

Tracking Snowmobile Trespass: Native Forest Network's Last Refuge Campaign Documents Illegal Motorized Travel in Wilderness Areas and Roadless Lands

By Phil Knight and Adam Rissien, Native Forest Network



*Illegal snowmobile use in the Gospel Hump Wilderness, on the Nez Perce National Forest, Idaho.
Photo by Chuck Pezeshki (<http://users.moscow.com/pezeshki>)*



Introduction

In June 1999, during a spring ski trip into the Madison Range of Montana, Native Forest Network's (NFN) Phil Knight and Rick Meis noticed old snowmobile tracks in the snow, deep inside the Lee Metcalf Wilderness. The next winter, during a February overnight ski trip, Knight and Meis found more snowmobile tracks, in a different area of the Lee Metcalf.

Becoming concerned with the extent of this illegal snowmobile use, in November of 2000 Knight began working with Adam Rissien at the NFN office in Missoula to methodically document illegal snowmobile use in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming. We not only organized our own monitoring efforts, we gathered news reports describing trespass incidents elsewhere. To date we know of trespass problems occurring in 15 different areas across the west, including the Bob Marshall Wilderness and Yellowstone National Park.

This winter, 2001-2002, we enjoyed the financial support of the Natural Trails and Waters Coalition, as well as the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative. Adam Rissien coordinated monitoring efforts on the Lolo National Forest in Montana and the Clearwater and Nez Perce National Forests in Idaho, while Phil Knight led efforts on the Gallatin and Helena National Forests in Montana and the Targhee National Forest in Wyoming. We expanded our efforts considerably this season, determined to show just how widespread illegal snowmobile use has become and to spur the Forest Service into taking more action to deal with it. We now have gathered solid evidence of extensive snowmobile trespass in the Great Burn Proposed Wilderness in Montana, the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness in Idaho, the Jedediah Smith Wilderness in Wyoming, the Gospel Hump Wilderness in Idaho, the Lee Metcalf Wilderness and in closed areas of the Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area in Montana, and in portions of Yellowstone National Park. Snowmobiles have become so popular that we are seeing more trespass in protected areas as well as escalating use in unprotected roadless lands.

The problem of snowmobile trespass promises to become one of the most crucial wintertime issues in our National Forests. We are dedicated to stopping illegal incursion and the degradation of the Wilderness. In this report we highlight our areas of focus, detail the results from our monitoring trips and explain the impacts of snowmobiles on wildlife and their habitat.

LightHawk, the "wings of conservation" (www.lighthawk.org), provided immense support via their Lander, Wyoming office and volunteer pilot network this winter, and worked with us throughout the season to find pilots willing to fly us over remote areas to scan for and document snowmobile tracks. Thanks to their diligent efforts we were able to get evidence of violations, document areas of heavy use and get some spectacular photos.

Snowmobiles are not harmless

As the use of snowmobiles for backcountry recreation increases, the damaging effects of this high-impact sport are becoming more and more obvious. The quiet, natural characteristics of our favorite wild places are threatened by irresponsible use of these machines. Ever more powerful snowmobiles are able to go faster, further and up steeper inclines, allowing easy access to the most remote wildlands. New 'sleds' can go from zero to 60 mph in less than 4 seconds, and achieve speeds well over 100 mph.

Montana's Lolo National Forest published the Stateline Snowmobile Environmental Assessment, which analyzed the effects of these machines. It found that wolverine dens could be severely impacted, causing stress and jeopardizing the survival of the young. Snowmobiles were also found to disturb endangered grey wolves as well. The report states that increased winter recreation within the Stateline analysis area could degrade air, soil and water quality, damage vegetation, and result in a lack of areas devoid of human noise. Snowmobiles can damage tree stems, break trunks and remove bark. They also may negatively impact aquatic life. The exhaust contains ammonium, nitrate and sulfate ions which, when mixed with water, create acids. These acids may stress tree seedlings and can impact germination, growth and survival.

In addition to the impacts from noise, snowmobile emissions have become the primary focus in places like Yellowstone National Park. According to the



The Great Burn Proposed Wilderness on the Montana/Idaho. Photo by Adam Rissien/NFN.



Bluewater Network, www.bluewaternet.org, snowmobiles dump 55,000 gallons of fuel, 2,200 gallons of raw 2-cycle oil and emit 11,439,436 pounds of hydrocarbons each winter season into the park. Fortunately, our National Forests are not seeing the numbers of machines that generate this kind of pollution. However, if only a fraction of these emissions are released into sensitive wildlife habitats or areas of forest regeneration then the impacts can become a concern.

We have also been studying the impacts of snowmobile use on thin or non-existent snow cover. Milder winters and thin snowpack, combined with the growing popularity of snowmobiles, results in travel directly on the soil and on low-growing plants. Preliminary results show that snowmobiles can have as much or more impact on soils and plants as wheeled vehicles, especially since they travel over very wet spring soil.



Snowmobilers on alpine tundra in the Beartooth Mountains, photos by Chris Caruso

Lynx and Wolverine

We have also been following the latest research on Canada lynx and wolverine distribution as well as what their habitat needs are. Since most of this is new, the Forest Service has not implemented the findings into their management plans for motorized use. An ongoing study hypothesizes that lynx (recently listed as Threatened under the ESA) have to compete with other predators for food because snowmobile tracks compact the snow enough to allow bobcats and coyotes into critical foraging habitat. This is a key issue as many areas we monitor are classified as lynx denning and foraging habitat. By gathering lynx and wolverine spatial data from the Forest Service, we have demonstrated that motorized use is occurring in their habitats. Below is an excerpt of some of the most recent wolverine research.

Aerial Surveys for Wolverine Presence and Potential Winter Recreation Impacts to Predicted Wolverine Denning Habitats in the Southwestern Yellowstone Ecosystem (Kimberly S. Heinemeyer, Bryan C. Aber, Daniel F. Doak January 2001), stated that “Some historical threats may continue to threaten wolverine populations, including habitat alteration and population isolation. Additionally, new threats place novel stresses on the remaining populations. One relatively new potential impact is winter recreational use of natal denning habitats. Female wolverines appear to prefer high elevation, north-facing talus slopes for natal denning. Often located within cirque basins, the females occupy extensive snow tunnels that form a complex of dens (Magoun and Copeland 1998). These dens are occupied during the early spring (February, April) birthing and whelping periods.

“Winter recreation may be the single largest threat to wolverines. Fifteen years ago, you couldn’t get a snow machine into these areas. There are snow machines coming out now that can go virtually anywhere. If we don’t protect these (denning) sites, we may not have wolverines.”

- Jeff Copeland, Former Idaho Fish and Game Dept. Wolverine Researcher

There is a growing body of evidence that females are prone to disturbance at den sites, particularly at the natal dens where birthing occurs. Idaho wolverine selected specific natal and kit rearing habitat and responded negatively to human disturbance near these sites (Copeland 1996). Female wolverine abandoned dens in Finland (Pulliainen 1968) and Norway (Myrberget 1968) when disturbed by human activity. Both snowmobile use and backcountry ski use has seen rapid increases in popularity over the last several years. Advancements in the power and technology of snowmobiles have resulted in machines and riders that can readily access what was previously viewed as inaccessible areas due to the rugged terrain. Extreme snowmobilers, who use the steep slopes of the cirque basins as playgrounds, favor these remote areas. Unfortunately, it is during the wolverine denning season (February-April) that we may see the highest or most intense



Wolverine. Photo by Gerald and Buff Corsi, California Academy of Sciences.

recreational use of denning habitats (i.e., cirque basins), by both snowmobilers and skiers. Spring snow pack provides the most favorable conditions to access the remote regions, and it is exactly during this time when these recreationists will most negatively affect reproductive activities of resident wolverines. As snowmobiling and backcountry skiing continues to grow in popularity, there is an increasing concern that reproductive habitats may become limiting to populations due to human disturbance. Protection of reproductive denning habitat may be critical for the persistence of wolverine. An association between wolverine presence and refugia (e.g., Wilderness Areas) may be linked to a lack of available reproductive denning habitat outside protected areas.”

The Great Burn Proposed Wilderness

The Great Burn Proposed Wilderness, which lies in the Bitterroot Mountains on the Idaho/Montana border, has been a candidate for protection since the early 70's. Beginning with the first Roadless Area Review and Evaluation, RARE I, local citizens have tried to ensure that the wild characteristics of this land endures. In 1979, the second inventory, RARE II, identified 165,197 acres as roadless, though other estimates put the total closer to 300,000 acres. Due to strong public support, the Lolo National Forest designated 98,680 acres to be managed as proposed wilderness while the Clearwater National Forest assigned approximately 126,000 acres. Yet, the Clearwater Forest Plan leaves their side completely open to cross-country snowmobile travel while the Lolo NF does not and it is for this reason we see violations within the protected areas of the Great Burn. The Forest Service designated these lands as proposed wilderness because of the public's expectation that Congress would soon vote in favor of making the area Wilderness. However, due to the rise in motorized use, portions of the Great Burn risk being excluded from future Wilderness designation.



View from the Schley Mt. corridor. Photo by Brian Huntington



Allowed snowmobile use on Kid Lake, Clearwater National Forest, Idaho. Photo by LightHawk.

Last season we documented extensive snowmobile violations in the northern and central portions of the Great Burn in Montana and recorded heavy use on the Idaho side. Even though snow conditions this season were poor and avalanche danger high, we still documented several violations in Montana and widespread use in Idaho.

The first fly-over was done by the Great Burn Study Group (GBSG) on January 15. Even through low hanging clouds, tracks were seen going from Trout Creek Rd. (F.R. 250) to Heart Lake on trail #171. About 25 sets of tracks were observed on the lake making this an early season hot spot. Just above lies Pearl Lake, but the clouds prevented any observation. One area that has frequent violations is Irish Basin just a little south of the Schley Mt. corridor along Surveyor Creek Rd. The Lolo N.F. leaves this route unprotected to allow access into Idaho. Snowmobilers use the corridor to get to Kid Lake but some drop down into Irish Basin. It was here that about 20 sets of tracks were found, including high marking, which can cause avalanches. Most of the other places did not have evidence of violations or were unapproachable due to the clouds.

Thanks to our volunteer ground crews and team leader Brian Huntington, we were able to get into places when the weather was uncooperative. The first trip, on January 18th to the Heart Lake trailhead #171 was to confirm the observations of the previous over-flight. No signs were posted at the trailhead warning users of the area closure and tracks were confirmed along the length of the trail. Volunteers observed oil spots in the snow at various points. The following weekend, January 25th, volunteers tried to get to the Heart Lake trailhead but could not due to an avalanche that had completely covered part of Trout Creek Rd. It was noted that the avalanche did not deter snowmobiles from traveling up the road. The next organized ground trip was on February 2nd, up Schley Mt. corridor. Again, tracks were seen in Irish Basin and volunteers observed coyotes and a moose on Surveyor Creek Rd. just a little ways from where they camped. On February 12th, the GBSG checked out Clearwater Crossing and found three sets of tracks continuing from the

trailhead to trail 99/103 junctions. No signs were posted to inform people of the motorized restriction.

On February 4th a LightHawk volunteer pilot flew over the Schley Mt. corridor and found snowmobile activity on the ridge between Kid and Cedar Log Lakes, which is the Stateline Trail #738. Again on March 10th, LightHawk was able to fly over portions of the Great Burn and observed more illegal use in Irish Basin. Violations were also documented along the Stateline Trail leading from Kid Lake toward Admiral Peak. Additional tracks were seen on the Stateline Trail #46 coming from the Crooked Fork and Hopeful Creek drainage. This drainage and Kid Lake both lie on the Idaho side and were covered with tracks. Traveling north, more evidence of use was seen on and northeast of Fish Lake. All these areas are unprotected from cross-country snowmobile use and lie in critical wolverine and lynx habitat. It is evident that snowmobilers routinely travel into the protected side of the Great Burn from Idaho and this season we were able to photograph their route from the Crooked Fork and Hopeful Creek drainage. The Clearwater NF already lists the trails in the drainage as off limits to snowmobiles so it would not be unreasonable to ask that they designate an area closure since their trail restrictions are not working.

Many more over-flights were scheduled and cancelled due



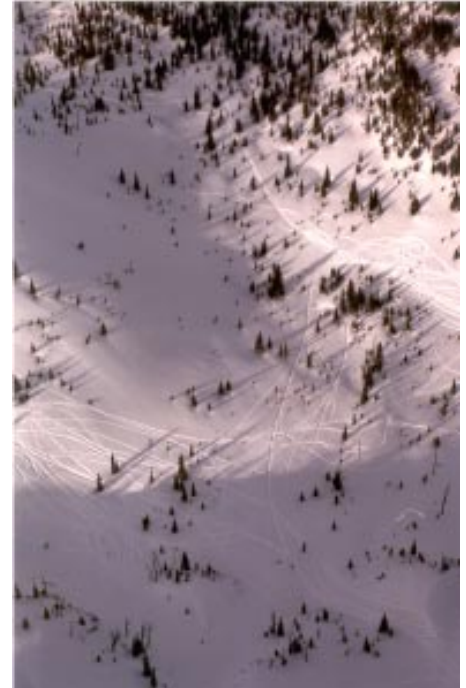
*Area around Heart Lake on the Lolo National Forest.
Photo by Bob Clark (2001) .*



State Line Trail with tracks from Kid Lake. Photo by LightHawk.



State Line Trail at the top of Crooked Fork. Photo by LightHawk.



Looking down from State Line Trail into Crooked Fork. Photo by LightHawk.

to weather conditions. Finally, on April 30th, in cooperation with the GBSG, we were able to fly over the northern part of the Great Burn. Heart, Pearl and Dalton Lakes had tracks on and around them. Recent snowfalls drew out snowmobilers who had faced poor snow conditions all season, so it was no surprise to see violations. Traveling south along the Idaho/Montana Stateline, we observed trespass on Straight Lake and high marking along the ridge to the west. More tracks were seen along the ridge up from Cedar Log Lakes and violations were again confirmed in Irish Basin. Both Fish and Kid Lakes showed sign of use over on the Idaho side.

Our goal in documenting violations and areas of heavy use is not only to bring attention to the issue, but also to convince the Forest Service that their efforts to protect the wilderness characteristics need to be improved. To this end we have asked that the Lolo National Forest close the access points that allow trespass to occur. We have also expressed our desire that the Clearwater National Forest change its management directives to protect its side of the proposed wilderness. Forest Plan revisions are scheduled soon and we need to send a clear message that decisive action needs to be taken in order to protect the Great Burn.

Clearwater National Forest, Idaho: Key Areas

The Bighorn-Weitas

Next to the Great Burn, the Bighorn-Weitas roadless area covers over 240,000 acres. Just recently over half of this was included into the proposed wilderness management classification called B2. This means the Clearwater NF should not allow activities that could jeopardize its pristine characteristics for inclusion into the national Wilderness system. Cayuse and Weitas Creeks provide potential grizzly bear habitat and support westslope cutthroat trout. Motorized dirt bikes are popular here and the potential for snowmobile use is high. On March 10th, a LightHawk overflight checked for tracks in areas that have potential for use and fortunately no tracks were discovered. We will be focusing more on this area in future monitoring trips in order to confirm levels of snowmobile activity.

Elk Summit

Located south of Highway 12, this area has a history of snowmobile use and provides several opportunities for violations into the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Forest Service Rd. 358 ends at the Wilderness boundary. Forest Service Rd. 360 leads to Elk Summit where snowmobilers can take two different trails to the Wilderness or continue towards Hoodoo Lake where trail #486 crosses into the Selway-Bitterroot. Though the area is not roadless, it does have a proposed wilderness designation (B2). Tom Beal Park, north of the B2 area, is at the end of F.S. Rd 362 just before the wilderness border. The March 10th LightHawk flight discovered tracks on Kooskooskia Meadows and coordinates place them leading from F.S. Rd. 358 right over the edge of the Wilderness. Due to a margin of error it would be wrong to say that this was definitely a violation, but it is close. The same can be said for the tracks seen around Hoodoo Lake, Elk Summit and Horse Heaven Meadows.

Again coordinates placed snowmobiles just below Hoodoo Mt., which is right on the wilderness boundary. Coordinates also show snowmobiles just feet from the Selway-Bitterroot in Tom Beal Park and tracks were seen traveling into the protected area. With one confirmed violation and several close calls, it is obvious that the Elk Summit area and Tom Beal Park should be protected.

The Gospel Hump Wilderness

Located in the Nez Perce National Forest, the Gospel Hump Wilderness covers over 200,000 acres. Named after Gospel Peak and Buffalo Hump, this magnificent wilderness offers some breathtaking

scenery. Unfortunately, snowmobile violations are a known occurrence and following up on information from the Friends of the

Clearwater we conducted monitoring in two key areas. On April 3rd a LightHawk flight documented trespass on the east face and summit of Buffalo Hump. More violations were seen in the western part of the wilderness on Wind River Meadows and at the headwaters of Gospel Creek. Forest Service Rd. 444 leads into the Wilderness forming a “cherry stem” providing access for the illegal use. On April 9th, renowned photographer and guide Chuck Pezeshki was able to document further violations on trail #380 leading to Moores Lake and on the north side of Gospel and Pyramid Peaks. According to Forest Service officials, the area is a known problem spot for violations. NFN confirmed that there are patrols and signs posted but vandals regularly damage or take them down.

Obviously more needs to be done to convince snowmobilers that this area is off limits. Salmon River District Ranger Jack Carlson expressed eagerness to catch a violator but had concerns that the penalties are not stiff enough to discourage trespass.

Head of Gospel Creek deep in the Gospel Hump Wilderness of the Nez Perce National Forest, Idaho. Photo by LightHawk.



Elk Summit in the Clearwater National Forest, Idaho. Photo by LightHawk.



Kooskooskia Meadows is located in a proposed Wilderness of the Clearwater National Forest, Idaho. Photo by LightHawk.



Gallatin National Forest, Montana: Key Areas

In the winter of 2001, we organized 2 fly-overs of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness and the Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area (HPBH WSA). These two flights yielded photos and documentation of dozens of snowmobile tracks in three different areas of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness and inside two areas within the HPBH WSA which are closed to snowmobiling. In addition, during the winters of 99-2000 and 2000-2001 we organized 4 ground patrols into four different areas involving five people, each of which resulted in documentation of illegal snowmobile travel. We have also received numerous reports from volunteers who have documented snowmobile trespass into other closed areas such as the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness.

Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area

In March we skied and snowshoed into two areas where trespass has been observed in the past: Tepee Creek and Porcupine Creek, in the HPBH WSA portion of the Gallatin Range. No evidence of trespass was found this time. Most likely the poor snow conditions would have stopped anyone attempting to snowmobile into these areas; in fact, the Big Sky Snowmobile Trail goes through Porcupine Creek (snowmobilers are required to stay on the trail), but there were no tracks at all on the trail in early March.

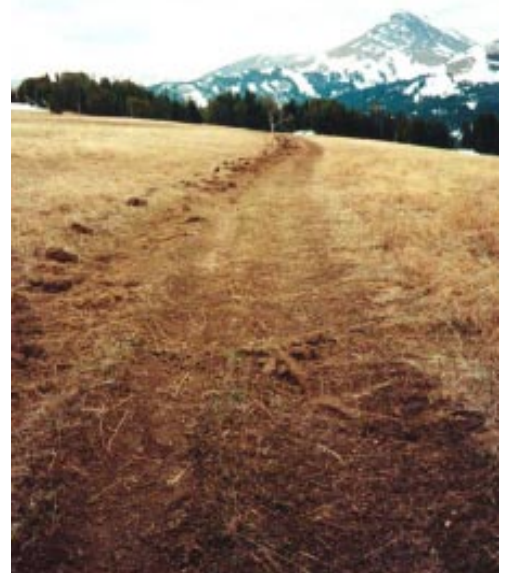
Snowmobilers do at times run all the way down Porcupine Creek, by crossing the main Gallatin divide from upper Rock Creek. The Forest Service told us that snowmobilers like to make this illegal run and go to the Corral Bar for lunch, then return. The whole Porcupine area is critical winter range for elk and bighorn sheep, and has resident wolverines and grey wolves. Grizzly bears also den in this area. In 2001 we found snowmobile tracks in the Onion Basin area, far from the legal snowmobile trail.

Tepee Creek lies just north of the Yellowstone Park boundary. It is closed to all types of motorized use except motorcycles. It too is critical winter range. In 2000, we found extensive snowmobile tracks in the upper basin, coming in from the Buffalo Horn Lakes. We have also heard that snowmobiles at times enter Daly Creek, in Yellowstone Park, from Tepee Creek.

Lee Metcalf Wilderness

The Lee Metcalf is remote and very rugged, with resident grizzly bears and wolverine, and probable lynx. It is some of the finest Wilderness in Greater Yellowstone. Unfortunately it is divided up into three different units with snowmobile 'play areas' in between. This allows for easier snowmobile access into closed areas. The Monument Mountain unit gets some trespass activity in upper Bacon Rind Creek, where snowmobilers can easily cross the ridge from Tepee Creek, which is a major play area. Our 2001 flights recorded hundreds of tracks in Tepee Creek, with a few crossing the ridge into Bacon Rind and high marking on White Peak.

In addition, we found that snowmobiles are entering the Taylor-Hilgard unit of the Lee Metcalf from upper Cache Creek in the Taylor Fork area, crossing the low part of Shedhorn Mountain into upper Shedhorn Creek. In the summer of 2000 we did find that large orange signs had been posted in at least one area to mark the boundary. The Forest Service also told us that snowmobiles get into the Taylor-Hilgard area from upper Buck Creek via the Lizard Lakes. This winter, 2001-2002, we scheduled overflights of the Lee Metcalf four different times, and had pilots available to go. One time we even got off the ground. Unfortunately, we were stopped by stormy weather every time.



Destruction of ground cover plants by snowmobiles on the Oil Well Trail in the Gallatin National Forest, Montana. Photo by Tom Arnold.



Snowmobile tracks high on the side of White Peak and upper Bacon Rind Creek in the Lee Metcalf Wilderness, Gallatin National Forest. Photo by Phil Knight/NFN.

Bear Canyon

Bear Canyon is a popular snowmobiling and skiing destination near Bozeman, in the Gallatin Range. In November, following up on a tip from a hiker, we documented an illegally constructed year-round motorized trail in this area. It leaves Trail 440 (a legal loop trail) and climbs about 2 miles to meet Trail 53 near the top of the Bear Canyon/Bozeman Creek divide. This trail has been constructed in violation of 36 CFR 295, with logs and trees cut to make way for ATVs and snowmobiles in order to access a hunting camp. This also allows motorized access into Bozeman Creek, which is the city watershed and is totally closed to motorized recreation.

Helena National Forest, Montana:

Edith Lakes Basin

In late March, 2002 we undertook an ambitious 4-day ski trip into the Edith Lakes Basin, a large roadless area in a remote part of the Big Belt Mountains which is closed to all motorized use. Due to deep snow and difficult terrain we were unable to get into the Edith Lakes Basin, but did spend 2 days skiing the top of the Big Belt Mountains, looking down into the basin. We saw no tracks or other evidence.

Targhee National Forest, Wyoming

Acting on our request, in March an Idaho-based LightHawk pilot flew along the west side of the Teton Mountains, on the Idaho/Wyoming border, to check for snowmobile trespass in the Jedediah Smith Wilderness. This is wide-open terrain with many high ridges between west-flowing drainages, and is very popular with backcountry skiers. It is also very susceptible to snowmobile trespass. According to the pilot, "We flew southeast, cutting across the southwest corner of Yellowstone Park to the northwest flank of the Tetons. The first sign of trespass was on the ridge north of South Badger Creek. As we flew south it was obvious that the Wilderness is being violated on every ridge that offers reasonably safe access to snowmachines." The pilot provided us with photographs and GPS waypoints of the tracks he spotted.

Citizens Take Action

Besides planning over flights and ground trips, the Last Refuge Campaign encourages backcountry skiers to report any illegal snowmobile activity. We provide trespass reports and local Forest Service contact information so citizens can take action and report violators themselves. This season we have had an increase in the number of people contacting us. One skier called to report a violation into the Bob Marshall Wilderness on his May 4th trip to Pyramid Peak in the Lolo National Forest's Seely Lake district. The Lolo N.F. manages the area along the Wilderness boundary and in the travel maps Pyramid Pk. is shown as protected from motorized use.

While working tirelessly to protect the fragile post-burn area in the Bitterroot National Forest, Wild Rockies Earth First! activists documented a violation into Robins Gulch. A sign was posted on a small wooden fence designating the area as protected from snowmobile use. However, the tracks were seen going around the fence with the sign completely ignored.

On May 2 we received signed affidavits from Kenneth and Margaret Emerson and Dave and Rachel Rockafellow, all of Bozeman, regarding illegal snowmobile use in Yellowstone National Park. On February 16, 2002, they all went skiing at a popular backcountry ski area next to Highway 191, called Telemark Meadows. At 44' 54" north, this area straddles the divide between the Gallatin River and Grayling Creek.

According to the Emersons, "We had been in this area only five days before, and there were only ski tracks, but this time there were tracks of at least two snowmobiles, which had gone up the slope and far back into the forest. The parking area is posted, and we have never before seen snowmobile tracks in this area; we and friends of ours usually ski the area several times every winter. We are not happy to have machine riders pushing into this pristine area of the park. We have been cross-country skiing the western edge of the park and the surrounding Gallatin National Forest for 30 years, and in that time we have seen the available places for this form of recreation contract to less than half of what they were in the 1970s."

The National Park Service reported in February that literally hundreds of snowmobile tracks had been spotted in closed areas of Yellowstone Park during overflights to check wildlife populations. The tracks were seen in the western border areas of the park, entering from remote areas of the Targhee National Forest in Idaho.



Heavy snowmobile traffic over thin snow destroys low-growing plants and saplings and causes soil loss. Photo by Phil Knight/NFN.

What Can Be Done

Convincing the Forest Service to protect these important wildlife areas from snowmobiles is a major focus for the Last Refuge Campaign. We have already asked the Clearwater National Forest to place restrictions on cross-country snowmobile travel in their proposed wilderness areas. Their neighbor, the Lolo National Forest, shares the Great Burn Proposed Wilderness and designates it as off limits to motors. That is why we will be promoting a "One Proposed Wilderness, One Unified Plan" vision for the upcoming Forest Plan revisions.

But Last Refuge is continuing to work in other places as well. Many other areas in Idaho are classified as proposed wilderness and we will be making sure that their natural character is protected from snowmobile use. We have also contacted the Forest Service urging more law enforcement and proper posting of signs. We continually ask that specific places be patrolled and violators prosecuted. This has certainly brought attention to the issue and we are seeing limited results. However, the areas that need to be patrolled are vast and remote. In order to really address the issue, the Forest Service needs to change its management directives and close the access points where snowmobilers enter. Law enforcement must be increased and used in an efficient manner. It saddened us to learn that instead of patrolling protected areas, law enforcement officers were ordered to West Yellowstone where the Department of Livestock officials were slaughtering the wild Yellowstone bison that wander into Montana.

The only way to change Forest Service management is through a forest plan amendment or revision. For that to happen we need to let them know that there is popular support for the protection of our lands. We urge you to contact the Forest Service and voice your concern.

Lolo National Forest, Montana

- The Lolo NF needs to close Surveyor Creek Rd. to motorized use. It also should close the upper portion of Trout Creek Rd to recreational snowmobile use in order to protect the Great Burn.
 - Law enforcement needs to be increased in areas known to have illegal use and violators held accountable to the fullest penalty.
- Contact Lolo NF Supervisor Deborah Austin at LNF, Fort Missoula Bldg. 24, Missoula, MT 59804 or (406) 329-3750.*

Clearwater National Forest, Idaho

- The Clearwater NF needs to revise their forest plan and adopt a policy that discontinues motorized use in its proposed wilderness (B2) areas.
 - Law enforcement needs to be increased in areas known to have illegal use and violators held accountable to the fullest penalty.
- Contact Clearwater NF Supervisor Larry Dawson at 12730 Hwy. 12, Orofino, ID 83544 or (208) 476-4541.*

Nez Perce National Forest, Idaho

- Contact the Nez Perce NF and let them know your concern over violations into the Gospel Hump Wilderness.
 - Law enforcement needs to be increased in areas known to have illegal use and violators held accountable to the fullest penalty.
- Contact the Supervisor's Office at Route 2, Box 475, Grangeville, ID 83530 or (208) 983-1950.*

Gallatin National Forest, Montana

- Contact the Gallatin NF and let them know that, unless the Big Sky Snowmobile Trail in the wilderness Study area can be effectively patrolled, it should be closed.
 - Urge them to beef up law enforcement patrols along the border of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness, and to arrest violators.
- Contact Becki Heath, Forest Supervisor or Rich Inman, Deputy Forest Supervisor at P.O. Box 130, 10 East Babcock Avenue, Bozeman, MT 59771 or (406) 587-6701.*

Targhee National Forest, Wyoming

- The Targhee needs to more effectively enforce the boundaries of the Jedediah Smith Wilderness.
 - Law enforcement needs to be increased in areas known to have illegal use and violators held accountable to the fullest penalty.
- Contact Targhee NF Supervisor Jerry Reese at 1405 Hollipark Drive, Idaho Falls, Idaho 83403 or (208) 524-7500.*

The Native Forest Network would like to give a special thanks to:

LightHawk: www.lighthawk.org

The Great Burn Study Group

The Friends of the Clearwater: www.wildrockies.org/foc

Chuck Pezeshki, Clearwater Biodiversity Project: users.moscow.com/pezeshki

For More Information:

Contact the Native Forest Network at P.O. Box 8251, Missoula, MT 59807, (406) 542-7343, nfn@wildrockies.org, www.nativefoest.org. Donations to the Native Forest Network are tax-deductible and always appreciated.



This is where snowmobilers cross from Tepee Creek into the Lee Metcalf Wilderness in Montana. Tracks on the right of the ridge are legal, those on the left are illegal (March 2001). Photo by Phil Knight/NFN.



Snowmobile tracks around Kid Lake in the unprotected portion of the Great Burn Proposed Wilderness where wolverines have been sighted in the past (March 2002). Photo by LightHawk.