

Legislative Analysis



FREE SNOWMOBILE WEEKEND

Phone: (517) 373-8080
<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa>

House Bill 4205 as introduced
Sponsor: Rep. Steven Johnson

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

House Bill 4206 as introduced
Sponsor: Rep. John R. Roth

Committee: Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation
Complete to 6-23-21

SUMMARY:

House Bills 4205 and 4206 would amend Part 821 (Snowmobiles) of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA) to require the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to allow one weekend during the snowmobile season for individuals to operate a snowmobile on a snowmobile trail without registration or a trail permit sticker.

NREPA currently requires snowmobiles to be registered when in operation on public lands. (Registration is not required for operation on lands owned or under the control of the snowmobile owner or for training purposes.) A snowmobile trail permit sticker is also required.

House Bill 4205 would provide that, before the start of each snowmobile season, the DNR must designate one weekend in that season during which *registration* is not required to operate a snowmobile on snowmobile trails.

MCL 324.82103

House Bill 4206 would provide that, before the start of each snowmobile season, the DNR must designate one weekend in that season during which a *trail permit* is not required.

MCL 324.82118

BACKGROUND:

The DNR currently designates two weekends per year to allow fishing without a license, entry into a state park or boating access site without a Recreation Passport, and operation of an off-road vehicle without a license or trail permit.¹

¹ [https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79119_79148_80650-487855--,00.html#:~:text=%22Three%20Free%22%20Weekend%20\(June%2012%2D13\)&text=Don't%20miss%20%22Three%20Free,sites%20%2D%20all%20free%20of%20charge.](https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79119_79148_80650-487855--,00.html#:~:text=%22Three%20Free%22%20Weekend%20(June%2012%2D13)&text=Don't%20miss%20%22Three%20Free,sites%20%2D%20all%20free%20of%20charge.)

FISCAL IMPACT:

House Bill 4205 would have an indeterminate but likely minimal fiscal impact on the Department of State. Any possible reduction in snowmobile registrations could reduce revenue to the Department of State from its \$3 per transaction share of snowmobile registration fees. Its share of registration fees support secretary of state registration administration and services. However, any increased interest among the public in snowmobiling could potentially lead to a subsequent offsetting increase in snowmobile registrations and fee revenue as well as snowmobile record lookup fees, which are deposited into the Transportation Administration Collection Fund. That fund supports the secretary of state's online and branch office vehicle and driver services.

The Department of State collected \$1,929,400 from snowmobile registrations in Fiscal Year 2019-20 and \$1,990,600 in FY 2018-19. Registration revenue is distributed to the Department of State and the Department of Natural Resources.

House Bill 4206 is likely to reduce revenue for the Department of Natural Resources by exempting snowmobilers from the trail permit requirement for one weekend per snowmobile season. The extent of this revenue loss would depend on the number of users that take advantage of this exemption who would otherwise be subject to the trail permit requirement. Revenue generated by the sale of permits is credited to the Snowmobile Trail Improvement Fund, which received \$9.5 million in FY 2019-20 revenue. This fund primarily supports DNR's Snowmobile Local Grants Program, which provides grants to local units of government and snowmobile clubs to expand and maintain the state's snowmobile trail system. This program has been appropriated at \$8.1 million annually for the past five years.

The bill is unlikely to directly affect departmental costs, local government costs, or local government revenues. The bill could indirectly affect local government revenues by diminishing availability of the aforementioned grant resources if trail permit exemption leads to significant DNR revenue loss over time.

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.