

TRAIL POLICY MANUAL



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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. These policies and procedures along with any revisions are current as of May, 2016. In order for Grant-in-Aid Application to be considered clubs/contractors must be compliant with all VAST policies and by-laws (*latest edition*).

A. Trail and Bridge Development

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

- In order to qualify for a grant a designated representative from each club who applies for construction grant in aid funding must attend the most recent VAST Spring Construction Seminar, or review the approved course curriculum online and acknowledge that they have reviewed, and understand all information contained within the curriculum by completing the exercise. By signing the Trails Agreement Form the designated representative from the applying club acknowledges that they and the applying club will be responsible for completing the project according to the VAST Guide for The Development of Snowmobile Trails and will adhere to the information outlined in the course curriculum. Upon request, the course curriculum materials can be sent directly to clubs not able to participate online. Clubs who participate using this format must acknowledge through the designated agent that they have reviewed, and understand all information contained within the curriculum via signed agreement.
- 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 and VAST Trails Administrator shall review and approve all construction grant-in-aid applications. Work on the project should not begin until written approval has been granted by the VAST Trails Administrator.
- In order to avoid the appearance of impropriety, or a conflict of interest, County Trail Coordinators shall not sign off on Grant-in-Aid Applications or corresponding paperwork for the club to which they belong. Paperwork shall be signed by the County Director or an authorized agent as outlined in the corresponding counties by-laws, or as approved by the VAST Trails Administrator upon written notice from the County Trail Coordinator.
- Projects submitted as part of a Grant-in-Aid Application may be inspected at the discretion of the Trails Administrator.

- Completed applications shall be submitted for the next fiscal year and must be received in the VAST office by **June 30th** 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 (*see section B. Priority Ranking of Corridor Trail Projects*).
- Projects shall be approved in priority order up to the amount budgeted for the fiscal year.
- Work on projects may be started upon receipt of notification that the project has been approved for construction, however funding may not be available until after October 1st.
- Projects that are denied may be re-submitted the next fiscal year.
- All projects not completed by December 15th of each year may be carried over. Extensions should be requested in writing to the VAST Trails Administrator prior to 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 (*as outlined in the VAST Guide for the Development of Snowmobile Trails (latest edition)*) by removing obstructions alongside of trail, in tread, widening curve radii, increasing sight distance at critical locations, etc. or by correcting underlying causes of dangerous conditions like erosion, 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. Installation of gates and culverts
4. Projects on secondary trails using the same priorities as used for corridor trails.

b. Trail Construction

1. Trail relocation due to land closure, landowner request or onto a permanent easement or unplowed public highway or projects that remove trails from a plowed highway, river or other body of water.
2. Project upgrades trail to a higher class as approved by Club, County, and the VAST Trails Committee:

- 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.
3. Construction of new trails as proven necessary and approved by the county and VAST Trails Committee. The following criteria shall be used when determining the practicality of the project.
- Permanence of Trail (*location on Federal, State or private land, or onto an easement*)
 - Level and cost of construction
 - Current grooming situation
 - Equipment used to maintain the trail
 - The cost associated with adding miles to current grooming contract as well as projected usual and unusual maintenance costs that may be necessary going forward.
 - Length of season and area where trail will be located (*higher elevations vs. lowlands and valleys*)
 - Volume of traffic on adjacent trails and new trail
 - Major trail connections (*E-W, N-S corridors*)
 - Connection to services
- 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.

4. Projects on secondary trails using the same priorities as used for corridor trails.

Bridge Policy

All bridge construction projects will require the standard construction documents including but not limited to Stream Alterations Permit/approval, Army Corp of Engineers Permit/approval, Local Zoning Permit/approval as well as 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. Clubs will be responsible for obtaining the necessary permits/approvals and providing them to the VAST Trails Administrator before any construction begins.

Landowner Bridge Agreement

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

- Allow the local club, VAST, or their representatives to enter & remove the bridge from their property, and repair the property in a good and husband like fashion.
- Purchase the bridge from VAST at its fair market value as determined by VAST or its duly authorized agent at the time of sale.
- Become sole owner of the bridge (*if the original cost for construction of the bridge was less than \$2,500*) and save the local snowmobile club, VAST and any of their agents or servants harmless from any liability arising out of the construction, use, or ownership thereof.

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.

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 Trails Request for Reimbursement must demonstrate this inspection. Approved projects shall be reimbursed based on the following criteria:

- Upon proof of payment, 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 detailed/itemized invoices must be submitted by the project coordinator and provided with payment request. Donated equipment, materials or services will not be reimbursed.
- VAST reserves the right to consider reimbursement or funding from any and all other sources in determining a net figure as the 100% reimbursement amount.
- Upon proof of payment labor associated with contracted equipment may be reimbursed at the discretion of the County Trails Coordinator and VAST Trails Administrator. All other incurred labor cost will be at the club's expense unless previously approved by the VAST Trails Administrator.
- If the total cost of a project exceeds the amount approved by the VAST Trails Administrator the overage will be the responsibility of the applying club. The overage, or a portion of the overage may be paid at the discretion of the VAST Trails Administrator.
- Any and all reimbursement or funding available or anticipated, from any source, to offset the cost of the project shall be disclosed to VAST prior to any determination of the project cost. VAST reserves the right to reevaluate its determination of the project cost in the event that funds become available to offset the cost following its initial determination.”

B. Trail Signing Standards

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. 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*.
2. Clubs may receive their initial signing needs for new trail construction at no charge if the trail has been approved by the Trails Committee and Board of Directors through the outlined process. Maintenance/upkeep will be by normal cost share procedures. Signs must be obtained and installed prior to December 16th of the season in which the new trail was constructed.
3. Water Crossing Signage as outlined in the Guidelines for Snowmobile Trail Signing and Placement manual, latest edition, shall be in place prior to the start of the snowmobile season on December 16th. Photos of the signs in place shall be taken and sent to the VAST Trails Administrator on an annual basis. These signs are available for order through the VAST office and will be provided to the VAST Clubs in need at no cost.
4. In some areas, trail signs may be left in place in the off-season at the landowner's discretion.
5. All signs that are visible from a public right of way installed by a VAST club shall be removed at the end of the snowmobile season.

C. Equipment Program Policies

1. Minimum Standards for Power Units and Grooming Equipment

a. Power Units

| <u>Class</u> | <u>Power Unit Drag Width</u> | <u>Examples</u> |
|--------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Minimum 8' | Tucker 2000 Series, Tractor Conversion - 8'+, PistenBully 100 or larger, Prinoth Trooper or equivalent & other units as approved by the Trails Committee & VAST Trails Administrator. |
| 2 | Minimum 7' | Tucker 1000, Tractor Conversion 7'+, PistenBully Paana or equivalent & other units as approved by the Trails Committee & VAST Trails Administrator |

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|---|-----------------|---|
| 3 | Minimum 6' | Tractor Conversions 6' +, Track Truck, Argo Centaur, Tracked ATV's & other units as approved by the Trails Committee VAST Trails Administrator. |
| 4 | Minimum 4' Drag | Alpine, Skandic, Polaris wide-track/long track, Yamaha VK 540, Arctic Cat Bearcat, Tracked ATV's & other units as approved by The Trails Committee & VAST Trails Administrator. |

b. Class 4 Grooming Policy

Class 4 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 4 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 4 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 (*for Class 1, 2 and 3 Equipment*) must be of a side-rail design with multiple cutting blades, packing pan 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 5/16*)

At times it may become necessary to place a moratorium on the purchase of grooming equipment due to a lack of revenue. A moratorium on the purchase of grooming equipment will be at the recommendation of the VAST Trails Administrator and approved by the VAST Board of Directors and Governors Snowmobile Council.

a. Equipment Grant-In-Aid Criteria

1. Grant amount will be based on the net purchase price. The maximum purchase price for a power unit will be set at \$200,000. Any expense above \$200,000 will be the responsibility of the grant applicant.
2. No equipment grant-in-aid for acquisition of equipment over 20 years old.
3. Financial capabilities of the Club/Contractor including anticipated or received funding from any grants or loans.
4. Volume of Non-Commercial Snowmobile Traffic
5. 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)
(as approved by the Trails Committee & Board of Directors).
 - 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. The application should include information regarding sources of funding for the purchase. If grants have been applied for, or will be applied for, information regarding them shall be appended to the application. If loans have been applied for, all information regarding them should be included with the application. If the financial position of the club changes after submission of the application, the application shall be amended to reflect the change. When VAST acts to review the application, it should be fully informed regarding all financial circumstances surrounding the proposed purchase.

The designated agent for the grooming contractor and/or the club president will be asked to sign the application. The club/contractor will be responsible to VAST for the accuracy of the information submitted on the grant application. If information contained within the submitted and signed application is found to be false/inaccurate the grant will be denied/revoked upon discretion of the VAST Trails Administrator.

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 1: 25 miles
- Class 2: 25 miles
- Class 3: 15 miles
- Class 4: 10 miles

Grooming equipment should not be contracted for more than 60 one-way miles of trail (i.e. 60 miles x 2 ways x twice per week equals 240 miles divided by 6 mph – 40 hours).

c. Purchase of Equipment

Up to 65% of the net purchase price (*as defined below*) for Class 1, 2 and 3 Power Units with the grant payment to be determined based on the contractual mileage and the contract weeks. The club/contractors contract weeks will determine the maximum grant allotment for the purchase of the power unit. The tables below represent the percentages divided into the two categories.

Maximum Grant Amounts are subject to change based on the following; *Table A. Percent changes in CPI for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): U.S. city average-All Items less food and energy*; <http://www.bls.gov/cpi/cpid1401.pdf>. The percentage in the *Unadjusted 12-mos. ended Jan.* of the current year will be multiplied by the maximum grant amount from the preceding year to come up with the new maximum grant amount. Once calculated the grant amounts will be approved by the Trails Committee and Board of Directors.

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 the contract weeks for the upcoming season:*

| | |
|-----------------|----------|
| 0-7.9 Weeks: | \$33,000 |
| 8.0-11.9 Weeks: | \$49,500 |
| 12.0-16 Weeks: | \$66,000 |

Example: Club A has 45 miles on their VAST Tailored Grooming contract and 11.5 contract weeks.

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

Based on the contract weeks, the maximum grant allotment is \$49,500. 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 based on the current Consumer Price Index.

Net purchase price means the total paid for the grooming equipment after deducting the value of any trade-ins, credits, discounts, incentives, grants (*whether received or pending*). All amounts of potential funding shall be clearly disclosed by the applicant prior to the release of any grant in aid funding by VAST.

If grants have been applied for, a description of the grant, the amount, and the proposed date of notification of approval shall be provided to the Trails Administrator. The applying club shall provide a signed authorization for release of information to VAST which will disclose all grant information as part of the grant application process and prior to any grant funds being released.

VAST grant funds shall not be applied towards grant writing fees or any other pre or post administrative grant costs.

If a grant or other source of funding is secured by the applicant after approval, or receipt of the VAST grant VAST reserves the right to reevaluate the VAST portion of the grant and act upon the decision accordingly.

A copy of the bill of sale for all power units being traded/sold will be required. The selling price will be deducted from the purchase price of the new power unit. Net purchase price will be calculated as noted above. It will be up to the discretion of the VAST Trails Administrator to determine if the bill of sale reflects the actual fair market value of the equipment being traded/sold.

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 contract weeks. 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 member from the Trails Committee may not be from the same county as the club whose application is being reviewed. The subcommittee will approve or deny the special request according to eligibility and need.

Example # 1: Club has 64 miles and 12.6 contract 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 \$66,000 based on the current Consumer Price Index.

Example #2: Club has 78 miles and 8.0 contract 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 \$49,500 based on the current Consumer Price Index.

e. Class 4 Equipment

Clubs applying for an equipment grant for Class 4 equipment shall be eligible for 50% of the net purchase price (*as defined above*).

If the club/contractor has more than 20 class 4 contract miles they may be eligible for an additional power unit.

f. 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.

g. Capital Repairs of Existing Owned Equipment

Capital Repairs Grants for multiple power units shall be submitted separately per minimum (*for each power unit*) below.

50% of documented purchased parts and labor per minimum below will be reimbursed at the Trails Administrators discretion. The Trails Administrator shall have the right to any and all information deemed by him/her to be relevant to the decision, including but not limited to, the need for the repair, the cause of the need for repair, the age of the equipment and expected useful life of the equipment, and the financial ability of the owner of the equipment.

Total not to exceed 50% of fair market value of equipment.

The total grant amount per power unit will be capped at \$15,000 per year.

Class 1 = \$2,000

Class 2 = \$1,500

Class 3 = \$1,000

Class 4 = \$800

Glass, fluids, filters, batteries, paint, and body work or add on accessories and equipment or any repairs that could be considered annual routine maintenance will not be considered for reimbursement.

Capital Repairs Grants will not cover tracks, track belts, grousers and cleats for any equipment less than 10 years old.

Power units that are minimum of 10 years old may be eligible for a capital repairs grant for expenses incurred, due to normal wear and tear, on tracks, track belts, grousers, as priority and funding allow and at discretion of the Trails Administrator.

All other capital repairs of existing owned equipment polices shall apply.

A minimum of \$25,000 will be set aside from the equipment grants line item to be used for emergency repairs to power units during the winter months. Funding for emergency repairs will be on a first come, first serve basis determined by the date a completed application is received at the VAST office. The amount of this funding that is not used in a given fiscal year will be carried forward into the next fiscal year to be used for the same purpose.

h. Lien Period for Service Payback

1. VAST Clubs and contractors that purchase *new* Class 1, 2 and 3 power units will be eligible for another equipment grant once the power unit in service which is proposed to be traded or sold for a new unit has groomed 2,500 hours and five seasons following the receipt of the initial grant. This policy is in effect starting with the FY 15 grants and will apply to all subsequent grants thereafter.
2. VAST Clubs and contractors that purchase *used* Class 1, 2 and 3 power units will be eligible for an equipment grant once the power unit in service which is proposed to be traded or sold for another unit has groomed an additional 1,500 hours or seven seasons following the receipt of the initial grant. This policy is in effect starting with the FY 15 grants and will apply to all subsequent grants thereafter.
3. VAST Clubs and contractors that purchase *new* Class 4 power units will be eligible for an equipment grant once the power unit in service, which is proposed to be traded or sold has groomed 3,500 miles and five seasons following the receipt of the initial grant.
4. VAST Clubs and contractors that purchase *used* Class 4 power units will be eligible for an equipment grant once the power unit in service which is proposed to be traded or sold has groomed 1,750 miles or five seasons following the receipt of the initial grant.
5. 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.
6. VAST clubs and contractors that receive a Capital Repairs Grant will not be eligible for a grant to replace the power unit they received the grant for based on the following;
 - Up to \$5,000 Grant Amount - 1 Year
 - Up to \$10,000 Grant Amount - 2 Years
 - Up to \$15,000 Grant Amount - 3 Years

When equipment is purchased or repaired, using any of the above listed grant in aid programs, a lien will be placed on said equipment based on the expected useful life of the equipment which is outlined in 1 through 6 above. If the grooming club/contractor holds the equipment for the specified number of miles, hours and/or seasons as outlined in 1 through 6 above following the receipt of the initial grant there is no proration of the Grant-in-Aid amount. In the event that the equipment is sold, traded

or any interest in ownership is transferred before the specified number of miles, hours and/or seasons as outlined in 1 through 6 above, the owner will be obligated to repay VAST for the remaining prorated amount, or that amount will be deducted from any successive Grant-in-Aid approved.

No equipment grants will be awarded based on the above criteria 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. If hour meter readings are not available the number of seasons the equipment has groomed will be used to determine eligibility for the grant.

Provided, however, that in the event that the owner proposes to sell equipment purchased with the benefit of any of the listed grant in aid programs prior the expected useful life of the equipment which is outlined in 1 through 6 above, VAST shall have the Right of First Refusal to purchase the equipment on the same terms as are proposed for the sale or transfer by the owner. VAST shall have thirty days from the written notification to VAST by the owner of the proposed transfer, and the terms of the proposed sale. VAST shall have the right to deduct the prorated amount of the grant remaining from the price paid by it under this Right of First Refusal.

In the event that any equipment which was purchased or repaired with the use of funds from or through any VAST program is proposed to be sold or traded the VAST Trails Administrator shall be notified and shall be given any and all information requested regarding the proposed transfer.

A Release signed by the VAST Trails Administrator and VAST Executive Director shall be required in order to release VASTS interests in any equipment being sold or transferred for which Grant-in-Aid funding was received in which a lien still applies. This policy is in effect starting with the FY 17 grants and will apply to all subsequent grants thereafter.

Class 3 and 4 equipment for which grant in aid funding is sought that is titled according to Vermont law shall have VAST listed as a lien holder in the second position in the event that bank financing has been a source of funding, or as the first lien holder in the event that there is no bank financing involved in the purchase. A copy of the title listing VAST as a lien holder shall be provided to VAST prior to any funding being released for the said equipment.

i. 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.

j. 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 5/16)*

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, emergency response services and other membership clubs and organizations, for the reasons stated above.

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**.
 - a.) The application should include information regarding sources of funding for the purchase, whether the funding is coming through the club or the organization the club is assisting with the grant. If grants have been applied for, or will be applied for, information regarding them shall be appended to the application. If loans have been applied for, all information regarding them should be included with the application. If the financial position of the applicant (club and/or organization being assisted) changes after submission of the application, the application shall be amended to reflect the change. When VAST acts to review the application, it should be fully informed regarding all financial circumstances surrounding the proposed purchase. Upon approval of the grant request, the payment will be made directly to the club applying for the grant-in-aid upon proof of payment. The club should submit the application and disperse the grant-in-aid money to the organization they are assisting upon final approval and receipt of the grant.
 - b.) If grants have been applied for, by either the club or the organization being assisted, a description of the grant, the amount, and the proposed date of notification of approval shall be provided to the Trails Administrator. The applying club or organization being assisted shall provide a signed authorization for release of information to VAST which will disclose all grant information as part of the grant application process and prior to any grant funds being released.

- c.) VAST grant funds shall not be applied towards grant writing fees or any other pre or post administrative grant costs.
 - d.) If a grant or other source of funding is secured by the club or the organization being assisted after approval, or receipt of the VAST grant, VAST reserves the right to reevaluate the VAST portion of the grant and act upon the decision accordingly.
 - e.) The designated agent for the club, along with a designated agent of the organization being assisted, will be asked to sign the application, and will be responsible to VAST for the accuracy of the information submitted on the grant application. If information contained within the submitted and signed application is found to be false/inaccurate the grant will be denied/revoked upon discretion of the VAST Trails Administrator.
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 for a 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% of the net purchase price not to exceed a maximum of \$10,000.
Net purchase price means the total paid for the rescue equipment after deducting the value of any trade-ins, credits, discounts, incentives, grants (whether received or pending). All amounts of potential funding shall be clearly disclosed by the applicant prior to the release of any grant in aid funding by VAST
 4. Grant-in-aid liens will be placed on all equipment and repayment will be five years.
 - a.) Provided, however, that in the event that the owner proposes to sell equipment purchased with the benefit of any of the listed grant in aid programs prior the expected useful life of the equipment, VAST shall have the Right of First Refusal to purchase the equipment on the same terms as are proposed for the sale or transfer by the owner. VAST shall have thirty days from the written notification to VAST by the owner of the proposed transfer, and the terms of the proposed sale. VAST shall have the right to deduct the prorated amount of the grant remaining from the price paid by it under this Right of First Refusal.
 - b.) In the event that any equipment which was purchased with the use of funds from or through any VAST program is proposed to be sold or traded the VAST Trails Administrator shall be notified and shall be given any and all information requested regarding the proposed transfer.
 - c.) A Release signed by the VAST Trails Administrator and VAST Executive Director shall be required in order to release VASTS interests in any equipment being sold or transferred for which Grant-in-Aid funding was received in which a lien still applies.

D. Grooming Contract Policies and Procedures

1. Tailored Grooming Contract

The contract weeks in the Tailored Grooming Contract will be based on the higher of the club/contractors five year or sixteen year grooming average as calculated at the conclusion of the 2012-2013 season. For clubs/contractors being issued new grooming contracts the contract weeks will be determined by the County Trail Coordinator and VAST Trails Administrator, taking into account the counties average contract weeks. These contract weeks will be used until adequate data is obtained for determining contract weeks. The contract weeks will be used to determine the startup payment, contract cap and grooming subsidy as described below.

2. 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 the club/contractors contract mileage multiplied by their rate of pay multiplied by their contract weeks, and will be indicated on their grooming contract. *(see example 1 below)*

Example #1: Club has a 50 mile, class 1 contract, and 10 contract weeks.

(50 miles x 4 (grooming 50 miles each way two times per week) x \$12 (rate paid per traveled mile for class 1) x 10 contract weeks = \$24,000 (grooming contract cap).

While the CAP allows for full payment of first and second-time grooming of all contracted trails for the contract 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 contract prior to reaching their contract weeks. A club/contractor may groom beyond contract weeks if contract mileage has not been exceeded.

Clubs/contractors will not be reimbursed for exceeding their grooming contract until they have reached both their contract weeks and contract mileage. *(see example 2 below)*

Example #2 (Based on grooming contract as outlined in Example 1 above)

Grooming Contract of \$24,000/\$12 paid per mile = 2,000 miles for the 10 contract weeks.

The club must groom 2,000 miles and 10 weeks before they are eligible to be paid for 1 time per week grooming above and beyond their \$24,000, 2,000 mile grooming contract.

Once clubs/contractors reach their contract weeks and mileage they may be reimbursed for grooming their contract mileage up to a maximum of one time per week, as approved by the County Trails Coordinator and VAST Trails Administrator. Under all circumstances clubs/contractors will need to submit a written request, to their County Trail Coordinator and the VAST Trails Administrator, at least 5 days in advance of

reaching their contract weeks and mileage. In turn the club/contractor must receive written approval from the VAST Trails Administrator prior to exceeding their cap.

Clubs/Contractors who have fulfilled their grooming contract and have adhered to the policies listed above will not be paid for any additional grooming until all TMA's are submitted and income and expenses for the season have been reconciled and there is sufficient revenue to meet the grooming expenses.

VAST also recognizes that a special circumstance may arise, which may force increased grooming in specific locations (*low snow statewide except in a few locations*). 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 grooming in a manner that will assure that the total grooming budget, for any given year, is not exceeded.

3. Startup Payment

Prior to the beginning of the grooming season, VAST will issue payment to each contracted club or contractor a start-up payment equal to 12.5% of their grooming contract cap. 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.

4. 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 be based upon a percentage of the grooming contract cap according to the club/contractors contract weeks as per the table below. This payment will be less the club's startup payment and any grooming payments made during the season.

| Contract Weeks | % of Contract Guaranteed |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 0-7.9 Weeks | 30% |
| 8-11.9 Weeks | 35% |
| 12 -16 Weeks | 40% |

- 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 club/contractor's grooming subsidy.

- 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.

5. Contingency Fund

The contingency fund shall be used only for the purpose of paying grooming clubs/contractors in the event the statewide expenses for grooming, in a given season, exceed the amount budgeted in the grooming line item. This fund shall not be used to pay clubs for grooming beyond a second time in a given week or for grooming over their contract under any circumstances.

6. Grooming Contract Renewal/Revocation

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 once or 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 (SSTS) should be logged on the proper grooming log sheets and must be submitted on a weekly basis.

The tailored grooming contract is issued based on the club/contractor's contract weeks when grooming trails twice weekly, the contract mileage and the equipment classification. Weekly and total mileage above the two time cap will not be paid.

Contract mileage is determined by the one-way ground miles within the club/contractor's area. Grooming in other areas on the SSTS is by mutual consent between the club/contractor and VAST Trails Administrator and shall be authorized in advance.

In the event of equipment breakdown, the club/contractor must notify the County Trails Coordinator and VAST Trails Administrator, and arrange with an adjoining club/contractor to groom until equipment repairs are completed. The assisting club will be reimbursed at their contracted rate per mile and funding used for reimbursement will count towards the grooming cap of the club requesting the assistance. 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.

Mileage submitted while the power unit is towing a compactor bar, roller or other type of equipment other than a drag as specified above will be reimbursed at the discretion of the County Trail Coordinator and VAST Trails Administrator.

Trails must be signed according to the VAST Guidelines for Snowmobile Trail Signing Manual (*latest edition*).

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 grooming the SSTS. The Financial Analysis form will be sent out with the grooming contracts annually. Final grooming payments for the current year will not be authorized until this form 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 reflect the actual costs 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
- Failure to submit all grooming logs and financial analysis

All grooming log sheets and the financial analysis must be submitted by grooming clubs/contractors to the VAST office no later than July 1st annually. If the grooming club/contractor fails to meet this deadline they will forfeit the remaining balance of their grooming contract for that season. A certified letter will be sent out to grooming clubs/contractors who have not submitted their paperwork on June 1st annually to remind them of the impending deadline.

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.

Operation of grooming equipment while under the influence of drugs or alcohol is ***strictly prohibited***. In the event that an operator is proven to be operating a groomer while impaired by alcohol or drugs, whether prescription or not, VAST reserves the right in its sole and unbridled discretion to reconsider the contractors/clubs grooming contract.

In order to operate a piece of grooming equipment you must be 18 years of age.

All highway & railroad crossings shall be left clean after the grooming equipment passes through.

7. Verification of Trail Mileages *(Revised 05/13)*

It will be up to the County Trail Coordinator and VAST Trails Administrator to verify contract mileage.

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

Clubs that have had their trail system mapped by GPS *(Class 1, 2, and 3 contracts)* will utilize the mileages verified by GPS technology.

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

(The following rates are based on 2014 grooming rates)

| | | |
|---------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Class 1 | 8 Ft. Minimum Width | \$12.00 Traveled Mile |
| Class 2 | 7 Ft. Minimum Width | \$ 9.25 Traveled Mile |
| Class 3 | 6 Ft. Minimum Width | \$ 6.90 Traveled Mile |
| Class 4 | 4 Ft. Minimum Width | \$ 3.95 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.

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.

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

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 and/or appropriate by the Board to include civil and criminal prosecution.

F. Open Season Trail Closures

The closed season is defined as the time from April 16th to December 15th annually. The only exception is for grooming, maintenance and rescue operations, otherwise, snowmobilers may be fined by law enforcement. VAST clubs also have 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
- 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 Manager*)
- 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 12/15)

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 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 30th**.
5. Reimbursement for debrushing will be made at the following rates according to the type of equipment used to debrush the trails:
 - **\$45/hour** for mechanized equipment that is towed by a tractor or ATV. This classification is for brush hog and other types of mowers.
 - **\$65/hour** for a tractor with a side arm mower or another type of attachment capable of removing overhead limbs and woody brush.
6. There shall be no reimbursement for debrushing completed with handheld equipment except where mandated by the USDA Forest Service or the State of Vermont. This work will be reimbursed at **\$25/hour** as approved by the VAST Trails Administrator.
7. 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.
8. 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. Donated equipment, materials or services will not be reimbursed.
 - VAST reserves the right to consider reimbursement or funding from any and all other sources in determining a net figure as the 100% reimbursement amount.
 - Any and all reimbursement or funding available or anticipated, from any source, to offset the cost of the project shall be disclosed to VAST prior to any determination of the project cost. VAST reserves the right to reevaluate its determination of the project cost in the event that funds become available to offset the cost following its initial determination.”

H. Plowed Parking Areas

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 1st**. 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. Invoices must show the date the parking area was plowed, and what the rate was for the plowing on the given date.
- The plowing contractor must be legally insured and have a current W9 on file with the VAST office.
- 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, endorsement from the club responsible for maintaining the trails in that area and insurance information carried by the contractor.

I. Resolution of Disputes

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 and outline their grievance in writing. The grievance shall be submitted within 15 calendar days of the date the club was notified of the decision they are grieving. 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 within 15 calendar days of the date the club is notified of the decision from Step 1. They shall determine what steps are to be taken. 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 and Vice President shall appoint an impartial committee of three to investigate the matter within 30 calendar days of the date the club was notified of the decision from step 2. The committee shall meet and rule on the grievance within 15 days of its receipt.
- 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. This shall be done within 30 calendar days of the date the club is notified of the decision from step 3. The Board may in its discretion elect to refrain from taking any action, or in the alternative, shall hold the hearing within 30 days of receipt of the request. The ruling of the Board shall be final.