



The Quiet Times

The Alaska Quiet Rights Coalition
P.O. Box 202592 Anchorage, AK 99520
907-566-3524

1998 Quiet Times

This newsletter is the first of four planned by the Alaska Quiet Rights Coalition (AQRC) for 1998. This first issue is focused on snow machines. The next publications will discuss helicopters (spring), jet skis and airboats (summer) and ATV's (fall).

Each newsletter will have news from around the state about particular problems and solutions associated with the machine featured in that issue. Please submit news from your locale.

Each newsletter will contain a supplement, carefully researched and meant to be accurate. These supplements are designed to be informational and educational, ideas that readers may find useful in staying informed, or putting together public testimony. (See the attached material on snow machines.) If you are interested in participating in research for any of the upcoming topics please contact AQRC. We need your contributions.

Quiet Thoughts

Do we really need to listen to it because somebody built it and somebody else bought it? Shouldn't the burden of proof be on the manufacturer and retailer that their product will not harm, pollute, or otherwise wreak havoc on public lands and private property? Doesn't the legislature have some responsibility for protecting us and protecting the commons? Doesn't the machine owner have responsibility for the effects of machine use?

AORC Board Report

In just a little over one year, AQRC has about 500 supporters including contacts all over the state. The interest in keeping our homes and recreational areas peaceful is very widespread. We have a solid organization with hard working committees. We have submitted incorporation papers, drafted by-laws, created a funding plan and a program plan. This fall AQRC had a successful Quiet Rights Day for public participation, and has been active in presentations to heads of various agencies as well as local groups. Our priorities for 1998 include active input into the new Chugach National Forest Management Plan, continuing education of our legislators about Quiet Rights/property rights/trespassing trails, and education of the media about quiet issues.

Programs of interest to AQRC supporters are scheduled monthly on the second Thursday. Watch the Anchorage Daily News or call for specific information.

Our messages are clear. Please make them your messages as well:

- 1) Quiet is a Natural Resource and needs to be treated as such by all governing bodies.**
- 2) Some areas in Alaska have reached a population density such that multi-use trails aren't working.**
- 3) The carrying capacity of public lands for various activities needs to be determined prior to any permitting.**



NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

Petersville/Tokositna Area

The upper Susitna Valley contains a large area full of rural homes and cabins that is situated south of Denali State Park and west of the Parks Highway. The area has been described in eloquent prose by Richard Leo. In recent years this once peaceful place has been overrun with recreational snow machines, many from Anchorage.

The Tokosha Citizens Council, the Tokosha Trails Group, some dog mushers, skiers, local residents, local snowmachiners and many individuals have all complained about the loss of their recreational opportunities and peaceful life-styles to recreational snowmachiners using trespassing trails. The Department of Fish and Game is concerned about the effect on post-rut moose areas in the Petersville Hills.

The State of Alaska, Division of Parks and Recreation, hired Scott Heidorn, a Fairbanks snowmachiner, to look at the conflicts in the area. This project is being called the Petersville Winter Access Project (or Petersville Winter Trails in other communications). In spite of the Denali State Park master plan, which recommends some non-motorized areas, no protection for the Park has been suggested. Instead, the effort seems to be to find ways to funnel more snow machines into Denali State Park and the wildlife sensitive upper Tokositna River area.

Heidorn is suggesting trails for snow machines along three alternative routes.

Residents for Responsible Development (RRD)

(from South Fork to Eklutna)

A small group of concerned residents from South Fork to Eklutna met this past fall and organized the Residents for Responsible Development (RRD). It is the group's intent to form a vital network via the community councils, that can activate quick, forceful, and meaningful response to development issues which tend to negatively impact a large number of residents.

We feel it is of great importance that locals be informed and organized to take on issues of responsible development before they pass the point of no return. It is the feeling of the RRD committee that many times issues in the community are dealt with behind the scenes and are already a done deal by the time the public takes notice. RRD was formed to help turn this trend around. The current issues being addressed are the proposed snowmachine corridor envisioned from Ship Creek to Mat-Su Valley and the new snowmachine trails in Chugach State Park which are negatively impacting neighborhoods.

Eastern Kenai Peninsula

Non-motorized users of Manitoba Mountain, 5 miles north of Summit Lake, are pursuing relinquishment of state selected lands on this extremely popular ski hill. If ownership is retained by USFS, it is more likely that the area will remain open to non-motorized users only. An extreme safety hazard exists on the steep and blind curves of the access road. This area is perfect to



NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

keep open all winter to non-motorized users only. **Do the world a favor**, contact Nancy Pease at State DNR, 3601 C Street, Suite 1130., Anchorage, AK 99503 and stress the need for the state to relinquish its claim on this USFS parcel.

Also of concern on the Eastern Kenai is snowmachine use on the 14 mile Lost Lake Trail. Non-motorized users will be asking the USFS to impose a seasonal-use restriction like that in effect on the Resurrection Trail.

Homer

The Homer area is short on areas where a person can go cross country skiing and get away from the noise and exhaust of snowmachines. No back country areas there have been set aside for quiet recreation and most borough and state land has no designation other than the critical habitats of Anchor River/Fritz Creek, Fox River Flats, and the Homer Airport. It is the feeling of some Homer residents that with some effort and zoning these critical habitats and surrounding areas could be set aside for quiet recreation though enforcement would be difficult. At the heart of the problem are a few bandit operators. It is the feeling of the frustrated Homer residents that reporting these outlaw operators is next to impossible as there is no way to identify the owner of the machines. They suggest the State of Alaska change the area zoning laws, require mufflers that reduce decibel levels, and insist on a plate for the snow-machine tread that leaves an identification number.

Fairbanks

One difficulty with snow machines in the Fairbanks North Star Borough is the officially recognized FNSB Trail Commission has been taken over by snowmachine operators who are intent on having all trails declared multiple-use. When new trails are proposed the snowmachine operators demand they be at least 20 feet wide to accommodate passing snowmachines. The result is the non-motorized trail users such as dog mushers, x-country skiers, ski-jorers, etc. are always bucking opposition to any trail system designed for non-motorized use.

Within the city limits of Fairbanks, certain areas have been declared off limits to snowmachines but there is no enforcement. The small park adjacent to the borough library is designated non-motorized, but a friend who lives close by has tried to notify the police when snowmachines trespass on this park. My friend would like to go to the park with her 4 year old son to teach him to ski, but it is too dangerous.

When she called the police to report the illegal snowmachine use she was told by the officer on duty that if she continued to phone in her complaint he was going to arrest her for contempt. She then phoned the city mayor and protested to him. He informed her she was absolutely correct about no snow-machines being allowed there but wouldn't promise there would be any enforcement of the law.

Snowmachines operate throughout the city area, often traveling well above the speed limits for



NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

automobiles on the city streets. They produce noise as well as air pollution.

Theoretically all snowmachines are supposed to be registered and pay a nominal fee, but there has never been any force in that requirement and many machines go unregistered. Likewise drivers of any age may operate them, there are no speed limits, and identification of particular snowmachines is impossible because they are not required to display identification large enough to be read some distance away. The issues we are struggling with in Fairbanks are the same issues many of you are facing in your communities.

Talkeetna

The Talkeetna Community Council Trails Committee has been working with skiers, snowmachiners, mushers and other local trail users over the past year and a half, and will present trail recommendations at the next Community Council meeting on 2/2/98.

The focus of the recommendations will be to secure right of ways for existing transportation routes into town, set up additional dog-mushing and ski trail options and identify trailhead facilities needed for snowmachiners and other users.

We are hopeful that working together with various trail users we can find solutions which will minimize conflicts that come with increased use and enhance the enjoyment of all.

This newsletter is supported by a generous operating grant from the Alaska Conservation Foundation.

Excerpts From the Snow Machine Information Packet Included In This Newsletter

- **Relevant laws and regulations for snowmachines**
- **In several surveys the number of Alaskans and visitors that enjoy quiet recreation far outnumber those interested in motorized recreation.**
- **"Alaska had the highest snowmobile injury death rate in the United States."**
- **The susceptibility of small and large game species to over-harvesting by hunters using snowmachine and other mechanized forms of transport have been documented in Alaska as well as in other states.**
- **Anchorage Economic Development Council is currently involved in working with state and local agencies to develop snowmachine corridors from Anchorage to the Mat-Su Valley. This project is quickly and quietly gaining momentum.**
- **News of Alaska State Parks Recreation Survey.**

AORC Board Members

Jim Adams, Michael Allwright, Doug Brown,
Bill Cox, Cliff Eames, Dan Elliot,
Elizabeth Hatton, Richard Hensel,
Trisha Herminghaus, Tamea Isham,
Tom Meacham Nancy Michaelson, Susan Olsen
Bill Sherwonit, Kate Worthington,
Dori McDannold

*"It's the great big, broad land way up yonder, It's the forests where silence has lease,
It's the beauty that thrills me with wonder, it's the stillness that fills me with peace." R. Service*