

# Klondike SNOWMOBILE ASSOCIATION

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Maintaining infrastructure

HOW THE KSA KEPT BUSY THIS SUMMER



**Mark Daniels**  
KSA President

This past summer was the first in a long time when the KSA didn't take on a major trail building initiative. Instead, we tidied up some outstanding project work and put some serious effort into brushing and other maintenance activities. We were also involved in six

separate consultation processes and retained our seat on the Whitehorse Trails and Greenways Committee, the advisory panel for trail matters within the City. You know the old saying: "If you don't vote, don't complain." We have to be present to be heard so I take every opportunity to advocate for snowmobilers.

On the construction side, we worked with the City of Whitehorse to correct the approaches on the bridge previously installed on the main Trans Canada Trail northwest of Cobalt Construction's yard. Also, a couple of the bridge approaches on our Whitehorse South Connector Project last year settled and needed extra fill to get them back to bridge deck level. I took a crew out in early

summer and we goon-spooned gravel in to level things up. That should have been enough to cap the project but, upon arriving on site with the crew, I found that someone had run into the railing on one of the bridges with what I suspect was a UTV. Whatever did the damage hit

the bridge hard enough to snap off two of the 4x4 posts. The crew and I were outfitted for dirt work so we had to make a later trip with materials and carpentry tools to repair the bridge.

The City is always expanding its paved commuter trail network. This summer, it extended the Takhini North trail from the McIntyre Creek bridge to the Pine Street snow dump. The KSA was consulted early on and had a strong hand in the design work. The result is a beautiful paved trail parallel to a four-metre-wide gravel motorized multi-use trail. This project is a glowing example of how all trail users can benefit from effective project planning and implementation. ■



City of Whitehorse photo

Crestview pedestrian connector trail and bridge

## The ins and outs of sled decks

by MARK DANIELS

This past winter, I invested in a used sled deck: a metal frame supporting a deck that fits inside the box of a pickup truck. The deck sits just above the box sides and, regardless of the length of the deck, the frame fits inside the truck box allowing the tailgate to be closed. These things have been around for years and are quite popular in the northern Rockies where vehicle access may be tricky and parking space is limited.

"Sled deck" is a bit of a misnomer because they can be used for a variety of purposes year-round. Mine is set up to carry two sleds, two ATVs, one UTV, three dirt bikes or four mountain bikes. I also use it to move appliances, lumber and

**Continued on page 2 ►**

### ► THE INS AND OUTS OF SLED DECKS

*Continued from page 1*

anything else that I would haul in my truck. Unlike most tonneau covers, the deck is made to bear weight. I can remove the deck in about 15 minutes and re-install it in 30.

A sled deck has several advantages over a trailer:

**Cost:** A deck generally costs as much as or less than a basic open trailer. They're virtually maintenance-free since they lack moving parts such as suspensions, axles, bearings and tires. You should also see improved fuel economy over trailering.

**Cleanliness:** A deck sits on top of the truck, not behind, so the deck and the sleds on it stay clear of most road spray generated by your truck and oncoming traffic.

**Manoeuvrability:** Your deck will go anywhere your truck can. Anyone who has backed a trailer for miles down a snowy-road-that-you-didn't-know-lacked-a-turn-around-until-you-got-to-the-end-of-the-road-probably-in-the-dark will appreciate what I'm talking about here.

**Drivability:** With the weight of two sleds above the bed, there can be a bit of sway but the truck is still more drivable than when pulling a trailer through deep snow or on icy roads. Weight over the rear axle improves traction in most situations.

Don't get me wrong: I'm still a fan of trailers and have a small fleet for various purposes. The deck just gives me more flexibility when used alone or in conjunction with a trailer.

I see a lot of people loading their sleds, ATVs/UTVs and dirt bikes straight into their pickup boxes. Sled decks have the following advantages over truck boxes:

**Storage:** With sleds on the deck and the tailgate locked, the truck box becomes se-

cure storage for your gear, tools, extra parts and fuel. Depending upon the model and installation method, the deck may make the pickup box nearly or completely weather-proof. Optional sliding gear drawers are available for your pickup box.

**Security:** Most sleds carried in the back of a pickup are not properly secured and can flip out in the case of an accident or collision.

**Appearance:** Recreational toys bouncing around in pickup truck boxes tend to cause scratches and dings that reduce the visual appeal and resale value of the toys and the trucks.

There's a wide variety of decks available on the market. I would avoid the frameless decks that clamp to the truck box sides. I see ads showing two large ATVs tied to these decks. That's 1,500 pounds of machine rocking and bouncing on the truck box walls as you rattle down a back road. These frameless decks have the advantage of leaving more usable space in the truck box. However, I hear stories of truck box welds breaking and other structural issues with this style of deck.

I chose an older fully-welded aluminum model. Aluminum is superior to steel because it's lighter and won't rust. Some suppliers offer decks that are bolted together. These decks are cheaper to build and, because they can be disassembled, cheaper to ship. I'd be pretty careful about using a deck that's bolted together. Frames and headache racks that are bolted to the deck have more flex and can rattle or break loose with use. If you have, or are thinking about getting, a bolt-together deck, consider welding it once it's assembled. Remember, you're planning to haul heavy stuff on the deck so invest in a sturdy model that won't give you



Mark Daniels photo

Sleds on a sled deck

problems.

The sled deck frame is secured in the truck by bolting it down or using camper-style turnbuckles. If bolted down, the bolts should run through the truck frame, not just the sheet metal of the truck box. Adapter plates can be bought or fabricated if the deck frame and truck frame don't line up. Similarly, when using turnbuckles, attach them to the tie-down anchors found in the corners of most pickup boxes. Don't tie off to the box sides, rails or the lighter track anchor system found in some trucks.

The actual decks are generally made of either wood or a composite plastic material. Wood is generally a cheaper option. It's the tried-and-true, easy-to-replace option but it does require a bit of maintenance. Composite is generally more expensive up front but, barring any catastrophic damage, will last longer than wood and requires less maintenance. With either option, a quality set of grip glides will extend the life of the deck tremendously and are standard equipment on many decks. Grip glides are composite panels with serrated grooves. The grooves guide and support snowmobile skis while the serrations provide grip for tires and boots. ►

# SNORIDERS

## SPECIAL KLONDIKE SNOWMOBILE ASSOCIATION REPORT



Mark Daniels photo

Pine Street TCT Connector: paved trail on left, motorized trail on right

► Decks come in a range of widths and lengths. Mine has telescoping sides. This option allows the deck to be truck-width when empty or when hauling one sled or ATV. The deck expands to 102 inches wide for hauling more stuff. I chose a seven-foot-long deck that fits nicely on my 6.5-foot box. Having a deck that fits within the footprint of the truck when empty improves the look of the vehicle and reduces the risk of running into any overhanging corners. Of course, seven feet isn't long enough to carry my mountain sleds. My deck has a pair of aluminum pans that clip onto the back rail of the deck and support the snowmobile tracks. I wouldn't recommend this option for sledders not able to lift the back of their machine with their shoulder while inserting the pans or, better yet, getting their buddy to insert the pans. Some newer decks have optional hinged beavertail extensions that lie on the deck and can be folded out to provide more length as needed.

Most decks have a large selection of tie-down points and some have track systems. A must-have for snowmobiles is the Super-clamp system. These tie-down bars require just a quick flip of a lever to secure a sled. They're adjustable for different ski styles and rubber-coated to protect your equipment from scratches. They're particularly effective on sled decks because they're installed from the side of the sled. It's a bit tight getting to the screw mechanism on a traditional bar clamp system when the sled is butted up against the headache rack.

Ramps come in one-piece, two-piece, hinged or telescoping models. One-piece models are not very popular because the length of the ramp is limited to the length of the deck. Most modern trucks are short-box models and many are lifted, leaving a one-piece ramp too short and steep to safely navigate. I recommend getting the longest ramp available as it will reduce the angle that you have to climb when loading up. Ramp angle can be improved by loading off a bank or pile. Whichever model you chose, make sure the ramp is sturdy enough to take repeated impacts as you drive onto it with enough momentum to get onto the deck.

Looking at the loading ramp from the seat of your machine for the first time can be a bit daunting but you shouldn't have any trouble loading up if you're already familiar with using ramps on trailers and truck boxes. Loading sleds and ATVs is simple and safe as long as you keep the bars straight and go

**Continued on page 4 ►**

## Membership Form

Time to renew your KSA membership. Do you know someone who should become a member?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Membership dues for the 2016/2017 season:

- Single \$20  Family \$30  Corporate \$105  
 Gold Corporate \$315 including GST

Please make cheques payable to:

**Klondike Snowmobile Association,  
4061 - 4th Ave., Whitehorse, YT Y1A 4H1**

## Membership Benefits

- KSA membership card
- KSA newsletters (four per year)
- KSA licence plate and decals
- Input into the development of KSA policy
- Assistance with problems, projects and trail development initiatives in your area
- A strong, unified voice with government and other agencies
- A guarantee that a team of volunteers are working year-round to enhance and promote multi-use trails throughout the Yukon Territory
- Four free issues of *SnoRiders* magazine
- 6% off gas at Tags 4th Ave. Whitehorse (not valid during gas wars)
- 10% off food at Trails North (excluding alcohol)
- 10% discount at McDonald's Restaurants Whitehorse (not valid with other offers)
- Access to Last Run Lounge at Mount Sima (please, no drinking and sledding)
- 10% off at Klondike RV Rentals - [www.klondikerv.com](http://www.klondikerv.com)
- 10% off at Mark's on regularly priced merchandise (separate card required, which is issued with membership)
- 20% off at Sandor's (Chilkoot Mall) on regularly priced goggles, gloves, toques, snowpants, jackets and snowboards
- Special prices on Haber Vision sunglasses and goggles - see [www.habervision.com](http://www.habervision.com) for details. Member code is "CCSO"
- 10% off at Mt. Lorne Bed and Breakfast - [www.klondikerv.com](http://www.klondikerv.com)
- Special rates at Choice Hotels - see [www.choicehotels.ca/ccso](http://www.choicehotels.ca/ccso) for details. Only available for online bookings.
- Special snowmobiler rates at the Atlin Inn
- Corporate Members get a link on our website
- Gold Corporate Members - 2 free ads in KSA newsletters
- 10% off snowmobile rentals at Yukon Wide Adventures



If you have comments, photos or story ideas for the Klondike Report, send them to:  
**Mark Daniels, Klondike Snowmobile Association**  
4061 - 4th Ave., Whitehorse, YT Y1A 4H1  
Phone: 867-667-7680 • Email: [klonsnow@yknnet.ca](mailto:klonsnow@yknnet.ca)



### KSA corporate members

A special thank you goes out to all the businesses that help support the Klondike Snowmobile Association via corporate memberships! For more info on becoming a corporate member, please see the Become a Member page on our website: [ksa.yk.ca](http://ksa.yk.ca).

- Alpine Aviation - Whitehorse
- Alsk Valley Contracting - Whitehorse
- Atlin Mountain Inn - Atlin, BC
- Bombardier Recreational Products - Sherbrooke, QC
- Braeburn Lodge - Braeburn
- Brewery Bay Chalet - Atlin, BC
- Canada Flooring - Whitehorse
- Capital Helicopters - Whitehorse
- Centennial Motors - Whitehorse
- Checked Flag Recreation - Whitehorse
- City of Whitehorse
- Fireweed Helicopters - Whitehorse
- Klondike Visitors Association - Dawson City
- Locksmith Services - Whitehorse
- Nomad Air - Whitehorse
- Quality Bearing - Whitehorse
- SnoRiders* magazine - Cranbrook, BC
- Territorial Contracting - Whitehorse
- Tourist Industry Association - Whitehorse
- Trails North Car & Truck Stop - Whitehorse
- U-Brew Yukon - Whitehorse
- Village of Mayo
- Wilderness Tourism Association Yukon
- Workforce Information & Networking Hub - Whitehorse
- Yukon Alpine Association
- Yukon Alpine Heliski
- Yukon Avalanche Association
- Yukon Meat and Sausage - Whitehorse
- Yukon Quest
- Yukon Trappers Association - Whitehorse
- Yukon Wide Adventures - Whitehorse
- Corporate Gold members:**
- Main Street Driving School - Whitehorse
- McDonald's Restaurants - Whitehorse
- Mic Mac Toyota - Whitehorse
- Safe Trails North Training Services - Whitehorse
- Triggs Family - Whitehorse
- Yukon Honda - Whitehorse
- Yukon Yamaha - Whitehorse

### ► SLED DECKS *continued from page 3*

easy on the throttle. Too much juice could land you on the roof of your truck. Too little and you'll spin out. Sleds and ATVs can be safely backed down for do-overs and unloading, even if they don't have reverse. Dirt bikes are a different story. It's in your interest to start from a pile, bank or some other feature that will reduce ramp angle. When using both the deck and a trailer, I leave the trailer coupled to the truck. I drop the trailer ramp on the ground and the deck ramp on the trailer. I drive the bikes onto the trailer then onto the deck. I added pairs of muffler clamps onto the round tubing of my headache rack to lock in bike tires so they stay secure when tied down. While the last bike can be spun around on a wide deck and coasted off frontwards, the other must be walked down the ramp backwards. This takes almost as much finesse and bravado as loading. Seriously, don't try loading a dirt bike onto a sled deck unless you're a skilled rider. The consequence of failure is a long drop to the ground with your bike on top of you.

As with most things sled-related, options abound on sled decks. Some nice-to-haves are:

**Lighting:** An assortment of clearance, indicator and convenience lighting is available. An under-deck light is handy for fishing out gear from your truck box in the wee hours. If the deck covers your truck's brake or turn lights, you'll need auxiliary lighting on your deck to stay law-abiding.

**Trim:** Some trim kits are purely cosmetic and cover or reduce the visible gap between the truck box and the sled deck. Other trim packages seal the deck to the box, making it a weatherproof compartment. All trim kits improve security by making the contents of your truck box less accessible to thieves.



Mark Daniels photo

Improved bridge approach near Crestview

**Self-Loading:** The pinnacle of sled decks incorporate hydraulic scissor mechanisms that lower the deck onto the ground behind the truck for ground-level loading and tie-down. With the push of a button, the deck returns to the truck box with your cargo attached.

A key consideration when hauling anything is the weight-bearing capacity of your truck. Check your manual or your dealer for axle weight rating, gross vehicle weight rating and, if you're towing, tongue weight, towing capacity and combined gross vehicle weight rating. I'm a firm believer that every truck should have airbags in the rear suspension. Mine are connected to an air pump with presets and a remote control fob so I can adjust pressures from inside or outside the truck. Air bags can greatly improve the ride characteristics of your vehicle when hauling and/or towing but they don't increase the legal load-bearing capacity. A half-ton truck with airbags is not magically transformed into a one-ton truck. ■



# WANTED:

## Your Yukon sledding photos and videos

Submit your sledding shots from this season to SnoRiders and **WIN PRIZES!** Visit [www.snoriderswest.com/hotshots](http://www.snoriderswest.com/hotshots) for details.

# SNORIDERS