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40 Miles of Keweenaw Snowmobile Trails Closed Due to Landowner Permit Revocations

KEWEENAW PENINSULA, Mich. — Forty miles of snowmobile trails in the Keweenaw Trail System have been closed for the 2026–2027 snowmobile season after private landowners revoked trail permits.

These closures are the direct result of riders failing to respect private property and issues on private Commercial Forest Act (CFA) lands. Under state law, CFA lands only require public foot access for hunting, fishing, and trapping. Motorized recreational trail access is not guaranteed. Snowmobile and off-road vehicle (ORV) riders are guests on these private lands and are permitted only on state-designated trails and open roads, subject to individual landowner policies and permits. Typically, navigating roads on CFA lands is acceptable if they are able to be traversed in a two-wheel-drive vehicle.

Causes of the Closures

Multiple issues led to the loss of these trail permits across the Upper Peninsula:

- **Vandalism and Trespassing:** Riders have navigated around closed gates and berms, destroyed gates and barricades, cut timber, removed signage, and left behind trash, shotgun shells, and other debris on private lands.
- **Resource Damage and Audit Failures:** Off-trail riding and trespassing have caused severe environmental damage. Private owners and CFA Lands have failed land-management audits and forced costly repairs.
- **Parking on Active Logging Sites:** Visitors have parked vehicles on active logging roads and job-sites to access off-trail riding areas. Logging operations run seven days a week, and unauthorized parking creates major safety hazards and operational delays.
- **Unauthorized Off-Trail Promotion:** The promotion of off-trail riding on CFA lands by private businesses violates CFA legislation and has further strained landowner relationships.

Strict Enforcement and Rider Rules
Law enforcement agencies will increase patrols and strictly enforce private land and CFA policies across the region this winter. Riders must adhere to the following rules:

- **No Off-Trail Riding:** Off-trail riding is strictly prohibited on private lands unless you hold a direct written agreement with the landowner. **Respect Private Land**
- **Do Not Contact Landowners:** Private and Commercial CFA landowners are not accepting requests for written off-trail permissions. Do not contact landowners individually, as doing so may trigger additional trail closures. **Respect Private Land**
- **Find Designated Parking:** Contact your lodging establishment, the DNR or the local snowmobile club before arriving to find safe, approved vehicle and trailer parking. **Respect Private Land**
- **Protect the Environment:** Stay only on open, designated trails. Never ride around closed gates, berms, up hillsides, or into trees. During warmer months, do not ride ORVs through rivers, streams, or mud holes. **Respect Private Land**

Looking Ahead to the 2026–2027 Season
Snowmobile clubs across the Upper Peninsula work tirelessly to maintain landowner relationships, carry liability insurance, and manage trail maintenance to ensure permits are renewed each year.

"We are deeply grateful to all current and former landowners who have opened their properties to create a connected trail system across the Keweenaw Peninsula," said Ryan LaPorte, President of the Keweenaw Snowmobile Club. "We wish the outcome were different, and we thank the private landowners, CFA landholders, volunteers, and the DNR for their efforts over the past few months to minimize these losses. We now need riders to prove they can respect private property so we can work toward restoring this access in the future. The restoration of these permits will be dependent on compliance by trail users."

While 40 miles of trail are closed, 186 miles remain open to explore the beauty of the Keweenaw Peninsula. Riders are urged to plan trips ahead of time, obey all closure signage, and check the Keweenaw Snowmobile Club website or the DNR Trail website for current maps of open trails and approved riding areas.

We look forward to welcoming you to the Keweenaw as soon as Mother Nature delivers the snow. Please recreate responsibly, know where it is legal to ride at all times of the year, and have a safe winter season. Please respect private land.

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