



Greetings Fellow Snowmobilers

The snowmobile season is well underway for the Clubs in Manitoba but I must say that it has been a very difficult start for our Club.

This week we have finally opened all of our trails north of PTH 44 with the exception of a portion of trail 764 through the bog between Hwy 11 and Halfway Hut. These trails are now our priority but the issue is the lack of freeze in the bogs.

I was absolutely amazed with the lack of freeze under the snow. We are told that we had the warmest November in history and December brought us the 2nd highest snowfall since 1908. When you put that much snow on the ground that is wet and not frozen there are bound to be issues.

And yes..... We had issues

On January 4th groomer 2 broke into the bog south of highway 44 on trail 764. We had packed that trail a dozen times and at least twice with our C drag (4.5' drag pulled behind our work sled) but we found out the hard way that the bog was not frozen enough to support our groomer. The



first picture is of the groomer surrounded by snow with the invisible bog below.....

and the 2nd picture is after a hoe dug out the slop from around the machine. 2" – 6" of ice and 2 feet of bog water waiting to swallow up our groomer.



With some help from a 45000 lb excavator we were out of the bog and back on the trail. It turned out to be a slow return as we had to chip all the frozen bog off the unit and clean up various moisture issues.... But with some long hours by our volunteers we got it back on the trails.

Just as our recovery team got home groomer # 3 broke through ice on a bog near the Agassiz Shelter on trail 763. This time it was a case of bad ice that gave away. The operator with some volunteer manpower was able to detach the drag and get the groomer out and then using a long cable get the drag out of the water and back on the trail....

So that is how the week started. Then there were the loose wheel bolts that caused issues for groomer 3 on trail 761.



Volunteers went out and had to take the track off the machine in the middle of the trail to make the necessary repairs and get the unit operational.

So 2 days later we were back on the trail and made it back to Lac du Bonnet only to find a flat tire on the opposite side of the groomer.



Another tire change which required taking the track off again.

I have helped take the track off a groomer 4 times in my life..... 3 times in the last 10 days.

By the end of the week our volunteers and operators were tired and quite frankly a little “bog” shy.

That’s where the story gets good. We reached out to our friends at the Lee River Snow Riders Club and they agreed to help us pack/groom several of our outstanding trails that run through boggy areas north of Pinawa.



And YES they came. And YES they groomed. By the end of the day we were able to open 768 from Pinawa to the Winnipeg River and 66 from the Lee River Snow Rider junction to the Seven Sisters dyke.

Our own machine was able to groom 769 from Pinawa to the junction with trail 66.

Then there is our dedicated volunteer from Seven Sisters who was determined to pack and open trail 770 from Seven Sisters to Whitemouth. A couple of sessions of packing by several members and their families and countless hours of grooming with our work machine towing a C drag at 15km / hour and I am thrilled to report that 770 is now open connecting Whitemouth / Elma / and the south end of Whiteshell Provincial Park.



And there he is..... riding when the packing and grooming is done. Thanks Don!

As I write this newsletter I am happy to say that most of our high use trails are groomed and open.

Our volunteers will continue to work on 764 south of highway 44 and trail 62 south of Molson.

This is my first year as President of the Eastman SnoPals and I have to say it appears Mother Nature has handed us a difficult year.

Some of the Riders are impatient and vocal. We all pay for SNOWPASSES but some of us spend 40+ hours a week trying to put up signs, pack trails, groom trails and do rescue repairs to equipment in the wilderness.

Please be patient with all of the clubs. This season is a difficult one and we have not seen the end of the difficulties with temperatures this weekend forecast to be able 0. That scenario is very hard on trails and equipment.

Over the month I have been impressed with the numbers of our new members who have stepped up to help the old tired veterans of the club.

THANK YOU

Your help, support and company on the trails is very much appreciated.

The issues that we have faced this month have forced us to look at our core function. How do we groom trails?

The equipment we currently operate has served us well but with the bog scenario we are facing this year we have to look for options that would allow us to do a better job.

We have struck a GROOMER COMMITTEE to collect all of the information on the various makes and models of groomers and drags so that our membership can make informed decisions as we move forward. The Committee had hoped to have something concrete to bring to the membership at the end of this month but as we have found out the question and answers are much more complex.

The committee continues to look for a replacement groomer and drag that would allow the club to get into deeper snow, pack trails without the drag attached and groom over bogs with less risk of breaking through.

One of the main issues is weight distribution. A groomer like the Lee River groomer has a weight distribution of just over 1 lb / sq inch of track area and our current tractors are 4 times that distribution.

We are in the market for a GROOMER and eventually in the market to sell one of our tractors and drags. If in your personal travels you identify any information on this topic please bring it to the attention of an Executive member.

- ❖ Our next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday February 15th at 7 pm with** optional dinner at 6 pm at the Tourist Hotel in Seven Sisters.

Let me finish this newsletter with my favorite picture of the month.....



RIDE SAFE

PLEASE RESPECT the LANDOWNERS.....even if the field looks smoother than the trail ... You **MUST** stay on our trail.

John Fleming President, Eastman SnoPALS