

July 17, 2016

Shoshone National Forest
Attn: Rob Robertson
333 East Main Street
Lander, WY 82520

Shoshone NF Travel Management Proposed Action comments

Hello Rob,

I would like to submit my comments in regards to the Shoshone National Forests Travel Managements Plan's proposed actions. My comments mainly related to the over-snow vehicle (OSV) use and the winter portion of the Plan in both the Washakie and Wind River Ranger Districts.

In the Falls CG/Deception Creek and Pinnacles cross-country ski trail areas, I agree with closing this to snowmobiles as I ski there several times in the winter, often snowmobiling in the Togwotee area one day and xc skiing there the next day. It is nice to have a groomed trail and the opportunity to go off trail in unbroken powder if one desires. Also, probably a little known fact, but I actually scouted the area and helped with the initial layout, along with Gary Weigel, Mike Smith and John Preston, among others in Deception Creek and Pinnacle Butte areas when I was a seasonal/winter volunteer on the Ranger District in the early 1980's.

I don't know much about ATV/UTV tracked widths, but I am not opposed to them using the trails that are groomed by the State Trails Program or their Contractors. I do not want to see large tracked vehicles (vans/SUV's, etc.) on the trails though.

I support the Proposed Action for a new ungroomed snowmobile trail in the Sublette Pass area.

My main focus in this comment letter will be in regards to the possibility to restricting OSV use by time periods according to low elevations and high elevations.

I don't see any relevance to putting a date limit when you can use certain zones. There are no statements in the Proposed Action into why or what basis on how these dates are being determined. I talked with the Washakie District Ranger at the Lander public meeting and he mentioned that it had to do with the timing of the State Trails Program grooming schedule and also because it was proposed by the Wind River RD and they wanted it to be more of a Forest-wide concept. He also mentioned that dates could be rescinded or extended by the particular District Ranger at the time. To me, not having anything in writing and leaving it to the desires of the District Ranger (and his staff) could set of high degree of variability and uncertainty based on the recreational/land use beliefs of the current Ranger at any given time.

In most years, the best snowfall, hence snow depths, are in the spring season (late-March to late-April) when we get upslope weather conditions (wind/moisture). This is often the best time to ride off trail as adequate snow base covers up rocks in the Washakie RD. I've included the following two photos of this.

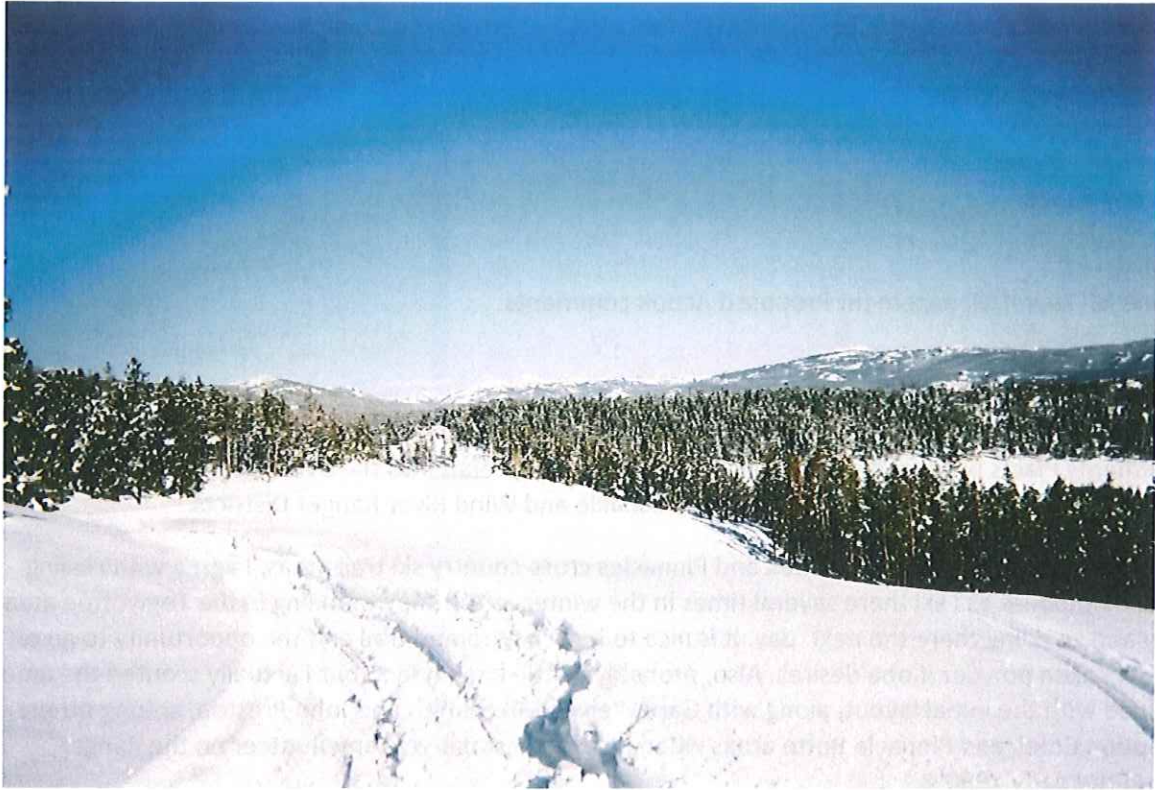


Figure 1. Along Loop Rd. above Burnt Gulch 5/14/2010



Figure 2. At Worthen Meadows Rd./CD Trail Junction 5/14/2010

The critical elk and moose winter range, which is within the low elevation zone, has also been accounted for in the Forest Plan Revision on the Washakie RD, along the USFS boundary from Limestone Mountain to Sinks Canyon with OSV closure, so winter range should not be an issue that needs to be addressed in the Proposed Action. When we have heavy snows in the Spring, most elk move east of Highway 28 and also in 2016 there were approximately 200 head north of Highway 287/789, near the Beaver Creek Oil Field Road and approximately 1000 head near the Twin Creek Road/Schoettlin Mountain area (personal observation).

Also, another comment about not using the Elevation Zones periods: The following was excerpted verbatim from Page 87 of the Forest Plan Revision:

"Where recreation demand exceeds capacity or significantly changes the recreation experience, alternative management strategies are evaluated and management adjusted as appropriate. In general, take the following management actions, in order of priority, if use degrades the desired recreation experience as identified in the given recreation opportunity spectrum class: • Educate the public on the issue • Control access through design • Regulate season of use • Restrict the number of users • Restore or rehabilitate the site • Close the area or site Utilizing a cooperative management strategy, conflicts between user groups in the development of new or expanded recreation opportunities are minimized."

In both the Washakie RD and Wind River RD, I don't believe there have been any issues of recreational experience exceeding capacity or being degraded, where this statement would come into play. Even if it has, in some minor instance, the Forest should be following its priorities that are listed above. Since the Plan Revision was signed in May of 2015 has the first two priorities been addressed to get us to the point of regulating seasons of use?

I do not have any alternatives for this particular proposal, nor do feel there should be any. I would like the Forest to drop the idea of use period zones.

Thank you for allowing my comments on these Proposed Actions.

Sincerely,



Cal Anacker

