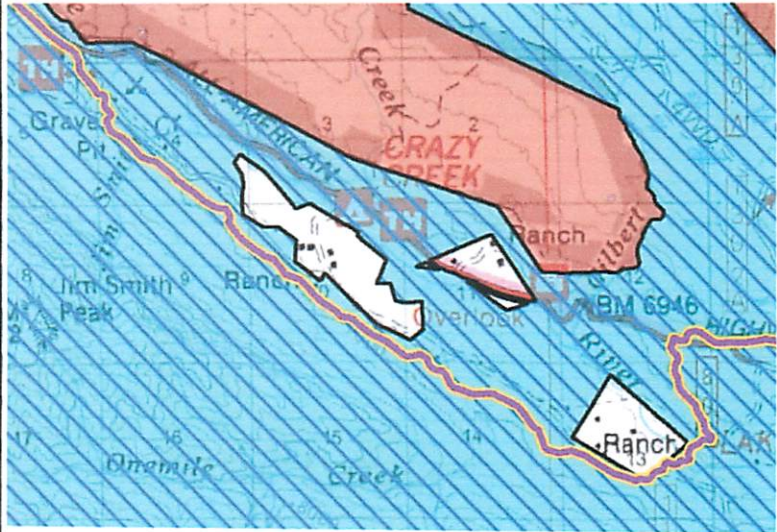
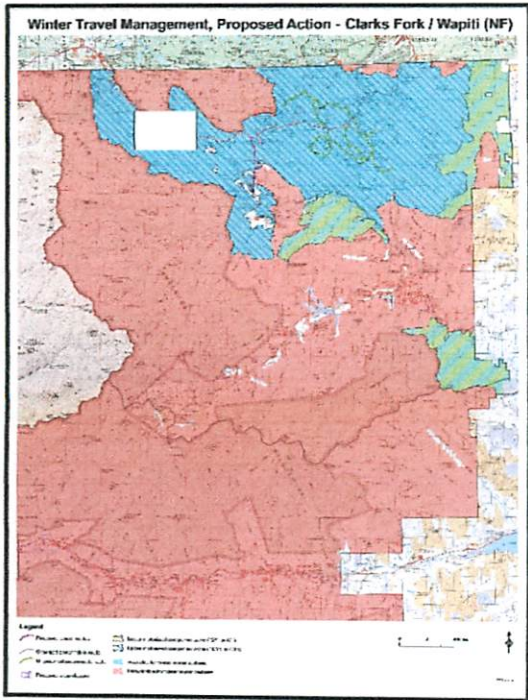


To: SHOSHONE NATIONAL FOREST, WINTER TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2016



This is a comment regarding an original proposal: "restricted to trail" -snowmobile use in the area between Pilot Creek and the bridge below the L-T Ranch- shown on the enlarged map above. This proposal was *not* included in the "Proposed Action" for the 2016 Winter Travel Management Plan. This narrow area has an active winter wildlife population that is stressed with snowmobile use. By keeping "open" snowmobiling in this section, there is no place left for an undisturbed wildlife population. The original proposal should be brought back and included in the updated 2016 Winter Travel Plan.

This area is a narrow Clark's Fork river corridor created by steep cliffs (Jim Smith Peak) on one side and steep, deep snowed rock faced mountainside on the other (Crazy Creek area). Hwy 212, right through the middle, has busy winter traffic traveling to Pilot Creek parking. The highway's impact on wildlife is big. Highway 212 follows the Clark's Fork River bank closely here. The river is the area's only open winter water and this low lying meandering river area presents prime moose winter habitat quite visible to travelers on this highway. Many other species such as ermine, fox, squirrel, grouse -generally less visible, use this area for winter water, food and cover.

When this snowmobile trail was established in the mid '80s the area surrounding the trail was heavily wooded. Please note that one issue during this trail creation in 1985 revolved mainly around maintaining bear habitat in this concentrated corridor. Upon original trail creation, there was little opportunity to leave trail through the thick woods and a designated "open" area carried an entirely different impact from now. On the south side of the river, including the south border of old ranch property there has been clear cut logging on forest service land beginning in 2012. Earlier, the '88 fires changed the landscape above this area creating big erosive cuts working through this snowmobile section. Now, because of the logging, snowmobiling can (and does) crisscross this zone even accessing sensitive Clark's Fork river riparian habitat. Some of this accelerated off trail use comes with current snowmobile technology. By whatever development, snowmobiles have a busier, noisier, air quality

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impact presence in this small tight section of winter motorized travel system. I have witnessed moose and fox pop up from a resting site and charge away from the sound of a snowmobile. However, I have not seen a snowmobiler directly hassle wildlife. It simply takes the presence of these fast loud machines to create threatening pressure.

The original proposal should be brought back as it is an easy answer: keep the snowmobile traffic on the existing (groomed) trail and eliminate the "open area" which would relieve *some* of the wildlife stress and still allow the established snowmobile access through this narrow area.

Enforcing this change: an introduction to the new trail restriction must be made with good signage. There is a prime location at either end of this proposed section for easy viewed signage.

- From the Lake Creek side going upriver, snowmobiles must go over a bridge right below the L-T Ranch. For access one has to funnel to a single lane over the bridge. The bridge entrance offers a very visible location to state through signage that all traffic must stay on snowmobile trail to Pilot Creek. If given more information such as "sensitive habitat", I sense that *most* users would understand the need to respect the restriction.
- From the Pilot Creek entrance the established trail can be more visible by adding signage throughout the parking area to inform users of the trail head whereabouts. At actual trail entrance from parking area, similar signage stating trail use reasons can be effected. Also, signage labeling the incorrect crossing at the old county road is necessary because there is no cutting through the thick riverside woods to get to correct trail once a traveler arrives at sensitive logged area (Jim Smith Creek). Therefore, the restriction must begin at Pilot Creek parking.

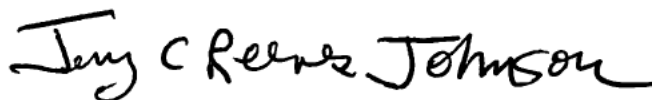
It goes without saying that enforcement of any "backcountry" restrictions is difficult in the hugeness of Wyoming. Snowmobiling in this Greater Yellowstone area is popular and growing more so -especially after the much accelerated attention the area is getting from Yellowstone's 100th birthday *worldwide* celebration. I have witnessed firsthand over the past 5 years the growing human interest and impact on this area especially from all their machines. While I cannot present the funds to hire law enforcement to monitor sensitive areas I can suggest that clear education about the "need", or the "why" to have existing rules may be a successful start. In the case of this short narrow corridor it may not be a difficult task to enforce, overall, and should **not** be the reason for disregarding this proposal.

Lastly, snowmobiling is most popular in the areas surrounding this "corridor". This corridor is not a destination snowmobile site but a relatively short track connecting two large popular areas: 1) The upper Beartooth Hwy, and 2) Colter Pass, Cooke City, Lulu Pass. There is Hwy 212 to haul snowmobiles to these two bigger high elevation areas so using the "corridor" is not the only access. Restricting use to the established groomed snowmobile trail between these two destinations stays mindful of human desires while not to the complete exclusion of wildlife needs.

I would host a field trip if needed.

Thank you,

Jenny Reeves Johnson



The following photos are winter wildlife from this area taken in 2014-2016.





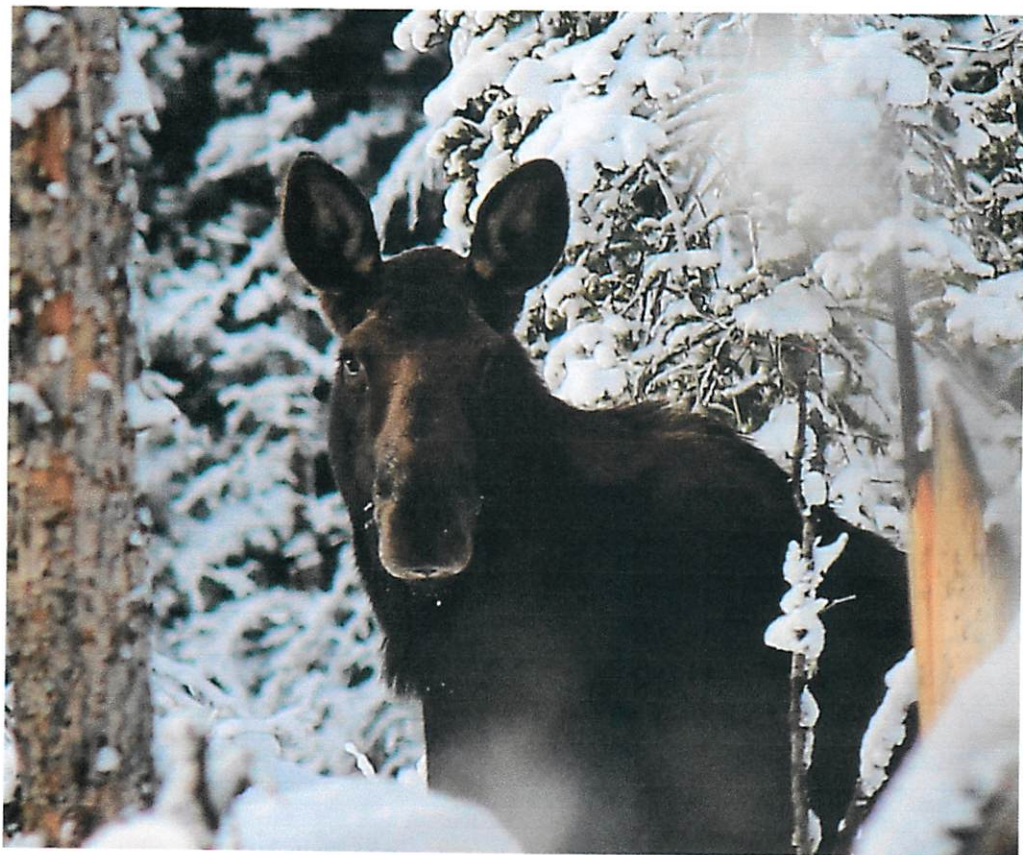
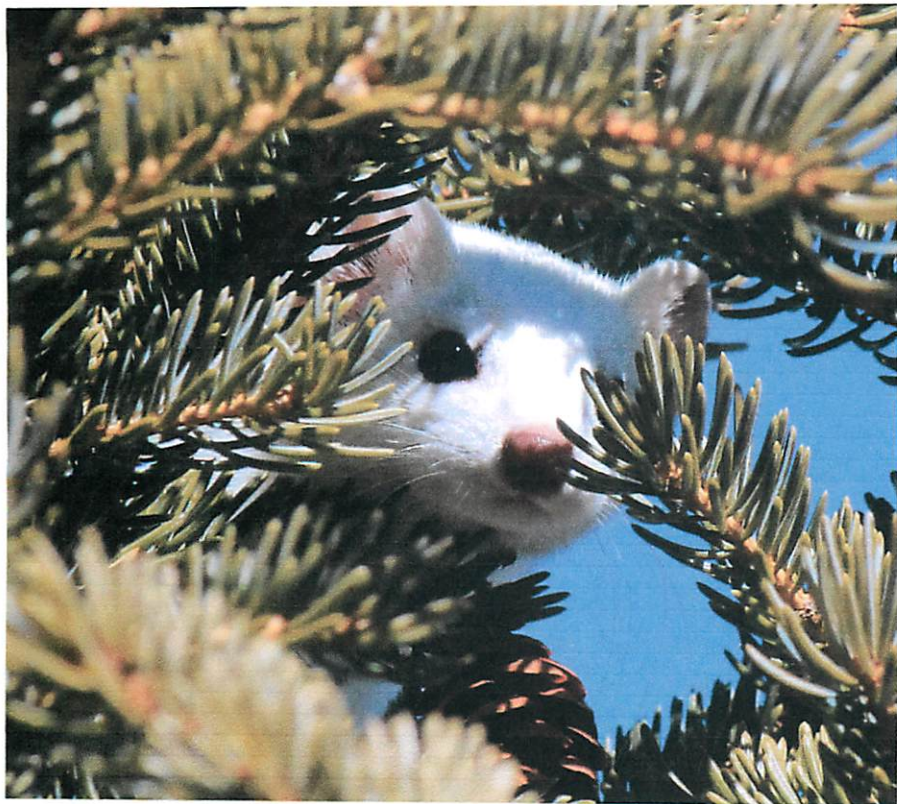






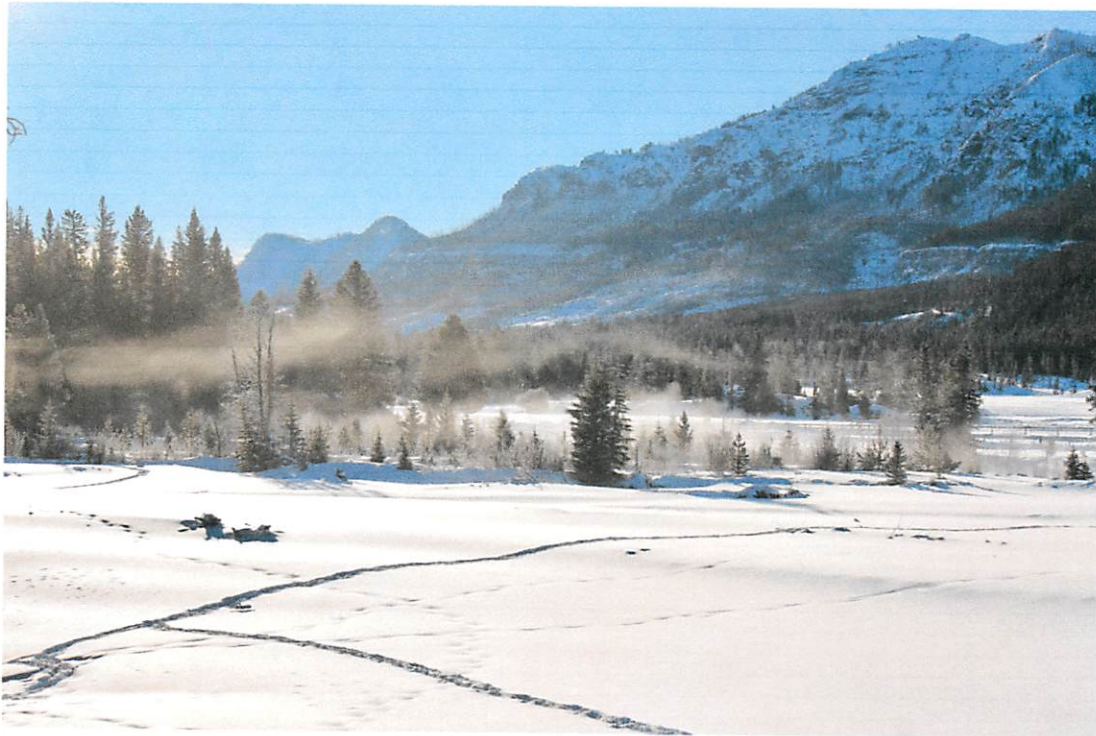
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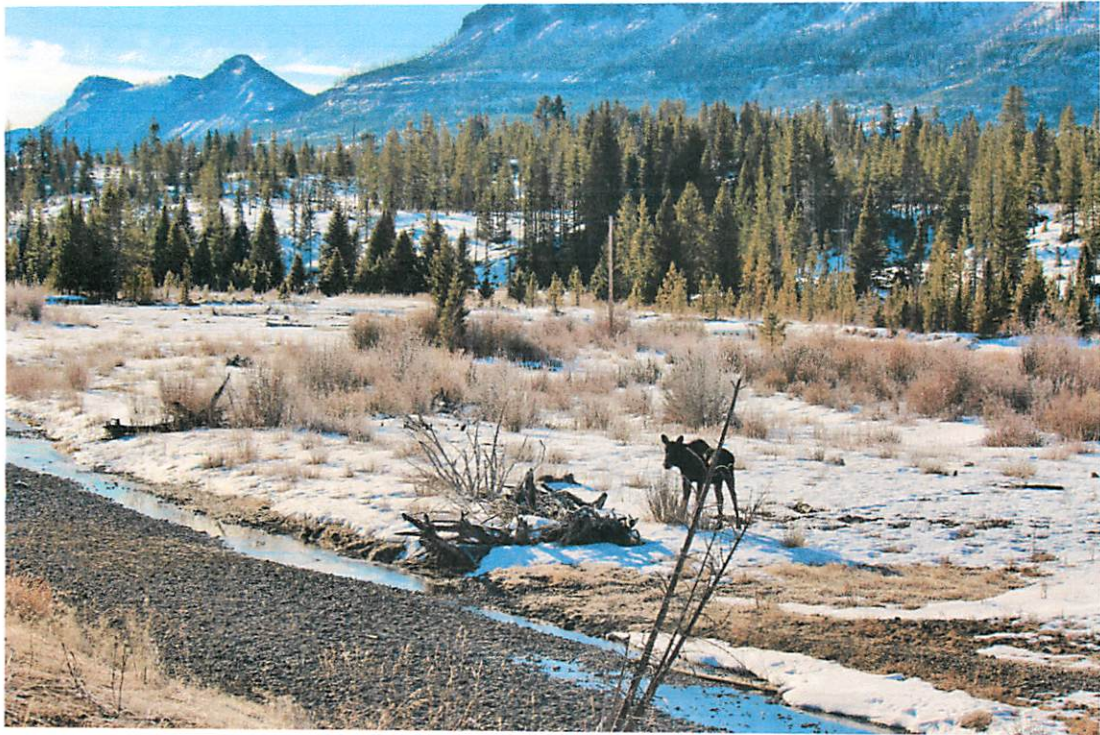




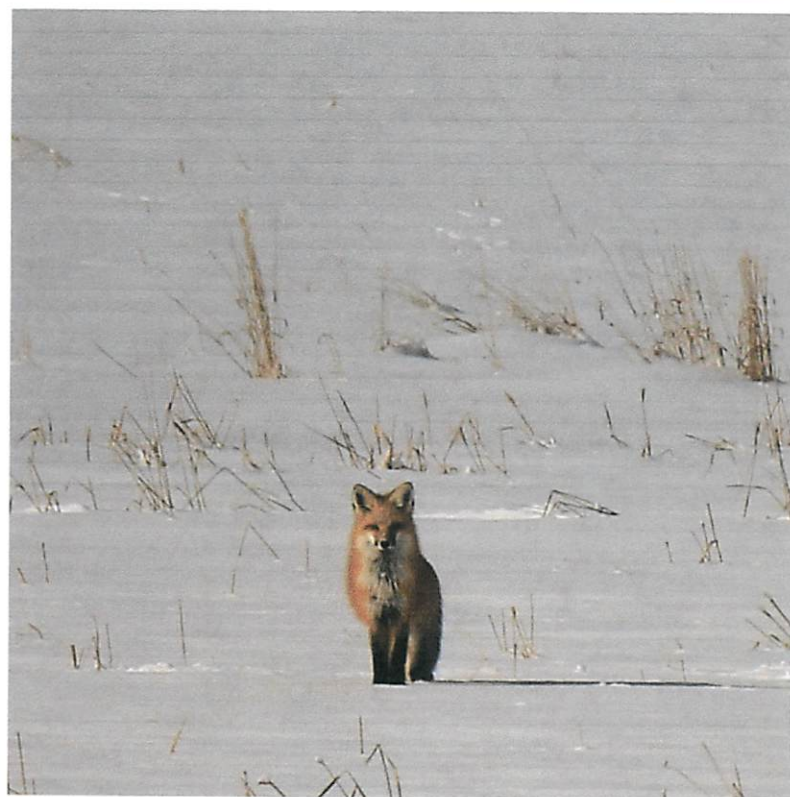
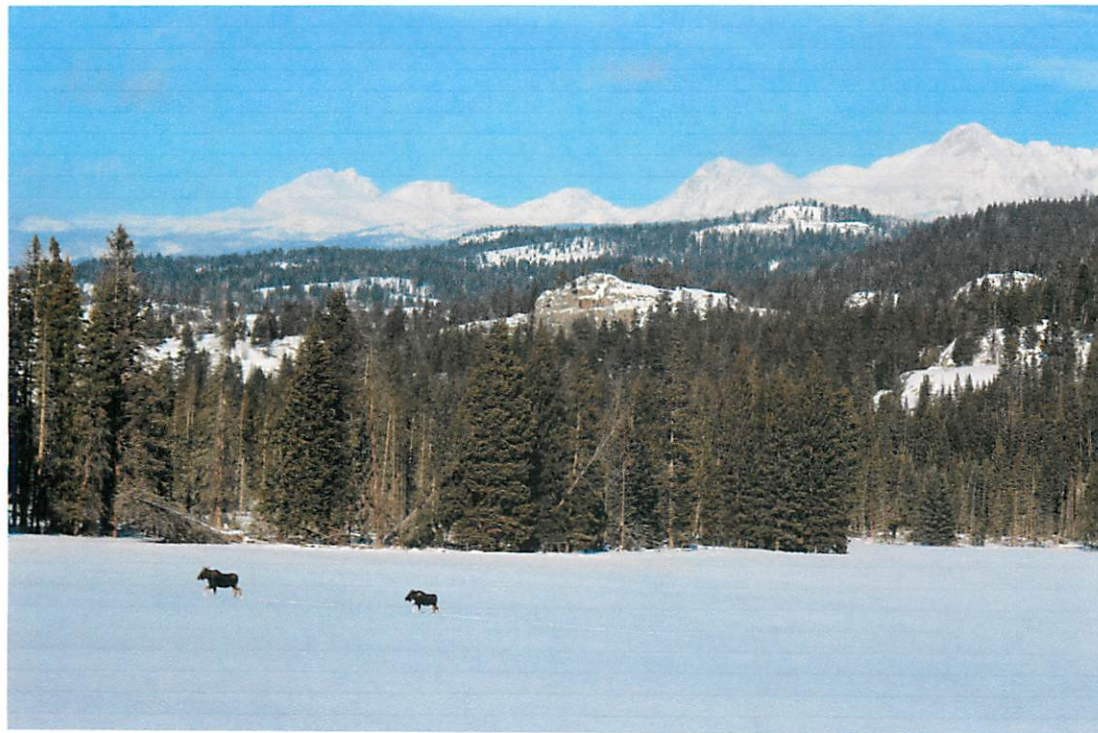




The Clarks Fork freezes in places allowing wildlife to cross easily. But crossing in this area involves crossing Hwy 212, kept open all winter and used heavily.



[Handwritten scribble]





2013 was a deep snow year. Off trail snowmobiling in that year was colossal. On a given weekend in that deep snow year the narrow corridor of which I address, had a cloud of blue exhaust hanging over it briefly, one beautiful Saturday afternoon.



This moose was photographed on a popular “thoroughfare” trail leading from the logged area to river.

The following photographs document 2016 snowmobile off trail traffic on same trail; most tracks are very near or on river riparian areas.











This trail cam captured three moose on their trek to water (via aforementioned "thoroughfare") from the woods below Jim Smith cliff face.



This and the following photo is of the same area as above, the next late morning.



Thank you for giving attention to this area.

Jenny Reeves Johnson
June 7, 2016

Quotes from:
Motorized Recreation
Analysis of Impacts
Yellowstone to Uintas Connection
Box 280 Mendon, Utah 84325
Y2uconn@hughes.net
Nov 15, 2012

"A two stroke snowmobile can emit more pollution in a single hour than a modern car does in a year. Even though four strokes emit lower amounts of pollutants, they emit more than an automobile."

"...In addition, a number of studies have documented adverse impacts of off-road vehicles on wildlife species. These include displacement from preferred habitats, increased stress and increased use of scarce energy reserves to flee from approaching vehicles. By compacting snow, snowmobiles create travel routes that can affect species distribution, movement, habitat use patterns and population dynamics. These same routes can become barriers to subnivean animals by fragmenting their habitat⁷². Motorized use (by snowmobiles) results in impacts to animals in Yellowstone and other national parks with animals in areas of snowmobile activity exhibiting elevated stress hormones when compared with those in areas where snowmobiles were absent. In a comparison between wolves at Voyageurs National Park in Minnesota, where snowmobiles are allowed, to Isle Royale National Park in Michigan, where they are banned, wolves exhibited higher stress hormones in areas with snowmobile activity. The stress hormone increased as snowmobiling intensity rose, almost doubling in areas with heavy snowmobile use."

Quote from:
Creel, S. et al. 2002. Snowmobile activity and glucocorticoid stress responses in wolves and elk. Conservation Biology 16:809-814.

"...new research shows that snowmobiles can raise the stress hormones of animals in national parks."

Quote from:



The
UNIVERSITY
of VERMONT

Vermont Legislative Research Shop Snowmobile . Impact on the Natural Environment: An Overview

"Wildlife

Dorance *et al.* (1973), Moen (1978), Hudson (1973), Harlow *et al.* (1987) all found that energy use by animals is of crucial importance during the winter. As winter progresses, many animals experience a negative energy balance, with more energy being used to survive than is being consumed in the form of forage. Natural (i.e., predators, snow) or, artificial (i.e., snowmobiles, hunting) perturbations to an animal's environment or behavior which affect, either negatively or positively, an animal's energy balance or stress level can have a substantial effect on survival and productivity, and can impair immune function. Furthermore, Dorance *et al.*, (1973), Moen (1976) have suggested that additional human caused stress on wildlife in the winter is undesirable since it may increase energy use and stress resulting in increased mortality, decreased productivity, and changes to behavioral adaptations."