

# New 40-Mile Snowmobile Thoroughfare Approved

by Editorial Staff  
Adirondack Explorer

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*Snowmobilers on a Class II snowmobile trail.*

A new 40-mile snowmobile thoroughfare will be built by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), mostly on “forever wild” Forest Preserve lands between the towns of Minerva, Newcomb and North Hudson. Construction of the 9 to 11 feet wide route, which was approved by the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) in July, is expected to begin immediately.

Some advocates for the Adirondack Park have opposed the plan, which will require the removal of trees and the understory, and grading with heavy machinery to allow snowmobiles to operate at high speeds. “These newly approved 40 miles of snowmobile trails are another step in the largest expansion of motorized use and access in the history of the Forest Preserve. Governor Cuomo is seeking to change forever wild into forever motorized,” said Peter Bauer, Executive Director of Protect the Adirondacks in a statement sent to the press. “It is clear that the approval and construction of new road-like snowmobile trails is the top priority for the DEC and APA.”

The trail will require a new bridge over the Boreas River, which is classified under the NYS Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act as a “scenic” river. The Rivers Act as well as DEC regulations for the Rivers Act prohibit motor vehicle uses in scenic river areas and cap trail width at four feet. “A new bridge for snowmobiles over the Boreas River violates the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act and DEC’s regulations. In order for such a bridge to be built, the law

and regulations need to be changed," Bauer said.



*A map of the new trail network.*

The new route is being built to Class II Community Connector Snowmobile Standards. Class II community connector snowmobile trails are 9-11 foot wide cleared trails, constructed to allow regular grooming with large multi-ton motor vehicles and high speed snowmobile travel. The construction of these road-like trails has been an ongoing concern for Forest Preserve advocates such as Adirondack Wild and Protect the Adirondacks, the latter of which described the trails in this way:

“Unlike other trails built by hand, these trails are excavated with heavy machinery, utilize extensive bench cutting, remove thousands of trees over 3 inches diameter at breast height (DBH), remove tens of thousands of trees under 3 inches DBH, remove the entire native understory, often replace the native understory with a grass mix, open the forest canopy, often fracture and chip away bedrock, utilize oversized bridges often equipped with reflectors, and are built to handle operation of motor vehicles. No other recreational activity in the Forest Preserve, outside of Intensive Use Areas, requires such profound terrain alteration and destruction of natural resources. Protect the Adirondacks believes that this network of ‘trails’ violates the SLMP [State Land Master Plan] and Article XIV, Section 1 of the NYS Constitution.”



*A 12-foot wide Class II snowmobile trail bridge being constructed in the Moose River Plains in 2012.*

Construction is expected to begin immediately on 18-miles of new trail between Newcomb and Minerva. The entire trail is expected to be completed by 2018, with portions of the trail being open to the public next year. Work will also begin next year on the trail connecting Newcomb and North Hudson, starting with the construction of a bridge over the outlet of Palmer Pond near the hamlet of North Hudson. The whole trail system is expected to be completed by 2022, with new trail segments becoming available for public recreation every year until the completed date.

The plan can be [found on DEC's website](#).