



## United States Department of the Interior

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**  
Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building  
1 Federal Drive  
Fort Snelling, MN 55111-4056



IN REPLY REFER TO:

Dear Snowmobile Enthusiast:

As you may have heard, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is working on a study for the possible establishment of a national wildlife refuge in several counties along the Wisconsin and Illinois border between Milwaukee and Chicago. Any actual refuge proposal would be a small portion of this study area. Snowmobile trails exist in parts of the study area.

During the initial public scoping and outreach for the study we have received comments from snowmobile riders that are worried about the potential impacts of future refuge lands on existing trails and their sport in general. It is important to understand that the Service will not purchase any of the existing state and county conservation lands that currently have snowmobile trails. The only lands the Service will have any control over are those lands where some interest is purchased by the Service or management responsibility is transferred by a formal agreement.

Motorized vehicles on National Wildlife Refuges are generally permitted only on designated roads during specified times of the year. Off-road vehicle use, including ATVs and snowmobiles, is generally not permitted due to impacts on vegetation, disturbance to wildlife and other refuge users, and safety and liability issues. However, the Service objective is not to eliminate or interrupt existing snowmobile trails. The enclosed fact sheet explains this policy in greater detail.

It is possible that at some time in the future a landowner would offer land for sale to the refuge that contains a portion of an existing snowmobile trail. We do not expect this situation to occur very often. The Service would work with the landowner and snowmobile clubs to either reroute the trail or encourage a third party to obtain a permanent trail easement prior to the federal purchase. McHenry County has expressed an interest in working with landowners and the Service to secure trail easements if the situation arises. The Department of Natural Resources in Illinois and Wisconsin, the respective county governments, and local snowmobile clubs may also choose to be involved to secure an existing trail.

I hope all of your questions and concerns will be addressed in the fact sheet or in the draft plan; due this summer. In the meantime, I invite you to visit the Service conservation planning website at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/Hackmatack/index.html> for up to date information.

Please pass along this information to the members of your snowmobile association or club.

Sincerely,

Gary Muehlenhardt  
Conservation Planner, Midwest Region