

From: [REDACTED]
To: [FS-travel-comments-rocky-mountain-shoshone](#)
Subject: Shoshone Travel Management Planning
Date: Wednesday, July 27, 2016 12:06:28 PM

To The Shoshone National Forest Travel Management Planning Staff,

I would like to thank the Shoshone National Forest (SNF) for the opportunity to participate in this planning process.

I have been riding snowmobiles since about 1974. I grew up riding with my family and most winter weekends involved trips with other families to ride various different areas in Wyoming. In past years we would start as early as Halloween and ride well into May. Most years we would ride on Mothers Day and enjoy a nice brunch near Dubois. I drove over Togwotee Pass on June 4th of this year and there was still plenty of snow for riding, granted it would be limited areas but still plenty to ride on right next to the highway.

Over the years I have introduced hundreds or maybe even thousands of people to the joy of snowmobiling. Not only have I introduced friends to the sport, but also I was a commercial snowmobile guide for a number of years. I personally know of many, many people that continue to visit Wyoming year after year due to the ability of being able to ride in wide open spaces. I have to admit they do ask why a forest such as the Shoshone would close 80-90% of public lands and prevent the public as a whole from using OUR public land and allow only select people the ability to use it. That is a tough question to answer..... It is easy to answer for some critical game areas, but other than that a reasonable and complete answer escapes me. The Forest Service is charged with managing the taxpayers land, not restricting it.

I, along with my family, are currently members of the Sweetwater Snowpokes and have been for approximately 12 years. Our club is very involved and we work very hard to keep our members aware of closures and restrictions in order to work in cooperation with the Forest Service and also the BLM. On a regular basis we ride in various different parts of Wyoming spending our money in different communities on food, gas, lodging, clothing, etc.

The High Lakes/Beartooth Mountain Range is a very special place to snowmobile.

I would like to submit my comments on the proposed dates for the snowmobile season (proposal SHO-02w). I feel that there is no need for dates to start and finish our season. There has been no supportive data brought forward to substantiate the proposed need for seasonal dates. There has been no reported or substantiated resource damage in this area. This would suggest that the current management practices are in fact working. This is the result of good on the ground management, combined with a good relationship between SNF and local user groups. As a working partner Sweetwater Snowpokes have done a good job of informing our members, and friends, of the current allowable uses and practices on the SNF. I believe this combination is the best way SNF can manage this area and to fulfill the needs of the public. In addition, by allowing over the snow vehicle use for as long as the snow is available, it also helps to distribute users over more of the forest, thus lessening potential impacts to all resources. I feel that if SNF sees no other way to manage this area effectively, and deems that there needs to be seasonal dates set, that they look at historic use, and adjust those dates to conform to that demonstrated public need. I have seen historic use occurring from October 15th through June 15th. I also feel that if dates are used, there needs to be flexibility, to account for years when there is adequate snowfall to allow for later/earlier use. It is also my belief that there is a current regulation in place that addresses potential resource damage. 36 CFR 261.15(h) states, "it is prohibited to operate

any vehicle off Forest Development, State, or County Roads in a manner which damages or unreasonably disturbs the land, wildlife, or vegetative resources.” This is the regulation the SNF could use to cite someone for causing resource damage if using a snowmobile off trail when there is inadequate snow cover.

I am very excited to submit my comments on the proposed new trail from the Painter Store, traveling up to trail A (proposal NZ-4w). This will be a great addition to the current trail system. It will be a benefit to the Crandall area community as well. I feel that the historic use, low levels of potential wildlife disturbance, and no potential resource impacts all suggest that this is a good direction for the SNF to go. Some of the other benefits are less congestion at the junction parking area, less use on the lower portion of trail A, and better safety, with the new trail being marked.

I would also like to note that a study was done by the University of Wyoming on the economic impact that snowmobiling has on our economy in Wyoming. At the time of the study snowmobiling's contribution to the state was OVER \$175 MILLION DOLLARS of income. Another interesting point is that of this \$175 million, 49% was from tourism. The Beartooth/Cooke City area is one of the highest rated destinations for snowmobiling in the US. This economic impact is very important to surrounding communities.

Once again I would like to thank the Shoshone National Forest for giving me the opportunity during this comment period, and for being a good cooperative partner.

Taylor Jones
Sweetwater Snowpokes Director