



November 19, 2021

I am writing on behalf of the Grand Mesa Nordic Council. We are a community-supported, nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting fun and safe cross country skiing experiences on Grand Mesa for skiers of all ages and abilities. We groom and maintain a network of cross-country ski trails at three trailheads: Skyway, County Line and Ward.

In the maps of the different alternatives under consideration, our trails mostly fall within areas categorized as suitable for timber base. We respectfully request that our trail systems be reclassified as non-suitable for timber base area to preserve our user experience and protect our trails.

We would also like to request that our trails be designated as a special management area for cross-country skiing. We and our members would like to see our areas managed for recreation, in particular, for non-motorized recreation.

Looking at the GMUG Recreation Forest Revision maps, we believe the Winter Travel Map that shows the current status of winter travel decisions contains an error. Part of the Skyway and Ward ski areas are labeled as "Analyzed - Open to OSV," and we believe the entire Skyway, County Line and Ward systems should be classified as "Oversnow Vehicles Prohibited Seasonally."

We currently experience motorized incursions to our trails during the season, and we would like to see some buffers to provide more separation between motorized (snowmobile) use and non-motorized areas. A snowmobile corridor currently runs through the middle of our Skyway/County Line trail system (the two names refer to the trailheads), and we would like to ask that this snowmobile trail be mapped and clearly marked to a narrower width, to emphasize that this trail is a passageway through our non-motorized system and to discourage snowmobilers from straying from the designated trail.

In examining Alternative C, we notice that it mis-categorizes the current usage of the eastern part of Ward ski area. This section is currently non-motorized for winter use and we believe it should stay that way to protect our trails and user experience.

Alternative D is the GMNC's preferred option for winter travel. We would like the new GMUG plan to protect non-motorized winter use, and to offer us the potential to expand our non-motorized trails in the future.

Our ski trails have become a destination for people seeking non-motorized winter recreation. We have members from Mesa, Delta, Montrose and Garfield counties, and we regularly receive visitors from throughout Colorado and the greater western states. We ask that the new GMUG plan protect this recreational use, which has become an important economic driver in our local communities.

We have business supporters from the lodging, restaurant, guiding and outdoor goods industries, and we receive grants from Mesa and Delta counties to support our work. Last year, we had more than 600 registered memberships, and a large number of these represent families with multiple members. Our numbers have been climbing for the last five years, and we expect the demand for non-motorized winter recreation to continue to grow.

Sincerely,

Christie Aschwanden
Executive Director
Grand Mesa Nordic Council
GMNG.org