



January 14, 2016

Sue Stresser, District Ranger
Clarks Fork-Greybull-Wapiti Ranger District
203A Yellowstone Avenue
Cody, WY 82414

RE: Winter Motorized Travel Management

Dear Sue:

I'm writing on behalf of the Wyoming State Snowmobile Association (WSSA) in regard to the Shoshone National Forest's Winter Motorized Travel Management planning process. The Shoshone Forest is an extremely important snowmobiling area for our members, as well as to Wyoming's tourism industry and winter economy. We appreciate this opportunity to submit comments and proposals for consideration by this process since it's extremely important that we keep our existing trails and off-trail riding opportunities intact. Our comments include:

All areas currently designated as Available for Winter Motorized Use (all 'blue' areas on your Forest Plan 'winter' maps) should be designated OPEN for cross-country motorized OSV travel on your final travel management maps.

First and foremost, we believe 100% of the area which was classified as "Available for Winter Motorized Use" in the new Forest Plan should be classified as OPEN to motorized over-snow vehicle (OSV) cross-country travel by snowmobiles. Consequently all "blue areas" shown on your Travel Management Winter Motorized Use maps should be designated OPEN to motorized OSV travel on the final winter travel management map produced by this planning process.

The Shoshone is a heavily non-motorized forest with limited motorized recreation opportunities due to extensive backcountry and designated Wilderness areas – that was a long-standing fact before the new forest plan was implemented and remains a fact today. Nonetheless the new forest plan closed another 295,200 acres to snowmobiling. We went from 887,600 acres (36% of the forest) being open to snowmobiles under the old forest plan to only 592,400 acres (only 24% of the entire Shoshone forest) being open to winter travel by snowmobiles and other OSVs today. Since available opportunities for winter motorized recreation access have already been decreased by 33% through recent forest planning, any further reduction or restriction to open OSV travel is unnecessary and unjustified.

All existing snowmobile trail routes (groomed and ungroomed) shown on the State of Wyoming's snowmobile trail maps are needed, should be retained, and be shown on the final travel management maps.

All existing groomed and ungroomed trail routes have generally been around for decades. They all serve a useful purpose for dispersing snowmobile riders from parking areas and for getting them to services, popular landmarks, and important off-trail riding areas. All should be carried forward onto the final winter travel management maps produced by this process.

Designated snowmobile trail routes should be provided through big game winter range.

The Forest Plan states that OSV use is allowed on designated groomed and ungroomed trails through designated big game winter range areas. The final travel plan must ensure that routes are provided through all pertinent winter range areas.

The Forest Plan also states that forest roads and trails through winter range are to be open to motorized use to ensure access to non-winter range lands beyond winter range areas. The final winter travel plan must make appropriate efforts to identify where this access is needed and then designate appropriate routes open to OSV travel on the final winter travel maps.

Winter range identified as 'exemption areas' by Wyoming Game and Fish should be designated as OPEN to OSV travel.

The Forest Plan states that any winter range determined to "have limited motorized use and not a detriment to crucial winter range" can be declared an Exemption Area by Wyoming Game and Fish, thereby allowing OSV use. Consequently all officially declared Exemption Areas should be identified and displayed as OPEN to OSV travel on the final winter travel maps.

Support the proposal by the Cody Country Snowmobile Association to add a new snowmobile trail between U.S. Highway 212 (Beartooth Mountains Trail 'A') and Painters Outpost.

The Cody Country Snowmobile Association has submitted a proposal to connect the Painter Outpost (located along WY Highway 296) to Highway 212/Trail 'A' along the existing Beartooth Mountains snowmobile trail system. This new trail connection would provide important on-trail access to services which are currently lacking on this trail system. This snowmobile trail route was previously approved by the Forest Service back in the 2000-2002 time period but never completed. We believe it is appropriate to give this new trail proposal due consideration through this winter travel planning process.

Support adding the Sublette Pass snowmobile trail to the winter travel map.

The Wyoming State Trails Program has identified the Sublette Pass Trail as an existing on-the-ground marked snowmobile trail route that is missing from their state maps as well as from the preliminary winter maps produced by the Forest Service. This trail between Togwotee Pass and Brooks Lake Lodge has been signed and used by snowmobilers for many decades, so we support adding it to the final winter travel maps.

Thanks for the opportunity to contribute these suggestions. Feel free to contact me at any time to further discuss details of these proposals or to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Bert Miller

Bert Miller, President
Wyoming State Snowmobile Association

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cc: Joe Alexander, Shoshone Forest Supervisor
Steve Schacht, Washakie District Ranger
Rick Metzger, Wind River District Ranger