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## **A change is imperative to advocate safety**

- This bill is about the safety of thousands of snowmobile riders and tourists from other states that ride miles of marked groomed snowmobile trails that were designed for 48 inch wide snowmobiles.
- The changes and amendments to PA 288 changed the canvas of the ORV access to the trail systems. The legislators that supported the change, were unable to predict what the future of vehicles would evolve into just these few short years later.
- Snowmobiles are manufactured to remain safe and stable on snow covered icy paths, unlike a vehicle with wheels, that are built for rough terrain, dirt or pavement.
- Due to the size and weight differences of the vehicles, this combination of vehicles traveling on the same trails, at the same time, creates a very dangerous situation as snowmobile trails are not directional.
- Most wheeled vehicles are much larger and heavier than a snowmobile. In a collision, the UTV or motor vehicle will likely go over top of the snowmobile, crushing or ejecting the riders, or forcing them off the trail.
- When riding at night, if the side-by-side is wider than the headlight pattern coming at a rider, they are very likely to hit part of the suspension that's hanging outside the headlight pattern.
- When an ORV meets a Trail Groomer there is little room for the ORV to pass due to the width of the equipment. By nature, the Groomer can not simply back up without damaging the trail surface as the drag is packed with snow. Therefore, this requires the other vehicle to get off the trail into the deep snow. Another difficult situation for the ORV, as they are not designed for that.
- This legislation is to avoid accidents that wheeled vehicles and snowmobiles will have if there is no bill in place to stop the mixed traffic.

## **The enormous conflict began**

- Due to the volume of riders in both groups, the shared trails have created a very dangerous recreational choice. There has been a dramatic increase of ATV / UTV use over the past 7-10 years. The growth in numbers has driven the desire for more ORV riding opportunities.
- The ORV community has thousands of miles of trails. Seasonal and forest roads available to them year around. However, when the snow gets deep, it is increasingly difficult for the ORV's and wheeled vehicles to navigate their trails. In turn, the groomed snowmobile trails become an appealing surface to ride on.
- By design, snowmobile trails are generally maintained 10 ft to 14 ft wide
  - A snowmobile is 48" wide or 4 ft
  - Side by side is 6 ft wide
  - Jeeps and Trucks with big tires can be wider yet
- Snowmobilers pay to play, they have an enormous volunteer club base that grooms and maintains the trails. They also contact the landowners for permission as well as put up the signs and take them down, to create safe and pleasurable trails to enjoy in the winter months when snow is plentiful.

- Snowmobile trail maintenance provided by the volunteers is paid for by the purchase of individual snowmobile permits at \$52.00. It is also appropriated through the snowmobile trail improvement fund distributed by our DNR partners.
- Due to the contract with the DNR, all 67 grant sponsors are required to maintain a smooth snowmobile surface from Dec. 1st through Mar. 31st. When ruts are created by wheeled vehicles, those sponsors are required to repair the surface to the best of their ability, but often the damage is irreparable for the length of the season.
- Many miles of snowmobile trails cross private property with a lease permission from the land owners. This causes confusion among riders and leads to trespassing in the winter months, as it is easy to be unaware you are on private property that may be adjacent to State Land.
- Not all snowmobile trails are open to ORV's. Many miles of snowmobile trails have been removed due to private landowners revoking the yearly lease to the snowmobiler community. When a trail closes, it is very difficult to regain the permissions to cross the property again.

## Public Act 288 Background

Signed by Gov. Rick Snyder on Sept. 28, 2016, and changes rules for:

- Off road vehicle (ORV) use on state forest roads
- Use of ORVs by hunters for the retrieval of big game animals on all state-owned lands open to hunting including:
  - Game areas
  - Wildlife areas
  - State parks
  - State recreation areas
- Use of pack and saddle animals for the retrieval of big game animals
- In addition to these changes, PA 288 required an inventory map of all state forest roads. This inventory was completed in the:
  - Northern Lower Peninsula - Dec. 31st, 2017
  - Upper Peninsula - Dec. 31st, 2018
  - Southern Lower Peninsula - Dec. 31st, 2018
- Thousands of miles of forest roads were opened for ORV use in the Northern Lower Peninsula following the inventory and mapping.
- The Michigan snowmobile trail program began as a small, loop trail system, with the goal of tying these loops together into an interconnected system of trails. Much the same as the ORV community.

## Our Mission here at MISORVA

- To act as a resource and distribution point for information and knowledge, which furthers the safety and general education about the sport in the State of Michigan.
- Work with local, state, and federal agencies to defend and preserve motorized recreation areas.
- Facilitate safety classes by promoting responsible and safe riding by endorsing the Zero Tolerance Policy that prohibits alcohol use while operating a snowmobile or ORV.
- MISORVA is a non-profit, volunteer organization dedicated to the success of snowmobiling and ORVing in Michigan. We work hard to protect, maintain and improve all our trail systems.