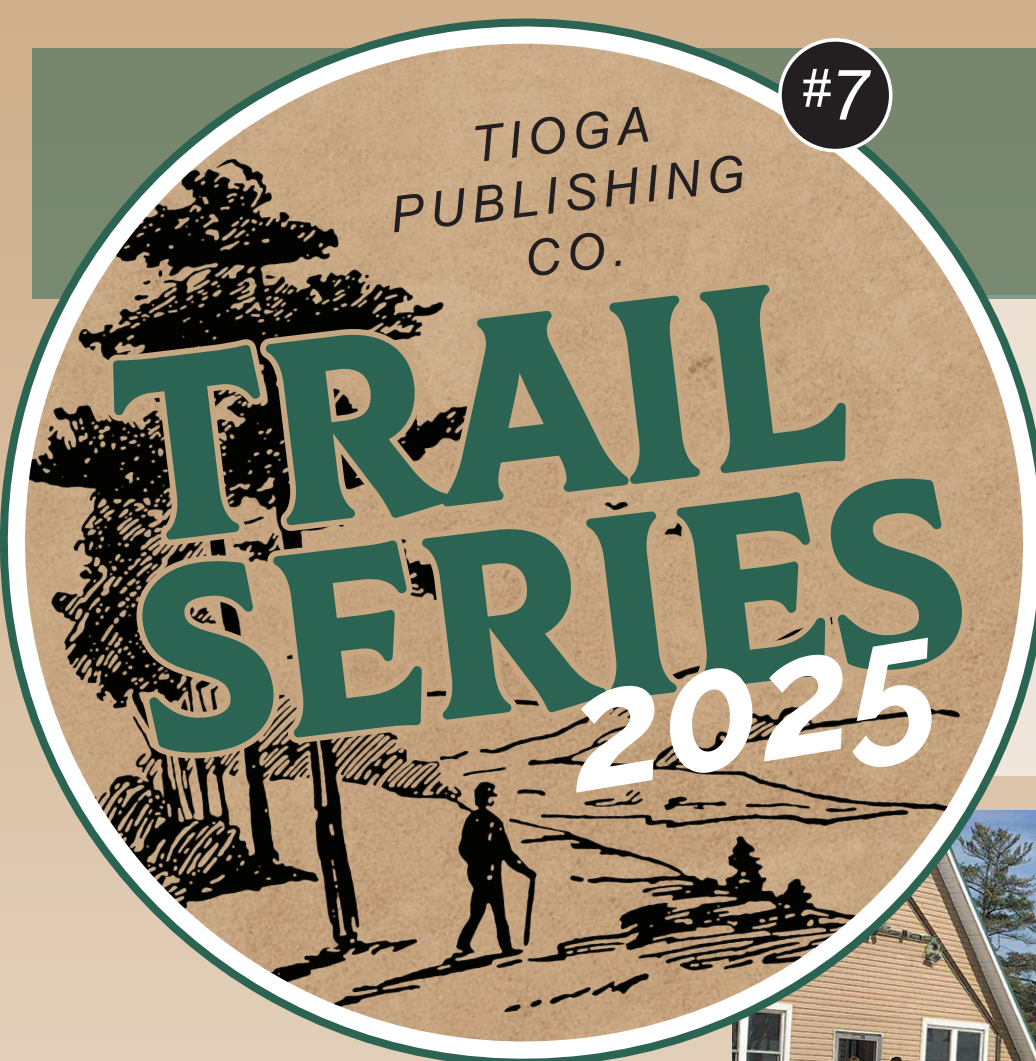




SKI SAWMILL & DENTON HILL

Winter in Tioga and Potter Counties transforms rolling hills and quiet valleys into a playground for snow lovers. At the heart of it all is Ski Sawmill Family Resort in Morris, where 13 slopes, crisp mountain air, and a welcoming community remind visitors that skiing doesn't have to be extravagant to be unforgettable. Smaller slopes like Sawmill offer an affordable way to learn, connect, and enjoy the outdoors while supporting local families and winter tourism. Nearby state parks extend the adventure with opportunities for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and winter hiking. Together, these destinations keep the spirit of cold-weather recreation alive in Pennsylvania's Northern Tier.

Where Winter Belongs: Skiing North-Central Pennsylvania

by Melanie A. Wood



Photos by Megan Gallant

Snow has a way of softening the noise of the world. In North-Central Pennsylvania, the rhythm of winter returns each year when the lifts start turning at Ski Sawmill Family Resort in Morris. For 25 seasons, owners Mike and Jody Knefley have carried on a local tradition that began in 1969: offering affordable, family-centered skiing to the communities of Tioga, Lycoming, and Potter Counties.

"We're a small, family-run ski area," Mike explains. "Our goal is to offer affordable skiing to local families who might not otherwise have that opportunity if we weren't right in their backyard." With 13 slopes ranging from beginner to expert, Ski Sawmill balances accessibility and adventure. Its smaller size makes it an ideal place for parents to let their kids explore without worry. The Knefleys say what makes

Ski Sawmill stand out isn't just the slopes, but the snow. "We're known for our amazing grooming," Mike says. "Having fewer skiers helps...our trails hold up beautifully compared to bigger resorts." Two T-bar lifts give beginners a chance to build confidence gradually, while a network of trails offers progression for growing skill levels.

For lifelong local skier Megan Gallant, that small-mountain feel is exactly what makes the region special. "Denton Hill was my childhood; Sawmill is my adulthood," she says. "I found a love of instructing there...teaching kids and adults to fall in love with skiing the same way I did."

Gallant grew up on the slopes of Denton Hill before it closed in 2014. "When we lost Denton, many stopped skiing altogether or had to travel farther north. Sawmill absorbed the rest of us," she explains. "It's as local as it gets. Everyone knows each other and looks out for the kids."

Small ski areas like Ski Sawmill are part of the community's social fabric. School ski clubs meet there on weeknights, giving students access to a sport that might otherwise be out of reach. "Kids who don't have family that ski get to learn in a safe and welcoming environment," Gallant says. "It's a great equalizer."

Safety is something Ski Sawmill emphasizes constantly. "The number-one tip is to take a lesson," Mike says. "Our instructors are trained to teach safely. A friend's advice might save money, but it can also lead to injury." He also encourages

everyone to follow the National Skiers Responsibility Code and wear helmets. "We want skiing to become part of who you are...something that opens doors to adventure."

The Knefleys' team includes certified ski patrollers trained in Outdoor Emergency Care, essentially mountain EMTs, who handle emergencies on site. Behind the scenes, nightly grooming and strong snowmaking efforts ensure smooth, consistent surfaces even through Pennsylvania's freeze-thaw cycles.

Across Tioga and Potter Counties, winter still draws people outside. Cross-country skiers glide through the Pine Creek Rail Trail, and locals watch for the long-awaited reopening of Denton Hill. For now, Ski Sawmill remains the region's anchor, proving that small mountains can have big hearts.

As Gallant puts it, "Skiing keeps people connected. It gives us sunlight, exercise, and friendships that last beyond the snow."

If You Do It

Ski Sawmill Family Resort: 383 Oregon Hill Road, Morris, PA 16938 Located between Wellsboro and Williamsport, Ski Sawmill offers 13 slopes, two T-bar lifts, and a family lodge with rentals, lessons, and a cozy cafeteria. The resort welcomes both skiers and snowboarders, with terrain suited for beginners through experts. Snowmaking and nightly grooming keep the surface consistent throughout the season, which typically runs from mid-December through late March.

Lessons & Rentals: Private and group lessons are available for all ages. Full rental packages include skis, boots, and poles (snowboard rentals also available). Lessons are strongly recommended for first-timers.

Events & Community: Ski Sawmill hosts local school ski nights, church and youth group outings, and community race events. Check their website for updates on special discount days and season passes.

Nearby Lodging & Food: Visitors can stay at the resort's small lodge or find additional lodging in Wellsboro, Liberty, or Mansfield. Local diners and cafes, like the Morris Family Restaurant or Wellsboro Diner, offer hearty winter fare for post-ski meals.

Safety Tips: Dress in layers, wear a helmet, and check trail conditions before heading out. Beginners should start on the easier slopes and always follow the Skier Responsibility Code. Ski Sawmill's ski patrol is on duty whenever lifts are running.

Trail Maps & Information: Visit www.skisawmill.com for current conditions, prices, webcam views, and operating hours. For updates on Denton Hill's redevelopment, check the Pennsylvania DCNR website <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dcnr/newsroom/dcnr-announce-es-first-round-of-improvement-s-to-revitalize-denton->

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