



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Taking to the Trails

PATTY RITCHIE March 2, 2015

| ISSUE: **RECREATION AND TOURISM**

### Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

10,400—that's how many miles of snowmobiling trails New York State is home to. This expansive network of trails means more than just an enjoyable time for outdoor enthusiasts. Our snowmobile trails also represent a major economic driver for our tourism economy, generating roughly \$868 million annually according to a recent study by SUNY Potsdam.

Throughout Central and Northern New York, many outdoors enthusiasts—including myself—spend countless hours on their sleds during the winter months. For my family and I, there's nothing better than spending a weekend out exploring the trails in Oswego, Jefferson, Lewis and especially, St. Lawrence County. As many of you know, time spent on the trails has been a great cure for cabin fever this winter, given our record breaking cold and snowy weather.

But, snowmobiling is more than just a great pastime. Across our region, there are so many local businesses that depend on the more than 230 local snowmobile clubs in New York State—as well as their thousands of members—to help boost their bottoms lines by spending time and money in their restaurants and hotels and on things like snacks, fuel, gear, sleds and more. That's why I'm working diligently to support winter tourism in our region. Recently, I called on Albany to boost investments in trail maintenance that will help to ensure our many miles of trails stay groomed and pristine for those who spend time on them.

And, it doesn't stop there. Recently, New York State took several steps to help boost winter tourism and encourage more people to hit the trails. Recently, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation awarded over \$4 million in grants to help maintain New York's more than 10,400 miles of trails for those who travel them. Our state is second only to Maine when it comes to miles of snowmobile trails and making sure they remain top-notch is key to making sure snowmobilers can continue to enjoy the sport and to attracting new people to the pastime.

In addition, on March 7th and 8th, out-of-state and Canadian snowmobilers will be able to take to New York's trails without having to pay registration fees. This special weekend will help to provide a boost to local businesses and encourage tourists to return to our region.

While spring may technically be just a few weeks away—as all upstate New Yorkers know, there's plenty of winter weather left. Whether you're new to the sport or a serious snowmobiler, I hope you'll get the opportunity to take to New York's trails in the weeks to come.