort. In many instances Staff has been in the field assessing the damage, and helping to coordinate repairs. Staff is closely working with Green Mountain National Forest staff, as well as other federal, and state agencies in an effort to ensure the necessary coordination that will allow for the maximum number of snowmobile trails to be open this winter.

We really need to get the message out that there WILL be snowmobiling in Vermont this winter, and that the majority of the SSTS will in fact be open.

**Every repair project is being reviewed, and assessed** by Alexis, Matt, and Jess, as to the value of the project; is it needed to make critical connections; what is the cost; how can we connect with other clubs to ensure that the connection won't be a dead end. A map has been created that shows all of the approved projects, and how that project connects with the adjoining club, and completes necessary connections that ensure the maximum number of miles of SSTS will result from the project.

**The cost of many projects is great**, and the funding to complete repairs is small, so we are looking at every project with an eye toward how we can reduce the cost, and/or how can we coordinate with public entities to ensure that the project is included within their FEMA declaration if they have applied and have been accepted by FEMA. This includes State Lands, and other public entities that are subject to FEMA eligibility; including lands that have access easements for public recreation similar to the old Champion lands, now under public and private ownership, but eligible to apply for FEMA grants because there are access easements on that land that include snowmobiling.

The Green Mountain National Forest has been great to work with, and they are coordinating their repairs in a manner that will maximize the number of miles of the SSTS on the GMNF to be opened in time for this year's snowmobile season. VAST is also working with the GMNF on projects that will be VAST funded, but will allow the opening of CT-7 from north to south this winter. This is a huge project, and it will be costly, but CT-7

is the only north/south snowmobile trail connecting the GMNF to the outside world. There are around 15-miles of the CT-7 that have seen massive damages. One project, approximately 1-mile in length, will require, at a minimum, ten new culverts and a bridge to breach an opening where twin 5-foot culverts existed. The cost to complete will be around \$50,000. Another project, approximately 2-miles in length: 40-culverts need to be cleaned, reset, or replaced; 23-culverts will have to be new. The cost for this project is projected to be around \$55,000. Both of the above projects will require a substantial amount of fill to be hauled in as the tread damage is extreme due to the slope of the road grades involved. A third project, on CT-7, will involve rebuilding a 3-mile section, just north of Griffith Lake. The Lake Brook went on a rampage causing extreme damage to CT-7 between the end of Forest Road 58 and Forest Road 30. The result, most of the trail tread was destroyed for approximately ½-mile, and many other washouts were created. This project is still in the early stages of review, and will be finalized by October 26. Based on the initial review, it is hoped that we will be able to make either permanent and/or temporary repairs that will enable access this winter. We have set aside \$45,000 for these repairs.

**Where will the funding come from?** We are working hard to spread the funds around that the Board approved at their September meeting. In total, we are looking at spending close to \$1-million in this fiscal year to repair storm related damages. Will this amount make all of the repairs? No, it won't; but it will put us back together for this winter.

**We are closely organizing our repairs with the Vermont Department of Forests Parks and Recreation (FP&R),** and we have established that damage on lands controlled by them will, more than likely, be covered by FEMA. There are strings attached, no work can be done until it has been authorized by the FP&R District, and the loss has been documented, and verified. VAST must develop a project summary for the prescriptive work to be done, and the clubs will have to get at least 3-bids for the proposed work if it will exceed \$1,000; two of the bids can be formal 'No Bids.'

We are still having active negotiations with FEMA, and we should know, within a week, what the result of those negotiations are. Also, we continue to work with the Vermont Department of Labor, and ultimately, we will use some of their work crews to assist with work on public lands.

**Several weeks ago we submitted a grant application to the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association.** Normally, they give maximum grants of \$4,000; we asked for \$250,000. We are being told that at least one manufacturer is considering a much larger donation; hopefully, we will know the outcome of this soon!!

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## **Where do we stand with repairs at this time?**

- 1) Projects in the northern half of the State are ongoing, and many are nearing completion. Also, we continue to partner with FP&R, and other public entities, and in some instances we will be able to have some of those costs covered in part by FEMA. Several trails, that we had envisioned not being open will be open if we have good luck. In all, it is projected that more than 95% of all snowmobile trails in this area will be open for the season.
- 2) One of the keys to making many of the repairs to the LVRT will rely upon whether or not we receive FEMA funding. If we do, then most of the damage will be able to be repaired, but not all of it prior to winter. Total damages to the LVRT, from all three storms, is believed to be around \$700,000. The priorities will be to make repairs in the areas where the LVRT is actively being used as a part of the SSTP.
- 3) Clubs in the southern half of the State have shifted into overdrive to make repairs to the SSTS. Many clubs have assured us that their trails will be 100% open! And, this includes clubs in Orange, Windsor, Windham, Bennington and Rutland Counties, some of the areas hit hardest by Irene. Our close partnership with the GMNF will ensure that many trails there. WILL be open, and the goal for making north/south-east/west connections will become a reality. Our GOAL for the southern half of the State is to have, at a minimum, 80 to 85% of the

SSTS open in that area and that figure could reach as high as 95%! Funding for most southern projects will be prioritized and paid for by utilizing funds from the Grooming Contingency Fund, and by using \$250,000 of the LVRT dedicated funds, for a total of \$500,000. VAST's first priorities are to fund bridges and culverts. Based on the ratio that was worked out in northern VT, this should enable \$2 million dollars worth of damage to be repaired.