

# TRAIL POLICY MANUAL



**Trails Administrator/Coordinator  
26 VAST Lane/Berlin  
Barre, VT 05641**

**802-229-0005 X12  
[matt@vtvast.org](mailto:matt@vtvast.org) or [trails@vtvast.org](mailto:trails@vtvast.org)  
Visit our website at: [www.vtvast.org](http://www.vtvast.org)**

*Revised 4/12*

## **Section 4 - Trails Program**

### **A. Trail and Bridge Development**

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In order to qualify for VAST grant-in-aid, trail construction and maintenance projects must be constructed according to the standards set forth in this document:

#### **1. VAST Guide for the Development of Snowmobile Trails (latest edition)**

#### **2. Construction Grant-In-Aid Policies and Procedures**

##### **a. Applications and Project Approval**

Prior to starting work on a project for which a grant-in-aid request will be made, a construction grant-in-aid project application must be submitted to the VAST Trails Administrator for approval. The County Trails Coordinator or VAST Trails Administrator shall approve all construction grant-in-aid applications.

- Applications for the next fiscal year must be received in the VAST office by **June 30<sup>th</sup>** each year.
- The VAST Trails Administrator shall rank each project request in order according to the VAST Trails priority list that appears in this policy (Section 6-2b).
- Projects shall be approved in priority order up to the amount budgeted for the next fiscal year. All clubs, with approved projects, shall be notified no later than July 20th.
- Work on projects may be started upon receipt of notification that the project has been approved for construction. Funding will not be available until the first of the next fiscal year (*October 1<sup>st</sup>*).
- Projects that are denied may be re-submitted the next fiscal year.

All projects not completed by December 15 of each year shall be cancelled. If a project cannot be completed by December 15, extensions may be requested in writing to the VAST Trails Administrator.

- All requests for extensions must be received in the VAST office, **in writing**, by December 15th.

## **b. Priority Ranking of Corridor Trail Projects**

Projects shall comply with the VAST Strategic Plan or be part of the existing SSTS and be shown on the current VAST Trails Map. Projects shall be approved based on priorities. Within each priority, projects on heavily used trails will be approved first in the following order:

### **a. Maintenance**

1. Bridges in need of repair or replacement for the upcoming season.
2. Projects that bring trails up to VAST safety-related standards by removing obstructions along side of trail, in tread, widening curve radii. Increasing sight distance at critical locations, etc. or by correcting underlying causes of dangerous conditions like ice boils; all as called for in standards for the existing trail class. ***This work would not upgrade a trail to a higher class.***
3. Correct resource damage like erosion.
4. Installation of Gates and Culverts
5. Projects on secondary trails using the same priorities as used for corridor trails.

#### ***a. Bridge Policy***

All bridge construction projects will require the standard construction documents and a signed landowner bridge agreement (when necessary). This agreement will be supplied by VAST and must be signed by the landowner, local club president, County Trails Coordinator, and VAST Trails Administrator before any construction begins.

#### **Landowner Bridge Agreement**

This agreement shall include a provision that in the event of a trail closure, the designated VAST trail leading to the snowmobile bridge is either discontinued or relocated off the landowner's property, the landowner agrees to:

- Allow the local club, VAST, or their representatives to remove the bridge from their property and restore the property back to an acceptable level as agreed upon by the club and the landowner.
- Or agrees to purchase the bridge from VAST at a cost equal to the original installation cost minus ten percent each year for depreciation and capped at ten years. If the original purchase price of the bridge is less than \$2,500.00 the landowner agrees to take the liability of the bridge or allows VAST to remove the bridge at Club's/VAST expense.

This policy will be reviewed and implemented on a case-by-case basis according to the VAST Trails Administrator, County Trails Coordinator and Club Trail Master.

#### **b. Trail Construction**

1. Trail relocation due to land closure, landowner request or onto a permanent easement or unplowed public highway.
2. Projects that remove trails from a plowed highway, river or other body of water.
3. Project upgrades trail to a higher class as approved by County and State Trails Committees:
  - Trail upgrades proven to be necessary to maintain overall trails continuity and when other options are not possible will be considered.
  - Trail upgrades, which are not necessary to maintain trail continuity or trail upgrades that create a parallel corridor trail, will most often not be approved.
4. Construction of new trails as proven necessary and approved by County and VAST Trails Committee. The following criteria shall be used when determining the practicality of the project.
  - Permanence of Trail (Location of Federal, State, Private or an easement) (20 points)
  - Level and Cost of Construction (20 points)
  - Current Grooming Situation (20 total points)
  - Equipment used to maintain the trail (10 points)
  - The cost associated with adding miles to current contract (10 points)
  - Length of season and area where trail will be located (higher elevations vs. lowlands and valleys) (15 points)

- Volume of traffic on adjacent trails and new trail (10 points)
- Major trail connections (E-W, N-S corridors) (10 points)
- Connection to services (5 points)
  - a. No new trail construction shall be implemented that will exceed the historic level of 4,700 miles of VAST funded corridor trails unless specifically approved by the Board of Directors and budgeted for any fiscal year. Once the Board of Directors determines the specific percentage or cost implemented in determining the feasibility of the projects.
- 5. Projects on secondary trails using the same priorities as used for corridor trails.

**c. Reimbursement**

The County Trails Coordinator or the VAST Trails Administrator must inspect all projects prior to the grant-in-aid payment being authorized. The signature of either on the payment authorization request must demonstrate this inspection. Approved projects shall be reimbursed based on the following criteria:

- Purchased material for trail projects such as culverts, fill, I-beams, bridge planking, etc. as well as leased, rented or contracted equipment, shall be reimbursed at 100% of the amount approved by the VAST Trails Administrator. Copies of invoices must be submitted by the project coordinator and provided with payment request. Incurred labor cost, if any, will be at the club's expense.

## **B. Trail Signing Standards**

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In order to qualify for grant-in-aid funding, signing must be installed and removed according to the standards set forth in the *VAST Guide for Snowmobile Trail Signing and Placement* - latest edition.

## **C. Equipment Program Policies**

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The following are the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers, Inc. policies and procedures developed by the VAST Trails Committee, which includes County Trail Coordinators from each county. These policies and

procedures have been reviewed and adopted by the VAST Board of Directors and are incorporated in the master document “VAST Policy Manual.” These policies and procedures along with any revisions are current as of May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009.

## **1. Minimum Standards for Power Units and Grooming Equipment**

### **a. Power Units**

<b><u>Class</u></b>	<b><u>Power Unit and Drag Width</u></b>	<b><u>Examples</u></b>
1	Minimum 8'	Tucker, Sur-Trac, Pisten Bully, Prinoth,
2	Minimum 7'	Tucker 1000, Tractor Conversion, Pisten Bully
3	Minimum 6'	Tractor Conversions, Track Truck, Tracked ATV's. <i>(As approved by Trails Administrator)</i>
4	Minimum 4' Drag	Alpine, Skandic, Polaris wide-track/long track, Yamaha VK 540, Tracked ATV's. <i>(As approved by Trails Administrator)</i>

### **b. Class IV Grooming Policy**

Class IV power units must be utility vehicles of a twin-track design or single-track snowmobiles with a track at least 20 inches wide and 150 inches long. ATV's that have a snow track conversion kit may be utilized for Class IV grooming with the following installed on the vehicle for trail grooming and/or maintenance and snowmobile rescue only during the winter months:

1. Landowner Permission for Class IV ATV Power Unit
  - a. Visible mounted beacon
  - b. Slow moving vehicle sign
  - c. All safety gear and equipment (first aid kit, etc)
  - d. Display VAST Trail Maintenance sign on front and rear of power unit.

Clubs and grooming contractors may only operate this unit on the VAST trail system upon the approval of the VAST Trails Administrator and the County Trails Coordinator. Once approved, the club/contractor must have a VAST grooming contract that is approved by the VAST Board of Directors.

**c. Groomer Classification**

If a VAST Club/Contractor is pulling a drag (the drag must meet the requirements of the current VAST policy for grooming equipment) with a narrower power unit and has successfully groomed their trails to the VAST Corridor Trail Standards, both the County Trails Coordinator and the VAST Trails Administrator shall approve the grooming classification for the equipment upon their discretion.

**d. Groomer Drags**

Grooming drags must be of a side-rail design with multiple cutting blades, packing wheels and rear trailing wheels. The purchase of new AFMI drags will not be eligible in this program.

**2. Grooming Equipment Grant-In-Aid Policies and Procedures** (Revised 4/08)

**a. Equipment Grant-In-Aid Criteria**

1. No equipment grant-in-aid for acquisition of equipment over 20 years old.
2. Financial capabilities of the Club/Contractor
3. Volume of Non-Commercial Snowmobile Traffic
4. Priority Order:
  - a. Equipment being replaced is more than 20 years old.
  - b. Documented record of serious mechanical failure that has caused repeated/excessive down time.
  - c. Class upgrade (Class 3 to 1 for example).
  - d. An incremental increase in the number of miles of trail groomed resulting in current equipment no longer being sufficient for the job.
  - e. Other.

**b. Application Procedures**

The VAST club/contractor must submit an equipment grant-in-aid application to the VAST Office by **June 1st**. Grooming equipment grants may be approved only for grantees with an approved (current or pending) VAST grooming contract. The following are

minimum contracted miles required to be eligible to apply for grant-in-aid for grooming equipment.

- Class I - 25 miles
- Class II - 25 miles
- Class III - 15 miles
- Class IV - 10 miles

Class I grooming equipment should not be contracted for more than 60 one-way miles of trail (i.e. 60 miles x 2 ways x twice a week equals 240 miles divided by 6 mph = 40 hrs.).

**c. Purchase of Equipment**

Up to 65% of the net purchase price (Net = cost of unit less trade) with the grant payment to be determined based on the contractual mileage and the five-year average of grooming weeks. The club/contractor's five-year average of grooming weeks will determine the maximum grant allotment for the purchase of the power unit. The following tables represent the percentages divided into the two categories:

*Contractual Mileage:*

25-30 Miles	65% of net
31-40 Miles	60% of net
41-49 Miles	55% of net
50+ Miles	50% of net

*The maximum grant amount is based on grooming weeks\*:*

0-7.9 Wks:	\$30,000
8.0-11.9 Wks:	\$45,000
12.0-16 Wks:	\$60,000

\*Based on Upcoming season's five year rolling average of grooming weeks.

Example: Club A has 45 miles on their VAST Tailored Grooming contract and a 5-year average of 11.5 weeks.

Cost of Power Unit:	\$165,000
Less trade:	<u>\$(90,000)</u>
<b>Net Purchase Price:</b>	<b>`\$75,000</b>

Based on the five-year average, the maximum grant allotment is \$45,000. Since the contractual mileage is 45 miles, clubs/contractors are eligible for 55% of the net purchase price. Therefore the total grant amount on this unit would be **\$41,250**.

**Class IV Equipment:** Clubs applying for an equipment grant for Class IV equipment shall be eligible for 50% of the net purchase price.

**d. Purchase of Equipment – Additional Units**

VAST recognizes that special circumstances may arise, and that additional grooming equipment is necessary in order to maintain the trail system within a contracted area. VAST Clubs and contractors that have a grooming contract for 60+ miles may be eligible for an equipment grant for multiple power units. The contracted miles will be divided into equal segments, equaling no less than 30 miles and the grants will be distributed according to the approved amount of grooming mileage and the five-year grooming average. Clubs that require multiple units for a grooming contract that is less than sixty miles may apply for an equipment grant; however a subcommittee will review their request. The members of the subcommittee shall include the VAST Trails Administrator, Trail Committee Chair and Co-Chair and one member from the Trails Committee. The subcommittee will approve or deny the special request according to eligibility and need.

Note: Additional units for a contracted area will be considered as new units and will not require payoff of depreciation liens held by VAST on other units.

Example # 1: Club has 64 miles and 12.6 weeks, divide the contract into two ( $64/2 = 32$  miles)

At 32 miles, club is eligible for 60% of the net, grant not to exceed \$60,000.

Example #2: Club has 78 miles and 8.0 weeks, divide the contract into two ( $78/2 = 39$  miles) At 39 miles, club is eligible for 60% of the net, grant not to exceed \$45,000

**e. Grooming Drags**

VAST equipment grants of 50% of the purchase price are available for clubs or contractors wishing to purchase new approved manufacturer side-rail style grooming drags. Used side-rail grooming drags will be funded at 50% of fair-market value as determined by the VAST Trails Administrator taking into consideration drag condition, age and size. Approved side-rail drag manufacturers are: Mogul Master, Mountain Grooming and other drags approved by the VAST Trails Administrator.

This lien shall require that the grantee(s) repay the pro-rated balance should the equipment be disposed of prior to full repayment.

**f. Capital Repairs of Existing Owned Equipment**

Does not cover expendable items such as tracks, tires, rollers, belts, batteries, etc. 25% of documented purchased parts and labor per minimum below. Total not to exceed 50% of fair-market value.

Class 1 = \$2,000

Class 2 = 1,500

Class 3 = 1,000

Class 4 = 800

**g. Lien Period for Service Payback**

VAST Clubs and contractors will be eligible for an equipment grant in five years or 2500 hours. No equipment grants will be awarded within the five years unless the club/contractor is eligible for a grant for multiple units. Hour meter readings will be tracked through the submission of the grooming log sheets during the snowmobile season and verified by the County Trails Coordinator or VAST Trails Administrator.

**h. Filing Equipment Grants Under the UCC-1 Codes**

All equipment grants shall be filed with the Secretary of State under the UCC-1 code. After the equipment grant is awarded, it will be the responsibility of the VAST Trails Administrator to file the lien with the Secretary of State. The club /contractor will receive copies of the paperwork at the time when the funding becomes available.

**i. Grooming Contractors**

All VAST Grooming Contractors shall establish a business name for their VAST grooming contract and the business shall be registered with the Vermont Secretary of State. This must be accomplished before the grooming contract goes into effect for the season.

### 3. Rescue Equipment Grant-In-Aid (Revised 05/05)

#### a. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to financially aid those county clubs or local clubs in the purchase of up-to-date rescue equipment to be used in emergencies related to snowmobiling or any other cause that would necessitate this type of equipment. Clubs shall make this available to communities, local rescue squads, state/local police departments and other membership clubs for the reasons stated above.

With the ever-increasing numbers of snowmobilers on our trail system, the need for this type of equipment will undoubtedly become greater. Historically high traffic areas will need to have up-to-date equipment now and in the future. Areas that are targeted for future trail development will also require this equipment. However, eventually all counties should have at least one unit standing ready.

Remember that the purchase of the necessary equipment is only one component of rescue readiness. A comprehensive plan including location of equipment manager (responsible for maintenance and repair), a network of club/rescue personnel available to respond in cases of emergency and communications systems should be in place prior or in conjunction with equipment purchase. **An outline of this plan will be a requirement for receiving grant-in-aid monies.**

#### b. Application Procedure

1. The VAST Club should apply for the rescue grant-in-aid and must submit a Rescue equipment grant-in-aid application to the VAST Office by **June 1st**. Upon approval of the grant request, the payment will be made directly to the Club applying for the grant-in-aid. If the local fire department or rescue squad is requesting the grant-in-aid, the club should submit the application and disperse the grant-in-aid money upon final approval and receipt of the grant.
2. The rescue sled by itself is only one component of the total package necessary applications may include the purchase of a power unit with the cost of the rescue sled. Power units currently approved for grant-in-aid under the Equipment Policy, Class 4 power units will qualify for this purpose. Further, mobility is essential to fast response to emergencies, therefore,

a trailer may also be part of the grant-in-aid application. This is a one-time purchase and should be looked at as a total package.

3. Grant-in-aid may be 50% not to exceed a maximum of \$5,000.
4. Grant-in-aid liens will be placed on all equipment and repayment will be four years.

## **D. Grooming Contract Policies and Procedures**

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### **1. Tailored Grooming Contract**

The Tailored Grooming Contract uses a club/contractor's current five-year history, based on submitted weekly grooming reports, of the average number of weeks groomed per season. This rolling five-year average will be the club/contractor's base-grooming contract for that season. The base-grooming contract will determine a club/contractor's yearly 25% startup fund, contract cap and yearly-grooming subsidy. The VAST Trails Administrator will update this information on a yearly basis.

### **2. Startup Fund**

Prior to the beginning of the grooming season, VAST will issue payment to each contracted club or contractor a setup fund equal to 25% of their base-grooming contract. These funds are intended to help clubs/contractors purchase necessary repair items, insurance, fuel or other grooming related items to insure equipment readiness at the start of the season. This startup capital is considered a grooming payment and will be factored into the first grooming payment made to the club/contractor.

### **3. Tailored Grooming Contract CAP**

Every club or contractor being issued an annual Tailored Grooming Contract will also be issued a grooming CAP figure. This grooming CAP will be equal to twice the club/contractor's BASE GROOMING CONTRACT and will be indicated on their grooming contract. While the CAP allows for full-payment of first and second-time grooming of all contracted trails for the number of weeks shown on the Tailored Grooming Contract, VAST also recognizes that not all trails need to be groomed twice per week. VAST encourages clubs to manage

grooming of their trail system so as to groom trails as often as prudent while not exceeding their grooming CAP. VAST also recognizes that a special circumstance may arise, which may force increased grooming in specific location (low snow statewide except in a few locations). In this special circumstance, clubs/contractors will need prior approval from the VAST Trails Administrator before exceeding CAP. In the event that there is a low snow year and the bulk of the snowmobile traffic is funneled to a limited area(s) of the state, the VAST Trails Administrator shall manage the supplemental third time grooming contracts in a manner that will assure that the total grooming budget, for any given year, is not exceeded.

#### **4. Grooming Contingency Fund (the “What if Fund”)**

In the event that any club/contractor should have an “extended season,” payments for grooming beyond a club/contractor’s contract shall be made out of this fund. The purpose of the contingency fund is to pay clubs first and second time grooming above their contracts only. In no case will this fund be used to pay for grooming beyond second-time grooming.

#### **5. Grooming Subsidies**

Grooming subsidies are paid to protect the financial well-being of clubs and grooming contractors as well as to protect VAST’s investment in grooming equipment. In the event of insufficient snow, the VAST Trails Administrator may authorize the payment of grooming subsidies to eligible grooming clubs/contractors. The grooming subsidy shall equal the club/contractor’s base grooming contract, as noted on their grooming contract. This payment will be less the club’s 25% startup payment and any grooming payments made during the season. In no case shall this payment exceed the club/contractor’s base contract. The clubs/grooming contractors that currently have a leased equipment sub-lease with VAST that are eligible for the subsidy will be reimbursed the cost of the contractor’s equipment insurance and the cost of the required annual maintenance. This subsidy is not to exceed half of their base contract.

- a. Subsidies will be paid only due to lack of snow.
- b. The applicant must have a valid contract and the contractor and equipment must have been available and ready to groom.

- c. The snow conditions must have been such that the total payments for completed grooming (including startup funds) were less than the contractor's base contract.
- d. The County Trails Coordinator or the VAST Trails Administrator must verify the poor snow conditions.
- e. **The VAST Trails Administrator shall have full authority to issue or deny subsidies based on information available or his/her observations.**

## **6. Grooming Contract Renewal/Revocation**

(Revised 05/04) (Approved 06/22/09)

The VAST Tailored Grooming Contract is an annual agreement between VAST and the VAST Club or Individual Grooming Contractor. The contract will be issued to the Club/Contractor in the fall prior to the snowmobile season. It is the Club/Contractor's responsibility to groom their trails that have been assigned to them on a weekly basis and in accordance to the VAST standards. This includes grooming when the conditions warrant twice a week for the duration of the season and within the limits of their grooming contract. Such grooming will be charged to the grooming Club/Contractor's contract. All grooming on the Statewide Snowmobile Trail System should be logged on the proper grooming log sheets and must be submitted on a weekly basis. The tailored grooming contract is issued on the Club/Contractor's five-year average for grooming trails twice weekly, the contract mileage and the equipment classification. Weekly and total mileage above the two-time cap will not be paid.

Prior to renewing a Tailored Grooming Contract, the VAST Trails Administrator shall require each grooming club or contractor to provide financial information documenting their cost, for the past winter, to groom portions of the Statewide Snowmobile Trail System (SSTS). A form/questionnaire shall be sent out in February, and the club or contractor shall fill out and return the requested information to the VAST Trails Administrator. Final grooming payments for the current year will not be authorized until this information is submitted to the VAST Trails Administrator. The financial information will be entered into a database and the current grooming cost will be determined before the upcoming year's budget is prepared. In addition, a renewal of a Tailored Grooming Contract will not be issued until the Trails Administrator has received the requested information. This information will become a permanent record for the

costs incurred to groom the SSTS annually, and will allow the VAST Trails Committee to assess these costs, and recommend, if necessary, future financial changes to Tailored Grooming Contracts, or other VAST Grant-in-Aid programs.

If the Club/Contractor fails to comply with their contract, the contract may be revoked upon the recommendation of the County Director and the County Trails Coordinator for one or more of the following reasons:

- Submittal of fraudulent claims on the VAST Grooming Log Sheets
- Inconsistent and infrequent grooming runs
- Failure to respond to written complaints regarding trail conditions
- Failure to groom the assigned trails when conditions warrant

In the event that a Club/Contractor's contract is in question, written documentation must be submitted to the County Trails Coordinator and the County Director. The County representative will contact the Club/Contractor to discuss the issue. If the issue does not get resolved at the County level and the grooming club/contractor does not display any progress and improvement, then the county representative will contact the VAST Trails Administrator. The VAST Trails Administrator will contact the grooming club or individual and make the decision to renew or revoke the contract at that time.

If the Club/Contractor has a dispute over the decision made, they may follow the resolution of disputes and the grievance process as defined by the VAST policy manual.

## **7. Verification of Trail Mileages** *(Revised 05/04)*

Within one year after issuance of a new or revised Grooming Summary, **County Trail Coordinators** must verify the trail mileage shown on the summary and any updates to them and provide that verification to the VAST Trails Administrator.

### **a. Additional Contract Mileage**

Clubs that would like to add additional miles to their current contract (via new trail construction) must present their requests to their County Trails Coordinator and also at the county level. Once it has been approved at the county level, the club shall submit their written request to the VAST Trails Administrator. The club will be invited to present their request at the Annual May Trails Committee Meeting. If the Trails committee approves, then the

final step is to go before the Board of Directors and they will determine if it is financially feasible for VAST to fund the additional mileage.

**b. GPS Mileage**

As of December 2001, the clubs that have had their trail system mapped by GPS (Class I, II, and III contracts) will utilize the mileages verified by GPS technology. The clubs/contractors will use the correct mileage figure for determining their contract and will be notified six months prior to the season. These mile changes will be implemented prior to the snowmobile season and conducted on an annual basis.

**8. Reimbursement Rates** (As Approved Annually by the Board of Directors)

(The following rates are based on 2003 grooming rates)

Class 1 .....	8 Ft. Minimum Width.....	\$ 10.00 Traveled Mile
Class 5 (Leased) ...	8 Ft. Minimum Width.....	\$ 5.00 Traveled Mile
Class 2 .....	7 Ft. Minimum Width.....	\$ 7.70 Traveled Mile
Class 3 .....	6 Ft. Minimum Width .....	\$ 5.75 Traveled Mile
Class 4 .....	4 Ft. Minimum Width .....	\$ 3.30 Traveled Mile

**9. Late Submission of Grooming Logs**

Grooming contractors must submit logs provided by VAST, completely filled out as instructed on the form provided. Logs submitted more than one week late shall be held until the end of the grooming year and shall be paid according to the priority sequence established by the Board of Directors to the extent that funds are available.

**10. Grooming Contract Change/Request**

In the event a VAST Club would like to add additional miles to their contract or upgrade their contract to another class, the Club must go through the process as explained in Section 7a under Additional Contract Mileage. It has been established that the maximum number of miles of VAST corridor trail shall not exceed 4,700 miles. In effort to control the total miles contracted to the grooming clubs, there will be a limited time frame that clubs and contractors will have to make their requests. All requests for contract upgrades and additional grooming mileage must be submitted to the VAST Trails Coordinator by May 1st of every year. Clubs will have the winter

season to notify the VAST Office to be placed on the agenda for the Trails Committee to review and approve their grooming contract request.

## **11. Grooming Weeks**

A week of grooming shall be defined as grooming the minimum of 25% of the club/contractor's grooming contract miles. For example: If a club is contracted for 50 one-way miles, a minimum of 12.5 one-way miles shall be considered an actual grooming week. This will determine the club/contractor's number of weeks groomed within one season and will be applied to the five-year rolling average of grooming weeks.

## **E. Fraudulent Equipment Grant-In-Aid or Grooming Payment Claims**

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It shall be the duty of the VAST Trails Administrator to oversee the grant-in-aid program and grooming contracts to assure that all claims are valid and that no fraudulent claims have been made. It shall be the duty of all County Trails Coordinators to assist in this matter and to verify that construction work has been completed, grooming accomplished and that grooming equipment is needed. Any person or club submitting a fraudulent claim shall be subject to actions deemed necessary by the Board including prosecution.

## **F. Open Season Trail Closures**

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The closed season is defined as the time from April 16th to the Sunday in December preceding the third Monday. The only exception is for grooming, maintenance and rescue operations, otherwise, snowmobilers may be fined in excess of \$500. This legislation also gave VAST clubs the authority to close their trail system within their club's jurisdiction during the open season due to the lack of snow or landowner's request.

The following criteria shall be considered when closing the trail system within a club's/county area:

- Lack of snow or low snow conditions (less than 8" of snow)
- Winter storms creating hazardous conditions
- Winter Logging Operations

- Landowner Request

The following protocol shall be followed in order to inform the VAST membership on these closures during the “open season”

- Clubs shall contact the County Director/County Trails Coordinator
- Contact VAST Office (Trails Administrator/Trails Assistant)
- VAST will announce information on the website, trail conditions report, VAST News, Radio/TV reports
- Clubs shall have a method of properly signing the trails as “closed” at trail junctions, trailheads and other access points
- Gates shall be closed; Adjacent clubs shall be informed until further notice

In the event that the club is unable to access the “open portion” of their trail system, they shall request grooming assistance from the adjacent club in the area. The assisting club will be reimbursed at their contracted rate per mile and the club requesting the assistance will be credited for that week of grooming. Both clubs must agree on the mutual aid before entering another club’s trail system and the specific time period shall be discussed and agreed upon before the time of grooming.

## **G. VAST Trail Debrushing – (Revised 04/12)**

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1. Local clubs are responsible for maintaining the trails within their area. It is the intent of this policy to assist local club volunteers by providing grants that will allow clubs to hire individuals or contractors to complete planned woody brush and limb removal. Trails must be Corridor Trails that are part of the SSTS (Statewide Snowmobile Trail System) and be shown on the current VAST map. This policy does not include routine removal of blow downs.
2. Grants for debrushing by a contractor or individual with brush hog, or side arm type equipment are authorized on existing VAST trails to the extent that funds budgeted for this purpose allow.
3. Grants for debrushing will be made to clubs only.
4. Applications for debrushing must be made in accordance with the procedures outlined for trail construction. The application deadline is **June 30<sup>th</sup>**.
5. Reimbursement for debrushing will be made at the following rates according to the type of equipment used to debrush the trails:

- **\$45/hour not to exceed \$90/mile** (this per mile rate is based on the contract mile which includes brushing both sides of the trail) for mechanized equipment that is towed by a tractor or ATV. This classification is for brush hog and other types of mowers.
  - **\$65/hour not to exceed \$130/mile** (this per mile rate is based on the contract mile which includes brushing both sides of the trail) for a tractor with a side arm mower or another type of attachment capable of removing overhead limbs and woody brush.
6. All debrushing for which a grant is received must be completed in accordance with the standards in the *VAST Guide for the Development of Snowmobile Trails*, latest edition.
  7. Clubs or grooming contractors responsible for the area may be reimbursed for up to 1/3 of the mileage within their area of responsibility each year. The County Trails Coordinator and the VAST Trails Administrator will determine club mileages. Payments will not be made until the Trails Coordinator has verified the debrushing is completed.

## H. Plowed Parking Areas

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VAST Clubs and contractors may be eligible to be reimbursed for the winter maintenance of parking areas that access the VAST Statewide Snowmobile Trail System. In order to be eligible for the plowed parking area program, the club/contractor shall have an annual agreement with VAST stating the following:

- Responsible parties for the winter maintenance of the parking area
- The name and location of the parking area
- The reimbursement rate made to the responsible party

The reimbursement rates are not to exceed the hourly rate unless the club/contractor has been authorized prior to the season. The following rates have been approved for the following types of snow removal equipment:

- \$50/hour: Pickup trucks
- \$80/hour: Loaders & Grooming Equipment

In order to be eligible for this program, new clubs/contractors shall submit their plowed parking area application by **June 1<sup>st</sup>**. The

following criterion has been established and will be reviewed and approved by the VAST Trails Administrator and the County Trails Coordinator:

- The parking area shall be located on the most current edition of the VAST Trails Map
- The location of the parking area shall be made available on the VAST Website, and the VAST News
- The parking area should be signed accordingly to inform the public that this parking area accesses the VAST Trail System
- There shall be no fees charged to park in the parking area
- The club/contractor shall invoice VAST once a month during the snowmobile season.
- The plowing contractor must be legally insured.
- Businesses that offer services and benefit from snowmobiling will not be eligible for the program.
- Approval will also be based on the location of the parking area on the Statewide Snowmobile Trails System, need, proximity to other plowed parking areas and endorsement from the club responsible for maintaining the trails in that area.

## **I. Signing Reimbursement**

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Proper and adequate trail signing is an important factor in trail safety and providing members with information, which will enhance their riding experience on the Statewide Snowmobile Trail System. This trail signing policy has been adopted to help clubs enhance their trail signing efforts.

1. Local VAST clubs are responsible for placing and removing trail signs on VAST trails within their area of responsibility. Signs should be placed in accordance with guidelines set forth in the VAST *Guidelines for Snowmobile Trail Signing and Placement* manual, latest edition.
2. As part of new trail construction, clubs may receive their initial signing needs from the VAST Trails Administrator at no charge. Maintenance/upkeep will be by normal cost share procedures.
3. Special Signs - If approved and funds are available, specialty signs will be cost shared with the club at 50% of the original cost of the signs. VAST clubs will be reimbursed under the Signing

Reimbursement Program after the spring of the current VAST fiscal year. In order for the reimbursement to be considered, all invoices must be submitted at the time of the application.

The following criteria will be considered when granting the club's request for special signing: Request from Landowner, Location of Sign, Contents of Sign and Cost of signs.

4. Clubs may be reimbursed at the rate of \$5 per mile for placing and removing trail signs to the extent that funds for this purpose are budgeted.
5. Reimbursement will be made after trail signs and stakes have been installed and verified by the County Trails Coordinator.
6. Submittal of this application shall be no later than **June 1st** of each year following the snowmobile season. Clubs may be denied their request if their trails aren't properly signed according to the Guidelines for Snowmobile Trail Signing and Placement.
7. In some areas, trail signs may be left in place in the off-season at the landowner's discretion.
8. County Trails Coordinators will provide updated mileage for each club.

## **J. Resolution of Disputes**

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From time to time disputes may arise over decisions that have been made by VAST employees, about trails and/or grooming, and/or within county clubs and or local clubs. The following steps shall be taken to resolve disputes that may arise:

Step 1 –The aggrieved party shall contact the County Trails Coordinator and the VAST Trails Administrator/Coordinator and outline their grievance. If the problem cannot be resolved at this level, in seven days, the process shall proceed to step 2.

Step 2 –The aggrieved party shall state their grievance in writing to the Executive Director and President of VAST. They shall determine what steps are to be taken to alleviate the grievance. This process shall be completed within 14 days. If the aggrieved party is not satisfied with the results the process will go to step 3.

Step 3 –If the aggrieved party is dissatisfied with the results of step 2 the President shall appoint an impartial committee of three to investigate the matter. The committee shall meet and rule on the grievance within 14 days.

Step 4 –If the aggrieved party is dissatisfied with the ruling of the committee, in step 3, they may petition the Board of Directors to hold a hearing on the issue. The Board shall hold the hearing with in 30 days of receipt of the request. The ruling of the Board shall be final.