

OFFICE OF THE FREMONT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Fremont County Government: Working To Best Serve You.

July 25, 2016

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Shoshone National Forest
Attn: Rob Robertson
333 E Main St
Lander, WY 82520

RE: Comments related to the May 2015 Shoshone National Forest
Travel Management Scoping Document

Dear Sir:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We recognize the importance for the public and cooperators to be able to offer comments to help shape the significant decisions being made.

As Fremont County Government, and in particular the Fremont County Commission, is a cooperating agency, we reserve the right to make edits or additions to these comments being submitted.

The following are our comments related to the Wind River and Washakie Zone proposals:

This has been a long and arduous process involving the many stakeholders of Fremont County. The Fremont County Commission views multiple use of the forest lands as a top priority in keeping the lands open to all residents of Fremont County.

We are concerned with the restrictions for winter use using snow depths as a gauge. There are several areas of the forest that always receive more or less snow. There does not seem to be any consistency regarding this proposed forest-wide rule of 6" depths, and to think that this should apply to the entire forest certainly does not take into account the differing snow depths that occur yearly depending on the geography. We believe that it is better to let the citizens decide for themselves what is in their best interest regarding how they would like to access the forest lands and when.

We are also concerned with compliance issues that are currently not being addressed. We understand that there is currently a work group trying to address the issues, but it certainly seems unattainable to

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think that the issues will or can be addressed as funding levels from the Federal Government will dictate the response for these issues.

WK-06, 07: WILLOW CREEK: We agree and concur with these proposals.

WK-26,30,31: We agree with these loop opportunities.

WR-01: SHERIDAN CREEK: This trail is located on an existing old road. This is also a groomed snowmobile trail. There is very little non-motorized use of the road, and to assist in opening loop opportunities it should be open to ATV use. The Forest Service has listed this road as on the CDNST. The CDNST is on other motorized trails and roads. This old road is not signed as the CDNST on the ground. The main trail is mostly on the Bridger Teton National Forest. The CDNST is not a valid reason to not using this existing road as a motorized loop trail.

WR-2: INDIAN RIDGE: We disagree strongly with the Plan management direction in closing this portion. This route has been used for more than 30 years, and provides a loop to the Double Cabins area from the east.

WR-03: WINDY MOUNTAIN: With the open terrain, this is a great scenic Loop for motorized enthusiasts. There are always compliance issues. By increasing loops opportunities compliance issues could decrease.

WR-04: WARM SPRINGS: This is an important connection between Union Pass and Camp Creek/ Sheridan Creek- Oval areas. This is using existing old roads and provides a great loop opportunity. By not allowing this loop connection it would cause a compliance issue as it is a heavily used motorized area.

WR-05: KITTEN CREEK: This is located on an existing road, and has very little non-motorized use. This gated road should be open for motorized use, on the constructed logging road portion.

WR-06: LITTLE WARM SPRINGS: This is a well-constructed logging road. It should not matter that it is a small loop. There is no apparent resource damage. Loop trails help diminish compliance concerns. By not opening the ¼ of a mile it encourages non-compliance.

WR-07: WARM SPRING MOUNTAIN: This is good place to have a loop trail. This will provide more opportunities for the public.

WR-08: GRANDY RESERVOIR: There is a road to Grandy Reservoir. This loop extends motorized trail on existing road. Loop trails help minimize compliance concerns.

WR-10: WARM SPRINGS: This trail should be open using an old existing road. This would be an ideal loop trail to Lake of the Woods and Fish Lake. It is used by a large amount of hunters and fisherman. By not opening this loop there are compliance issues.

WR-11: BACHELOR CREEK: This is a great loop proposal.

WR-12, WR-13, WR-14: These all provide loop opportunities for motorized travel using mostly existing roads. WR-14 will have minimal construction to connect loop.

WR-15: UPPER WIND RIVER: There is no reason to close the road, it provides hunting access. It should not matter that there are no dispersed camping sites as people still want access to the area that has been sued for many years.

WR-16: LONG CREEK: This duplicate road provides a small loop for hunters and sight-seeing. This should remain open.

WR-20 (UNION PASS), WR-21, WR-22, WR-23 (MOON LAKE ROAD): In this area there is not enough dispersed campsites. This area gets a lot of motorized use during the summer and fall. There is a large amount of folks hunting in this area. There should be no offset of trail mileage, as this should not apply. This will encourage non-compliance.

WR-24: LITTLE WARM SPRINGS: This is a good well-constructed road causing no resource damage to the POW camp area. This proposal has historical and economic value as a tourist site. This would be good for the community as it may provide more tourism opportunities.

WR-25 (BURROUGH CREEK) and WR-29 (LONG CREEK): There is no reason for seasonal closure especially on the main roads. The suggested closure dates are too long and unrealistic. Closures should not extend past May 15th. If this seasonal closure is implemented there will be serious non-compliance issues. This same logic could potentially be applied to all the Forest Service roads.

WR-26, WR-62: BEAR CREEK: This Bear Creek road should be left and maintained as a system road. Changing the use of this road will encourage non-compliance issues.

WR-27: LONG CREEK: We agree with this loop as it follows existing roads.

WR-30: CASTLE ROCK: This trail provides hunter access to higher elevation on an existing road. This would encourage non-compliance. There is more motorized use especially during hunting season in this area than non-motorized.

WR-33: GAP LAKE: This proposed motorized trail is a popular spot for motorized recreation use and hunting access. This should not be closed because of non-motorized recreation. Again, we believe in multiple use, not picking one activity over others.

WR-36: BALD MOUNTAIN: The lower 1 ½ mile of this trail is on a well-constructed logging road. The Top of Bald Mountain is a great scenic view. This road provides access to a locally known cave.

WR-37, WR-38, WR-39: Sheridan Creek, Double Cabin, Clint Creek are all on existing roads and should remain open. We agree that this not be in the action.

WR-41 (PARQUE CR. MEADOWS) & WR-42 (WARM SPRINGS MOUNTAIN) WR-44: LON CREEK ROAD: These are popular motorized areas on existing roads.

WR-51: BURNT TIMBER LAKE: There is no reason to close this constructed logging road short of the Wilderness Boundary. It is hunting, motorized recreation and camping access at the base of the cliffs. This should remain open and part of the system.

FREMONT COUNTY GENERAL COMMENTS:

By connecting loop trails this will encourages compliance.

By closing open areas it encourages non-compliance.

Width restrictions are a concern. We suggest a 65" width. The manufacturers are constantly upgrading UTV's and other vehicles, and we are concerned that a restriction less than 65" will prohibit newer UTV's from access.

We do not want to see any closures of existing roads and trails. This just takes more opportunities away from the citizens.

Many of the phrases used in the rationale can be applied to all parts of the forest.

Motorized recreation is a huge industry that brings much needed economic value to Fremont County. By providing the best possible outdoor experiences we encourage tourism. Our local communities depend on resources from the federal lands for economic viability. Economic viability of the local communities and Fremont County should be the greatest concern of our federal land managers when developing the Travel Management Plan.

Providing more loop trails and accesses allows the citizens of various means and abilities to enjoy areas of the national forest that would otherwise be off limits.

Compliance difficulty is frequently listed as a reason for closure. This is a problem for all areas and a part of the job of managing the forest.

Non-motorized use is also listed as a reason for closure of several roads and trails. In most of these areas there is very little non-motorized users. Non-motorized use is so little it should not be a reason to close or not allow motorized travel.

Many of these lower elevation roads and trails are snow free and useable by May and June and are not in critical wildlife areas. They are used by wood cutters, wildlife viewing, and general motorized recreation.

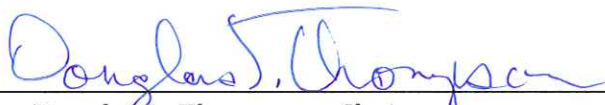
There is considerable use of all forest roads and trails for visitors just driving and sightseeing from the time they are accessible until they are closed by weather in the fall. We need to provide opportunities for this travel. The more travelers we can keep in our local communities the more economic opportunities there are. These opportunities are vital to Fremont County and our local towns.

Mr. Rob Robertson
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We appreciate your consideration of our comments in the process to complete the Proposed Action and look forward to working with Forest Service staff. Please contact us if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF FREMONT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

By: 
Douglas L. Thompson, Chairman

cc: Honorable Governor Matthew H. Mead
Joe Alexander, Shoshone National Forest Supervisor
Rick Metzger, Shoshone National Forest District Ranger (Wind River)
Steve Schacht, Shoshone National Forest District Manger (Washakie)