

Letter to the Forest Service,

Thank you for taking the time to consider all the view points (particularly those of us that live here in Alaska) and not just look at the volume of responses. I have been dissatisfied by the number of public comments from the lower 48 that are simply one sentence submissions with no context or thought.

I would like to express my support for Alternative B. I would also highlight that since the creating of our state that sno-gos, snow-machines, and other names for snowmobiles are about as traditional as you get here in Alaska and therefore I would implore that you consider that as part of the "traditional land use" in this area.

I have the honor of helping children to get out of their houses in the winter and ride snow machines around the state with one of the non-profit organizations that I am a part of. While there are places that will always be open for this activity, those chances when we can get kids and young adults into the land CLOSE to their house helps to connect them to the wilderness and helps to show the great outdoors just minutes away from their home. The harder we as a muni, state, or nation make this the easier it is to sit at home and play video games or start other bad habits. Not trying to use a slippery slope argument...but things like crime, alcoholism, and drug use are linkable increased statistics to decreased positive outdoor activities.

One of the areas that gets some negative attention in certain circles are the trails that both horse, skiers, hikers, and others share with snowmachines. My family members are avid hikers in the summer and winter and my wife and in-laws all cross country ski. So I feel that I understand this challenge and can provide first hand perspective. First, once outside the first 10 miles of ANY Chugach trail that we use to ride there is NO ONE else to use the trails. And while I'm sure that some folks feel they need race down the trail to get to the open areas to ride the vast majority of people don't. Two winters ago I actually had a skier that turned perpendicular to the trail and stood there to block the trail on purpose. My wife, both of our boys, and I got to see first hand the "us versus them" mentality. We decided to stop and have lunch until they finally passed by us. So there are always bad apples in every bunch.

Please don't limit our use of the land. The riders that I ride with are courteous, responsible, and enjoy being able to ride in our own home towns. I ask that you consider Alternative B as the most supportive of ALL Alaskans.

Thanks.

Mark DeRocchi  
Eagle River, AK