

Fat Bike (Winter Mountain Biking) Best Practices



(Yield triangle design by Jake Hawkes. Content on this page was developed in part by Grand Targhee Resort (<http://www.grandtarghee.com/>) and Teton Valley Trails and Pathways (<http://tvtap.org/>), IMBA, Kingdom Trails and others)

Due to the growing popularity of winter biking, the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation along with our partners at VMBA and VAST is pleased to announce a Pilot Program for Winter Fat Biking for 2015-2016. The opening date for this season will be **December 16, 2015** and the closing date will be **April 15, 2016**.

Fat Biking on snow is described as:

1. Wide tires — deep snow coverage may require tires wider than 3.5 inches.
2. Tire pressure will often be less than 10 PSI.
3. Enough floatation that you can travel over snow **without leaving a rut deeper than one inch**.
4. Sufficient traction that you are able to safely control your bike and ride in a straight line.

The locations for this pilot program have been determined by state land managers, VMBA representatives, VAST representatives and fat bike users.

Please share your thoughts on how we can improve this program. Contact Jessica Savage at Jessica.savage@state.vt.us with any questions or comments.

To reduce conflict and lower the impact of snow biking on our existing trails, we ask that you to follow these guidelines.

Always be courteous to other snow travelers.

- Be a good trail citizen. Spread the word about snow biking, make it fun, keep it safe. Be respectful.
- Be an ambassador for the sport – stay polite, educate other bikers, discourage bad behavior, follow the rules, and we'll all have a good time this winter.
- Bikes yield to all other users.
- Do not ride if the snow is too soft. Do not operate on any trails if the temperature is near or above freezing. If you have to get off and push your bike, the snow is too soft.
- If you are leaving a rut deeper than an inch or are having a hard time riding in a straight line, it is too soft to be on the trails.

Best Practices for Fat Biking on Groomed Nordic Trails

- Only ride at ski areas that allow and encourage winter biking.
- Yield to all other users when riding. Skiers don't have brakes but you do!
- Ride on the firmest part of the track.
- Do not ride on or in the classic tracks.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross-country_skiing#Classic)
- Leave room for skiers to pass (don't ride side-by-side with all of your buddies blocking the full trail).
- Allow the track time to set up after grooming and before riding.
- Respect alternate-use days for bikers and skiers.
- Some areas require riding only a purpose-built fat bike, not any old mountain bike. There may be a minimum tire tread width.
- Be an ambassador for the sport: stay polite, educate other riders, discourage bad behavior and follow the rules.
- Help out and get involved by joining your local nordic club.
- Consider donating money for trail grooming.

Best Practices for Riding on Snowmobile Trails

- When riding on snowmobile trails, use a front white blinker and rear red blinker at all times.
- Wear reflective material on both the front and rear of your body.
- Do not use any type of headphones or devices that impair your ability to hear.
- Stay to the far right of the trail and yield to snowmobiles.
- Know and obey the rules of your local land manager/owner. Understand that some trails may be on private property and might not be open to alternative uses. If unsure, please contact VAST at 802-229-0005.
- Be prepared. Winter travel in the backcountry requires carrying proper gear and dressing properly. Be self-sufficient!
- Use extreme caution when riding at night. Be visible and use the brightest lights you can find.

- Be friendly! Fat bikers are the newest trail users. Be courteous and open to suggestions from snowmobile riders.
- Help out by supporting your local snowmobile club: <https://www.vtvast.org/club>
- Consider donating to trail grooming and maintenance efforts.

External Resources

- A guide to understanding safe ice thickness (<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/ice/thickness.html>)
- U.S. Snowmobile Trail Associations (<http://snowmobilers.org/organizations.asp>)
- Cross Country Ski Areas Association (<http://www.xcski.org/>)
- Dressing for riding in extreme cold (http://youtu.be/jlhN-x_JUEU) (-40F to +30F)
- Safety advice by IMBA Midwest Region Director Hansi Johnson (<http://universalklister.blogspot.com/2013/01/fat-bike-bedlamitessurviving-boredom.html>)