

Portage Lakes Advisory Council

Our Mission

COLLABORATION
EDUCATION
CONSERVATION
COMMUNITY



Facilitate communication among the local community and government organizations, including ODNR and Summit Metroparks.

Educate the residents around the Portage Lakes on issues related to the Lakes and conduct programs to increase public awareness.

Promote both active and passive recreational use of the Portage Lakes.

Winter Rules! On the Portage Lakes

***We all know that Winter Rules on the PLX!
... but do you know the actual winter rules?***

ODNR and PLAC support winter recreation on the Portage Lakes including skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, skating, fishing, snowmobiling and ATV riding, but **safety is a top priority.**

Mutual respect and common sense can go a long way in creating a safe and fun environment for all users.



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Q: How can I access Portage Lakes and where can I park my truck and trailer for winter activities?

A: All Portage Lakes State Park Ramps (New Ramp, Old Park, State Mill) are accessible for winter recreation activities.

Q: Can we park cars/trailer overnight at the state park ramps?

A: There is NO overnight parking at any Portage Lakes Lots including public boat launch ramp.



Q: Is registration required to operate an ATV or snowmobile on the Portage Lakes?

A: Yes, registration is required to operate ATVs and snowmobiles in Ohio, except on private property.

OAC 4519.02 Registration required . . .

No Person shall operate any snowmobile, off-highway motorcycle, or all purpose vehicle within this state unless the vehicle is registered and numbered in sec. 4519.03 and 4519.04 of the Revised Code.

You can register your snowmobile or ATV at any Ohio BMV office.

Additionally, Registration stickers/plates, lights, and mufflers are required by OAC 4519.20.

Please refer to OAC 4519 for detailed rules for registering and operating snowmobiles and ATVs in Ohio.



Q: Is there a Speed Limit for ATVs and Snowmobiles on the Portage Lakes?

A: Yes, Snowmobiles, ATV's, etc. are not permitted to operate at speeds greater than 20 MPH within 100 feet of any shoreline.

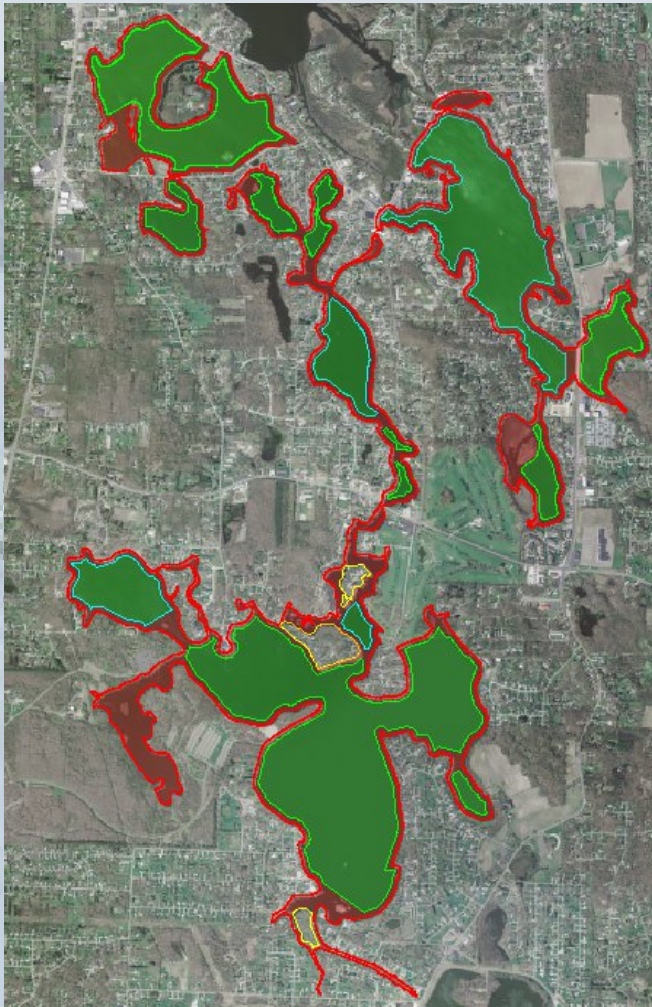
Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) 1501:46-14-03 - Operating on Frozen Lakes

(E) No Person shall operate a Snowmobile, Ice Boat, or all Purpose vehicle upon the frozen surface of the waters of Portage Lakes State Park in excess of 20 mph when within 100 ft of any shoreline.

Meaning speeds in excess of 20 mph are NOT permitted in Turkeyfoot Channel, the Iron Channel thru the Clock Tower area, Miller Lake Channel, the Entrance into Rex Lake, or within 100 feet of any shoreline.



Q: Is there a Speed Limit for ATVs and Snowmobiles on the Portage Lakes?

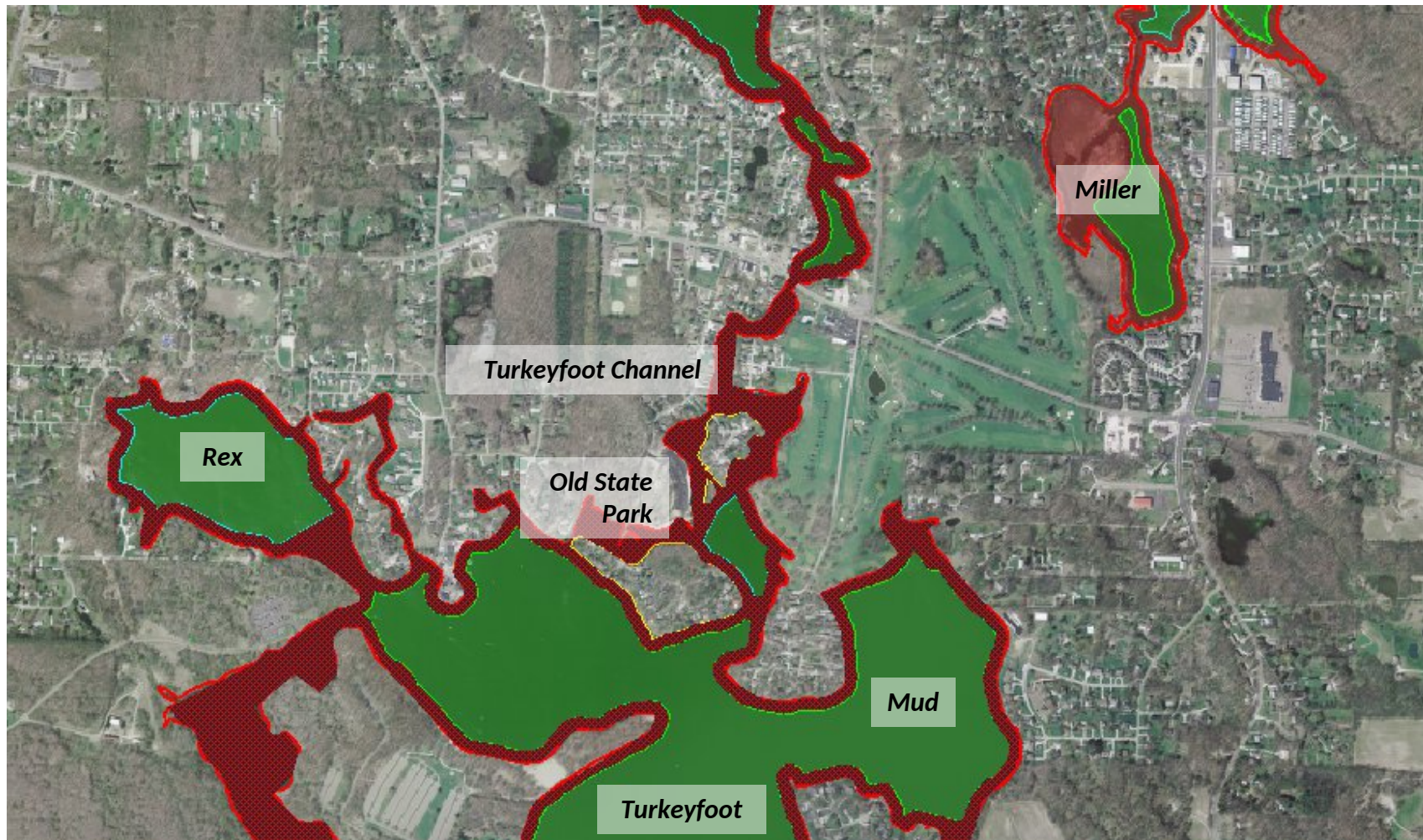


RED HATCH AREAS = 20 MPH Speed Limit

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Q: Is there a Speed Limit for ATVs and Snowmobiles on the Portage Lakes?



RED HATCH AREAS = 20 MPH Speed Limit

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Q: Is there a law restricting times for operating Snowmobiles and ATV's on the Portage Lakes?

A: Yes. Operation is prohibited between 11PM and 6AM.



OAC 1501:46-14-04 Hours of operation; exceptions

No person shall operate at anytime between the hours of 11pm and 6am

Q: Are snowmobiles or ATV's permitted to operate on or around Nimisila Reservoir?

A: No, snowmobiles and ATV's are not permitted on Nimisila Reservoir or the surrounding parkland including the walking trail along to top of the dam.

Also, operation of snowmobiles and ATV's is prohibited on all park lands at Portage Lakes State Park. (i.e. you can not ride in the woods and on the trails at the State Park)



Q: What are the rules regarding the interaction between Snowmobile/ATV riders and fishermen?

A: It is always the snowmobile and ATV operators' responsibility to slow vehicle operation to a reasonable and prudent speed and yield the right-of-way when travelling near any person who is not upon a snowmobile - including those fishing, skating, skiing, snowshoeing, or other activity.

1501:46-14-08 Snowmobiles; right-of-way.

When operating a snowmobile on lands or waters administered by the division, the operator of said vehicle shall slow his vehicle to a reasonable and prudent speed and shall yield the right-of-way when overtaking or travelling near any person who is not upon a snowmobile.



Q: What are the rules regarding alcohol on the Portage Lakes?

A: The rules regarding alcohol are the same at all state parks. ODNR prohibits the use of alcohol while driving snowmobiles and ATV's. Ohio Revised Code law 4511.19 for Operating a Vehicle Under the Influence (OVI) applies to Snowmobiles, ATV's, and off road motorcycles operation on public property.

[1501:46-3-22 Intoxicating Beverages](#)

(A) No person shall publicly consume or display the presence of any beer or intoxicating liquor in any area administered by the division except within the confines and privacy afforded in a cabin, cabin site, lodge room, rented campsite, or in those areas designated by authority of the chief. . .



Q: Are Cars, Trucks or other Vehicles allowed on the Ice?

A: No, NEVER.

Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) 1501:46-14-03 - Operating on Frozen Lakes

(D) No motor vehicles other than snowmobiles, ice boats, or all purpose vehicles shall be permitted on the frozen surface of waters of the Division at any time.

During the 2015 winter, ice thicknesses were measured in excess of 15". There were reports of people driving trucks and cars on the ice. This is prohibited and will be strictly enforced.



Q: Who do I contact to report an accident on the ice or other illegal activity?

A: If there is an emergency always call 911.

To report dangerous or illegal activity call

#ODNR

This ODNR dispatch is manned 24 hours a day.



Q: What are the age restrictions for operating a snowmobile or ATV?

A: No one under 12 is allowed to operate a snowmobile or ATV on the Portage Lakes. Persons 12 thru 15 can operate under direct visual and audible supervision of an

[1501:46-14-09 Snowmobile; prohibited operation.](#)

No person between the ages of **twelve and fifteen**, inclusive, shall operate a snowmobile or all purpose vehicle, as defined in section [4519.01](#) of the Revised Code, on any lands or waters administered by the division unless such person is **under direct visual and audible supervision** of a parent, guardian, or person over the age of eighteen.

No person under **twelve years of age** shall operate a snowmobile or all purpose vehicle, as defined in section [4519.01](#) of the Revised Code, on any lands or waters administered by the division.



Q: How will ODNR be enforcing rules on the Portage Lakes in the Winter?

A: When the ice is sufficiently frozen that winter activities are happening, ODNR routinely (day and night) patrols both on the ice and by land. They will be enforcing after hours violations, registration violations, impaired operation violations, responding to complaints, and other dangerous activities.

Comments: ODNR supports winter activities on the ice. Have fun and be safe.

To avoid calling attention to yourself. . .

- Travel at safe speeds for the conditions, including respecting the speed limits in the channels and within 100 feet of any shoreline.
- Drive vehicles that are registered, have the required lights, and have muffled exhausts.
- ODNR receives the largest volume of calls because of noise related concerns late at night. By being out past curfew - 11:00 pm, on a loud machine with no muffler makes you a target. Respect the neighbors.



Q: Bubblers are becoming more popular around the lakes as dock owners try to minimize the damage ice can have on their investment by keeping the area clear around docks. These bubblers, however, pose a risk to snowmobilers, skaters and others using the lake in the winter as melted areas and thin ice are not always visible. Does ODNR have a policy regarding the use of Bubblers?

A: ODNR does not currently have a policy regarding the use of bubblers to prevent ice from forming around docks, the issue is currently under review to develop that policy.

Dock owners should practice prudence if planning to use bubblers to avoid impacting others ability to enjoy the ice.

- Melting large areas of ice should be avoided as it creates a safety hazard for others.
- The impact of the bubbler should be limited to the area immediately around the dock being protected.
- Owners should place signs (Large enough to see visually from lake) on docks indicating a bubbler is in use.



Topic: Ice Safety

There is no such thing as 100% safe ice!

Recommended Minimum Ice Thickness (Rough Guidelines for New Clear Ice Only)

2" or less
**STAY
OFF!!**



4 Inches
Ice Fishing



5 Inches
Snowmobile
or ATV



8-12 Inches
Car or
Small Pickup



12-15 Inches
Medium Truck

**Vehicles are NOT
Permitted on the Portage
Lakes!**



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Venturing out on the Ice . . . on Foot . . .

- Don't go alone (or let someone know when you are going and when you expect to return)
- Dress for the weather – Boots, gloves, reflective clothing, PFD
- Take your cell phone
- Have a flashlight or headlamp – be visible
- Strongly recommend a life vest, ice picks, whistle
- Know the ice – do you know your lake and its soft spots
 - Under Bridges – road salt (SR 619 and S Turkeyfoot)
 - Near Spillways – moving water
 - Underwater springs create soft spots – fireworks point
 - Iron channel
 - Where else?



A life vest is the one piece of equipment most likely to save your life should you fall through the ice. No one expects to fall thru the ice, but when it happens, it is too late to put one on or wish you had brought one.

Venturing out on the Ice . . . On Snowmobile. . .

- Don't go alone (or let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return)
- Take your cell phone
- Dress for the weather – Boots, gloves, hats, **Helmet**
- Ice safety equipment
 - Whistle
 - Ice Picks
 - Floatation
 - **Throw Bag w/rope**
- Use your headlights – Don't out drive them
- Watch for Ice Fisherman and Pedestrians
- Know the ice – do you know your lake



What if I come across someone who has fallen through the ice?

- Call 911
- Throw them anything to help stay afloat
 - Rope, tree branch, any floatable object
- Don't become a second victim
- Encourage them to stay calm, kick their feet to get horizontal and crawl out on their belly in the direction they came from.
- Roll away from the hole.

<https://youtu.be/QS49wGhYwvU>



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HOW LONG CAN YOU SURVIVE?

| Water Temp (degrees F) | Exhaustion or Unconsciousness | Survival Time |
|------------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| 0-32 | under 15 minutes | 15-45 minutes |
| 33-40 | 15-30 minutes | 30-90 minutes |
| 41-50 | 30-60 minutes | 1-3 hours |
| 51-60 | 1-2 hours | 1-6 hours |
| 61-70 | 2-7 hours | 2-36 hours |
| 71-80 | 3-12 hours | indefinite |
| over 80 | indefinite | indefinite |



Run to the Beach 5K

& 1 MILE EASTER EGG SCRAMBLE



Run to the Beach 5K and 1-Mile Easter Egg Scramble

***Benefiting Portage Lakes
Advisory Council***

***Saturday April 11th
Portage Lakes State Park
8:30 AM***

Register online at:

<https://portagelakesadvisorycouncil.org/>

***This presentation was produced as a public service by the
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Upcoming Meetings:
Thursday, Feb 5th, 2026
Thursday, March 5th, 2026

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