

---



# CHANZ GREEN

---

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 74<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

May 2, 2023

## Testimony on Assembly Bill 98

### Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation

Thank you, Chairman Mursau and committee members, for having a hearing today on Assembly Bill 98 relating to signs along snowmobile trails that advertise nearby businesses.

Snowmobiling is a big part of the 74th district and is enjoyed by residents and tourists every year during the winter. To accommodate these riders, hundreds of miles of trails have been cleared and are prepared every year, cutting through both public and private property, and often with stops along the way to allow for refueling, food, repairs, and shelter from the elements.

Over the past couple of years, the DNR has begun to dismantle these signs, citing NR 45.05(3)(f)1, which prohibits advertising of private businesses on state land. The DNR's portrayal of these signs as 'an inconvenience' for snowmobilers is nonsense. These signs matter when it comes to public safety since they are used by both riders and local emergency services as landmarks and indicators of location on the trails. These signs will guide snowmobilers to refueling, food, repairs, and shelter to protect them from the extreme elements.

As a bar owner, I see snowmobiling as having a huge economic impact on all parts of Northern Wisconsin. Having these signs that advertise these local businesses is detrimental to their success in the winter months.

Assembly Bill 98 will allow the DNR to create agreements with local snowmobile clubs, providing these organizations with the ability to put up signs on public trails. The signs will only be able to advertise snowmobile-accessible businesses that offer fuel, food, vehicle servicing, and lodging. Lastly, the bill also specifies that the department won't be able to charge snowmobile clubs to place signs on trails.

It is important to pass this bill to ensure the public safety of snowmobile riders within the state of Wisconsin and to ensure the safety of tourists that come to Northern Wisconsin.

I am grateful for the opportunity to collaborate on this bill with my colleague from the Senate, Senator Felzkowski. Thank you for your time today, and thank you for your consideration of this bill.



---

# MARY FELZKOWSKI

STATE SENATOR • 12<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

## Testimony for AB 98

Senator Mary Felzkowski

Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation

May 2, 2023

Good afternoon Chairman Mursau and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Assembly Bill 98, which will allow snowmobile clubs to establish signs that advertise nearby businesses on snowmobile trails.

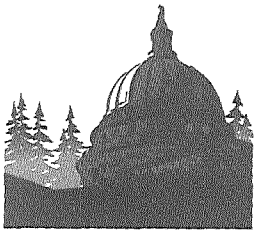
Snowmobiling is one of the most popular winter sports in Wisconsin, and is enjoyed by thousands of residents and out-of-state visitors each year. To accommodate these riders, hundreds of miles of trails are made available, cutting through both public and private property. At many of the intersections of these trails are signs directing snowmobilers to businesses providing fuel, food, repair services, and lodging. I personally have been snowmobiling my whole life, have spent countless hours on those trails, and let me tell you, one of the most vital resources when it's freezing cold and snowing are those trail signs!

While snowmobile trail signs are well utilized by riders throughout the winter months, the DNR has taken it upon themselves to dismantle these signs, citing NR 45.04 (3)(f)1 which prohibits advertising of private businesses on state land. This action has not gone unnoticed though, as these signs are utilized for the safety of snowmobilers of every level. For riders like myself who have been using these trails for years, these signs act as landmarks, letting us know exactly where we are. And for those who are new, these signs can absolutely be lifesavers, guiding them to warm shelter, fuel, food, and lodging when the temperatures drop and the sun goes down. Most importantly, however, these signs have been used in the past as a way for riders to guide emergency services to their location when an accident occurs on the trails, as businesses described on these signs can help to significantly narrow down a search radius. In the dead of winter, every second counts.

AB 98 will allow the DNR to create agreements with local snowmobile clubs, providing these organizations with the ability to put up signs on public trails. These signs, which will only be able to advertise snowmobile-accessible businesses that offer fuel, food, vehicle servicing, and lodging, will have specific requirements pertaining to location placement and sign construction, ensuring uniformity throughout the state. This bill also specifies that the Department won't be able to charge snowmobile clubs to place signs on trails. We have also drafted an amendment at the recommendation of the DNR to better incorporate these changes into procurement statutes, and to incorporate into negotiations between the snowmobile clubs and the DNR a provision regarding when signs can be put up, and when they are to be taken down.

Passage of this bill is a matter of public safety, as these signs will give snowmobilers waypoints in the cold, directions to safe locations in the dark, and landmarks for emergency services to find injured riders.

I am grateful to my Assembly author, Representative Green, for his assistance with this legislation. Thank you for your time today, and thank you for your consideration of this bill.



# ROB SWEARINGEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 34<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Office: (608) 237-9134  
Toll Free: (888) 534-0034  
Rep.Swearingen@legis.wi.gov

P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708-8953

May 2, 2023

## Testimony on Assembly Bill 98

### Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation

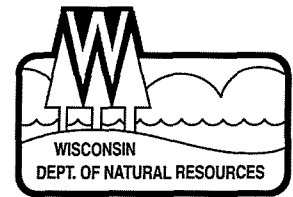
Thank you, Chairman Mursau and committee members for hearing Assembly Bill 98. This bill would allow snowmobile clubs to install signs along snowmobile trails with the purpose of directing people to local businesses.

As a representative of the 34th assembly district, I am aware of how important tourism is to the local economy. Our district is blessed with natural beauty that attracts visitors year-round, especially during the winter when snowmobiling is a popular activity. Businesses in my district depend on the economic impact of snowmobiling to stay afloat and continue to provide employment opportunities for local residents during the winter months.

Current DNR administrative rules prohibit businesses from posting signs along snowmobile trails without first obtaining authorization through a contractual agreement. This bill would allow snowmobile clubs to erect signs that can direct riders to nearby businesses along snowmobile trails on DNR land.

Additionally, AB 98 aims to improve public safety by providing snowmobilers with important information about nearby businesses. Snowmobilers need access to fuel, food, vehicle servicing, or lodging, and this bill would ensure that they have the necessary information to pursue any of these necessities while on trail. This is particularly important for snowmobiling at night, which can present risks such as the possibility of getting lost or stranded. This bill can help ensure the safety of snowmobilers and promote responsible tourism, which in turn will have positive economic effects on local businesses and the state as a whole.

Thank you again for hearing AB 98, and I am hoping for strong bipartisan support on this legislation.



## Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation

### *2023 Assembly Bill 98*

### *Signs Along Snowmobile Trails that Advertise Nearby Businesses*

*May 2, 2023*

Good morning, Chair Mursau, and members of the Committee. My name is Brigit Brown, and I am the recreation management supervisor for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Assembly Bill 98, related to signs along snowmobile trails that advertise nearby businesses.

Assembly Bill 105 would provide a way for snowmobile clubs to erect advertising signs on state lands and advertise for local businesses on those signs. Historically, the DNR has allowed signage providing basic information about goods and services relevant to snowmobiles that are accessible by snowmobile trails and routes. This basic information includes the type of good or service provided, such as gas, food, or lodging, the distance to the business, and an arrow indicating direction of the business. This signage is allowed with the land use agreements the department enters with local snowmobile clubs across the state.

While the department already can enter into agreements to allow such signage on department properties, other laws and policies come into play when advertising specific business names on state public lands. Specifically, state purchasing rules, which are under the authority of the Department of Administration (DOA) and expressed in state statute and in policy such as the State Procurement Manual.

While the bill exempts the snowmobile clubs from DOA procurement procedures when they advertise on signs for local businesses, the bill is missing a cross reference that would exempt agreements between the DNR and snowmobile clubs from the DOA procurement procedures. Without this exemption, the department may still be required to competitively bid contracts for erecting the signage. The authors could also consider requiring that snowmobile signs be removed at the end of the season. These signs advertise for businesses that are accessible via snowmobile routes, so having signs up in the summer could be confusing for trail users and could lead to inadvertent trespass violations.

We would like to thank the authors for allowing us the opportunity to review the amendment that has been introduced, and for taking some of our suggestions into consideration.

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, we would like to thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.





## Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs – AWSC

529 Trail Side Dr., Suite 100 – DeForest, WI 53532  
Phone: 800.232.4108 / 608.846.5530 – Fax: 608.846.5534  
Web: [www.awsc.org](http://www.awsc.org) / Email: [awsc@awsc.org](mailto:awsc@awsc.org)

To: Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation

From: Lori Heideman, AWSC President

Re: AWSC Support of Assembly Bill 98

Date: May 2, 2023

---

Mr. Chairman Mursau and Committee Members:

Thank you for holding a public hearing on AB 98. The Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs strongly supports this bill.

AB 98 allows snowmobile clubs who maintain sections of trails located on DNR property to place guide signs that include the names of businesses. This is something that has always been allowed at intersections for trails located on private property, and snowmobilers expect to see these signs on all trails. Current administrative rules in NR 45.04 prohibit posting signs or advertising material without being authorized by contractual agreement with the DNR.

According to DNR attorneys, this agreement process could only be done through the Chapter 16 procurement rules, and a public bidding process. Current law has proved unworkable for establishing a means to erect wayfinding signs containing business names on intersecting trails that are situated on DNR-controlled property.

Signs are important to snowmobile riders looking for services they need when riding the trails. Signs are used as a wayfinding tool and help snowmobilers navigate the trail system safely. Many of these businesses are well-known landmarks to snowmobilers. Snowmobilers can know where they are located on the trail system by recognizing the name and location of local businesses. The names of these businesses are also on the maps we use to navigate the trails.

Knowing where one is located on a trail by recognizing the name of a business can become a safety issue when lost or low on gas. When riding with your family, it may be important to know where to find a place to warm up or a bathroom to use. When riding in a strange area or after dark, seeing a sign that directs them to a resort or lodge where they are staying can be very reassuring.

AWSC is not proposing large billboards with flashing lights. The signs are simple, and inform snowmobilers of the location of businesses that are important to them. These signs will have to meet the criteria for all guide signs found in the snowmobile trail signing guidelines and in NR 50. According to the guidance provided, guide signs are required to have a brown background with white lettering. I have attached pictures to my testimony showing examples of signs and the signing guidelines.

These signs will only be posted by clubs on trails located on DNR property that intersect with other snowmobile trails. The signs will only be allowed to include businesses that are accessible by snowmobile and provide the necessary services of fuel, food, lodging and repair services. These intersecting trails are unique to snowmobiling, and most are located on private property and are part of the interconnecting statewide trail system. The snowmobile clubs are responsible for erecting, removing and maintaining the signs, so that other recreational trail users are not directed onto private property. The businesses that are identified on each sign support the local snowmobile club by advertising in their county snowmobile map. I have also included an attachment to my testimony with pictures of trail maps showing intersecting trails.

Many of the intersecting snowmobile trails on DNR-controlled property already have signs installed by local clubs. That is because current law has not been consistently enforced. This bill provides a process for these signs to become compliant.

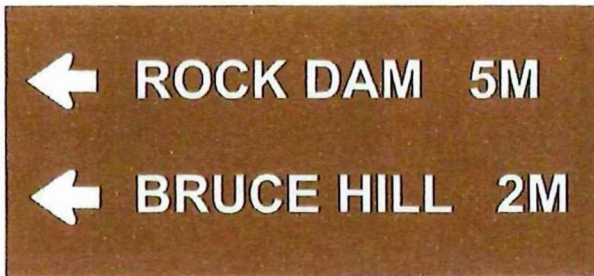
AWSC has worked with DNR throughout the process to formulate AB 98. AWSC understands DNR has raised a question about how the signs will be taken down. To address that issue, AWSC has worked with the bill authors to draft an amendment to AB 98 and SB 105 that would allow the DNR and the clubs to negotiate in the sign agreements for provisions relating to the erection and removal of the signs. The amendment also ensures the agreements between DNR and the snowmobile clubs are exempt from the public bidding and procurement rules.

We want to thank Representative Green and Senator Felzkowski for authoring this bill.

We hope to receive the support of this committee to move this legislation forward and we would be happy to take any questions.







Size Variable  
2" Upper Case Letters Minimum



Size Variable  
2" Upper Case Letters Minimum



Typically  
9" x 9"



## Guide Signs

Guide signs are used to direct the rider to a destination on the trail. They should be placed at decision points along the trail such as intersections and trailheads. These signs must have a reflectorized white legend on a brown background. When indicated, mileage figures should be calculated as accurately as possible to the nearest mile. Arrows used to show direction on these signs may point in any direction.

The use of guide signs to direct trail users to gas stations, resorts, restaurants and other trailside businesses is helpful, but the number of signs for this purpose should be kept reasonable.

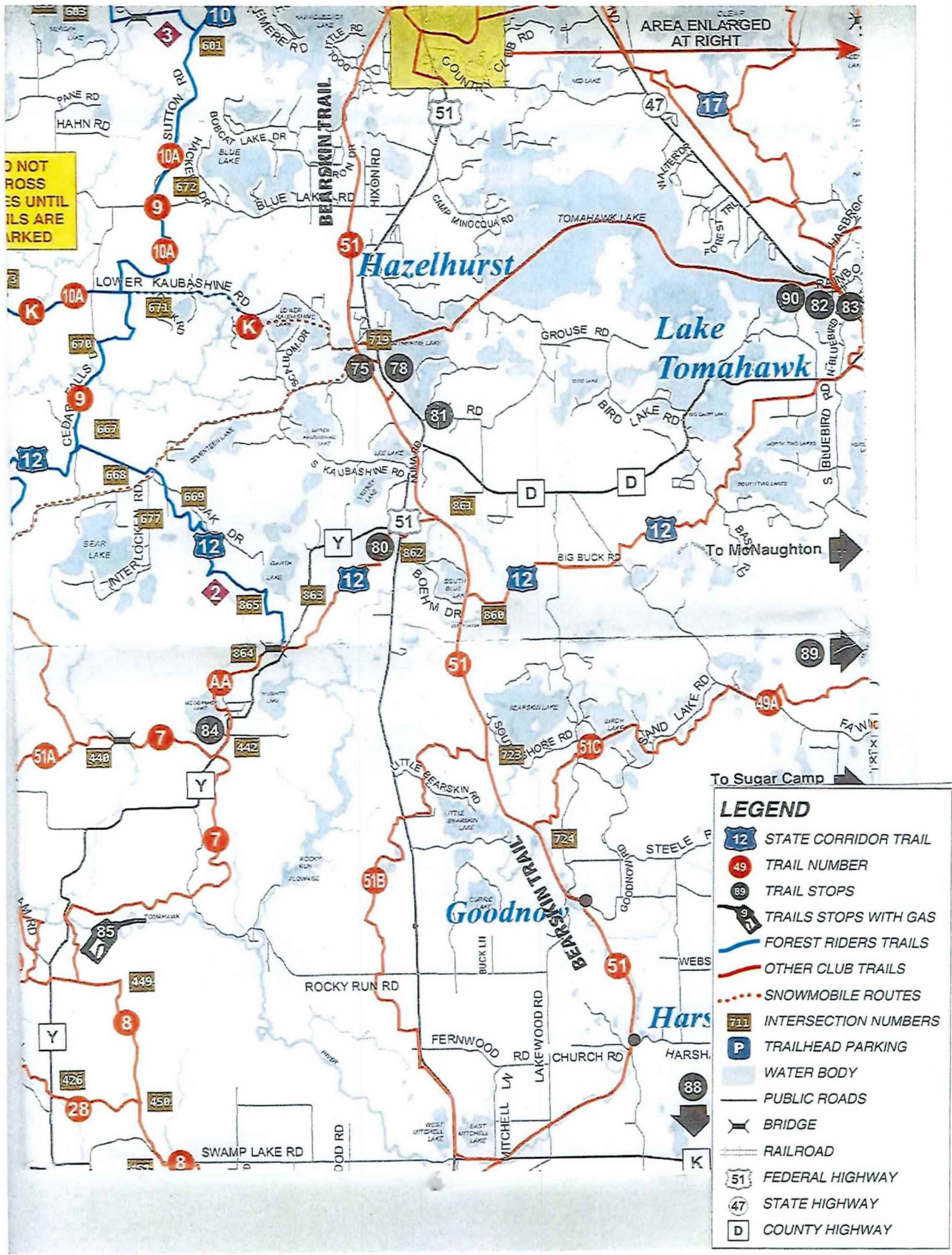
## Informational Signs

Informational signs are used to furnish information to the rider about trails, facilities or road crossings. Also, streams and other geographic features can be named as a matter of interest and help in establishing location.

The standard colors for the sign are a white legend on a brown background. Reflectorization of informational signs is encouraged, but not required. Where the county has a standard color scheme for informational signs in county parks that differ from the white on brown color scheme, that county's color scheme may be adapted for trail information or guide signing purposes. A trail signing technique growing in popularity is the use of informational signs that identify numbered trail intersections.

**NOTE:** Signs that depict symbols related to alcoholic beverages are strictly forbidden on state-owned properties.





DO NOT CROSS BRIDGES UNTIL SIGNALS ARE MARKED

AREA ENLARGED AT RIGHT

Hazelhurst

Lake Tomahawk

Goodno

Hars

To Sugar Camp

**LEGEND**

- 12 STATE CORRIDOR TRAIL
- 49 TRAIL NUMBER
- 89 TRAIL STOPS
- 9 TRAILS STOPS WITH GAS
- FOREST RIDERS TRAILS
- OTHER CLUB TRAILS
- SNOWMOBILE ROUTES
- 711 INTERSECTION NUMBERS
- P TRAILHEAD PARKING
- WATER BODY
- PUBLIC ROADS
- BRIDGE
- RAILROAD
- 51 FEDERAL HIGHWAY
- 47 STATE HIGHWAY
- D COUNTY HIGHWAY



**To:** Members of the Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks & Outdoor Recreation  
Rep. Jeff Mursau, Chairman

**From:** Kathi Kilgore, Contract Lobbyist

**Date:** May 2, 2023

**Re:** Support for AB 98, relating to signs along snowmobile trails that advertise nearby businesses

The Wisconsin Hotel & Lodging Association is made up of approximately 600 bed and breakfasts, vacation homes, hotels, motels, resorts, and other industry partners who play a key role in the successful operation of lodging properties in the state. WHLA's members span across all regions of the state, and represent a great variety of independent, franchise, family-owned and corporate-owned properties. Some have restaurants, some have attractions, and some are single units that allow you to get away from it all.

AB 98 would allow local snowmobile clubs that maintain trails on DNR property to put up signs along the snowmobile trails. The signs would only be available to snowmobile-accessible businesses that offer lodging, fuel, food, and vehicle servicing.

Like other businesses, lodging properties depend upon signage to direct travelers to their establishments. Whether it be along our highway system or our trail system, signs are a wayfinding tool for people visiting the area. In the case of AB 98, it will allow for snowmobilers to find their way to the lodging property they are staying at after a long day on the trails, but will also assist them in finding restaurants, bars, and gas stations to warm up, get something to eat and drink, refuel, and use the restroom.

These signs, which will be more like blue SIS signs you see along the interstate than "advertising" signs, will also serve as landmarks for snowmobilers if they need to call 911 in an emergency.

On behalf of WHLA's members around the state, we ask for your support of AB 98. Thank you for your consideration.