

To whom it concerns,

Thank you for the opportunity to let our concerns be heard in this process. I am a lover of the outdoors, hiking, rock climbing, camping, providing firewood for friends that cannot afford modern fuel sources, driving in the mountains watching wildlife and snowmobiling deep into the vast greatness of our public lands. I partake in all these activities plus many more. I enjoy the human powered ones as much as the mechanized ones. They each offer their own unique desired qualities, but nature and our forests are what they all have in common. As a whole, I consider myself an environmentalist for the simple fact that I take great pride in maintaining and caring for my forests. This outlook was acquired as a young man growing up as the oldest son of a dairy farming family. We cared for the land that we raised our crops on to feed the cattle that we were so dependent upon. I also was very involved in youth groups learning how to survive in and enjoy nature.

My biggest passion in life is snowmobiling. I have met hundreds of people traveling all over the country exploring our national forests. As a Midwesterner that fell in love with the remoteness and impressiveness of the mountains of the west, I finally moved to the Rockies this past winter. I have aspirations to and have always had at the top of my bucket list to go to Alaska, both in the summer and in the winter. I can't wait to finally check this off my list and hopefully make it a regular trip as many other national forests have become. I however fear that as snowmobilers our voice may not be heard, and this may not be an option due to heavily restricted land access. Land access issues have been pipping up all over our country for one reason or another. No matter the reason, it feels as if our rights and access as citizens of the United States of America are being threatened by special interest groups. We as snowmobilers want the very same thing as every forest user should want, for our forests, rivers and wildlife to thrive. With that said, we also want to experience the forest for the peace and enjoyment that it brings while escaping the modern world.

As snowmobilers we are already faced with a poor perception by many people in the country. Many think we are riding machines that destroy the environment through pollution and destruction. This is far from the truth however. As a former Co-Captain of the Society of Automotive Engineers – Clean Snowmobile Challenge team at the University of Wisconsin – Platteville, I can assure you that the snowmobiles of today have undergone and met rigorous emissions testing and standards. Many are more efficient than the average automobile on the road today. Then there is the perception of damage and destruction to the environment. This is simply not an issue through responsible use while the forest is blanketed by snow. Can we do better as humans with litter, absolutely. But this is true for every single group that has ever been in the forest, there are always a few disrespectful individuals.

I do not feel as if more land designated as “Wilderness” is beneficial. If there is an endangered species that has a critical season or area that must be restricted to ensure their survival, we must do so. This typically can be done with seasonal or temporary area specific restrictions based on actual study data that proves this as a necessity. Closing vast areas of forests for the next 10-15 years is not the answer.

This doesn't help anyone other than those that feel the "higher power" to close access to others that do not see things the same way as themselves.

Snowmobilers are some of the most open minded and understanding of most all user groups. I say this from years of observation seeing that many snowmobilers used to be avid human powered users. I also do not know a single snowmobiler that has a hatred for other user groups, or any that would intentionally disrespect other groups. I however on the other hand have witnessed and heard many firsthand stories where this is not the case in return. Many other user groups feel they are deserving of sole access and that is simply not the intentions of the national forest. Many groups that feel this way already have ample land that they currently have access to that we as mechanized do not. The current Wilderness and Non-motorized areas have already given in to their agenda. I cannot stand to allow this to continue. I WILL however, stand for equal rights to our lands for all users while keeping the wellbeing of the forests, rivers and wildlife a priority.

I am not from Alaska and have not experience the Chugach Forest yet. I so however see the very same issues in forests near me and am reaching out to share my concerns. Allowing any further closures and restrictions to the access to our public lands cannot be accepted. Closing access to mechanized travel eliminates people such as my very good friend that can only access the most peaceful area of our lands via snowmobile as he is paralyzed from the chest down. I do not want to take the amazing experience our National Forests have to offer away from him or anyone that cannot physically access a zone such as one designated Wilderness without the help of modern technologies.

All of these passionate thoughts bring me to one conclusion. Option "C" and "D" are absolutely not acceptable. Losing more access to the Kenai Peninsula will be detrimental to the recreation of snowmobiling in Alaska. Option "B" appears to be the most appropriate, however no access closures should be made to any user group regardless of the option that is selected. Warmer winters and higher snow levels have made access harder across the country which is another reason to keep access for all user groups in all areas that we currently have. Snowmobilers do not want exclusive access, just access for all. Please keep our Public Lands public and accessible to all!

Thank you,

Tony Ryan

651-380-3332

Tryan61@hotmail.com

This is a carbon copy PDF in case of foul play with the body of the original electronic submission.