

Testimony for Hearing on HB1346

Primary Sponsor: Eric J. Murphy, District 43

Thank you, Chairman Clemens and honorable members of the Senate Transportation Committee. For the record, my name is Eric James Murphy, representative from District 43, Grand Forks.

I was asked by a constituent to introduce this bill. He is an avid snowmobile enthusiast and rides nearly every weekend on the trails in the Red River Valley. He noted that there are many riders from out-of-state using these trails, most of whom he knows do not pay the \$25 yearly user fee. This presents a problem as these fees are used to offset the costs of maintain our 2800 miles of groomed trails.

While he certainly wants to share the over 2800 miles of groomed trails in North Dakota with our visitors, he understands it takes the dedicated service of 14 snow mobile clubs from around the state to maintain these trails.

In North Dakota, the Department of Parks and Recreation, with the help of 14 snow mobile clubs around the state, groom over 13 snowmobile trails that are just over 2800 miles in total length. These trails are generally open from December 1st through April 1st and are open to North Dakota residents with registered snowmobiles and our visitors from out-of-state who have paid for a public trails and land access use permit.

For North Dakota residents, a fee of \$50 is assessed to register their snowmobile for a two-year period. This registration must be firmly affixed to the side of the snowmobile and displayed in a manner that is discernable and this registration allows for the complete use of the snowmobile trail system. Failure to display the registration results in a \$50 fine.

For our out-of-state snowmobile enthusiasts, the cost of a public trails and land access use permit is \$25 yearly and presently does not have to be displayed on the snowmobile. This makes it difficult for other snowmobilers and law enforcement to discern who has and who has not paid the \$25 fee. In the last three years, 334 permits have been sold and 10 citations for use without a permit have been issued since 2018.

This bill requires out-of-state snowmobile enthusiasts to display the public trails and land access use permit on their snowmobile consistent with what is required by North Dakota residents. This is delineated in 39-24-04 see Section 1, 3a of the bill. Prior to receiving the decal form of their permit, they have a five-day grace period where the online receipt may be presented in lieu of the decal.

Failure to display the public trails and land access use permit will be assessed a fine (fee) of \$50, again, consistent with the penalty for North Dakota residents who fail to display their registration decal. This penalty is delineated in 39-24-11 see Section 2, 2 of the bill.

In addition, unnecessary language was deleted from these sections as well in this updated section of North Dakota Century Code.

In summary, while we embrace all users of our over 2800 miles of snowmobile trails found in 13 trail systems, it is important to apply the same rules of use to North Dakota residents and to our out-of-state visitors. User fees help offset the cost of maintaining this system and it is important to collect these fees from all users of the public trail system.

While I am not a snowmobile enthusiast and must confess, I have never ridden a snowmobile, it does look like it would be a bit of a thrill ride that all users help pay this cost. These changes make North Dakota similar in requirements for display of the out-of-state public trails use permits, similar to the requirements in Minnesota and in Montana.

Thank you for your consideration and I urge a do pass vote on HB1346.