

Shoshone National Forest Travel Management Request for Public Input

Ranger District: Wind River Ranger District

New Proposals

1. What is the proposal? (loop; route; closures; restrictions) , etc.)

Clearly and concisely state the Proposal. Include as much detail as possible.

The proposal is to close all big game crucial winter range to over-snow vehicles (OSVs). The Shoshone National Forest Land Management Plan (May 2015) creates exceptions for over-snow motorized use in specific scenarios that are based on winter travel management planning. See Shoshone LMP, page 59. First, OSV use is permitted on roads and trails within crucial big game winter range where it is consistent with law and regulations. Second, OSV use is permitted on designated groomed snowmobile trails within crucial big game winter range. Third, OSV use is permitted on designated ungroomed snowmobile trails within crucial big game winter range. And finally, OSV use is permitted within identified exemption areas. The first three exceptions are based on OSV designations, which are made through winter travel management decisions. Therefore by closing those routes through winter travel management planning, this proposal would be consistent with the Forest Plan.

2. Where is the proposal located?

Give general description of project location (example: 5 miles SW of Cody, WY) as well as UTM coordinates, Township/Range/Sec, or Lat/Long if you have that information.

All locations across the entire forest identified as big game crucial winter habitat.

3. Why is your proposal desired or needed?

As part of its winter travel management planning, the Forest Service has a duty to meaningfully apply Executive Orders 11644 and 11989. When designating areas or trails available for off-road vehicle use (including OSV use), the executive orders require the agency locate them to minimize damage to natural resources, minimize harassment of wildlife or significant disruption of wildlife habitats, and minimize conflicts between off-road vehicle use and other existing or proposed recreational uses.

The science is clear: motorized access over snow makes life more difficult for ungulates through physiological stress resulting in increased movements and higher energy expenditures. See Winter Wildlands Alliance, Snowmobile Best Management Practices for Forest Service Travel Planning: A Comprehensive Literature Review and Recommendations for Management (Dec. 2014), page 11, available at <http://winterwildlands.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/BMP-Report.pdf> (Attachment A) (providing best management practices (BMPs) as guidelines, based on peer-reviewed science, for OSV designation decisions made to minimize impacts to wildlife, water quality, soils, and vegetation). Given the known impacts of OSV use on ungulates, the Forest Service should consider closing all big game crucial winter habitat to OSV travel. At a minimum, OSV travel within these areas should be limited to designated groomed routes to minimize impacts. *Id.* at 11 (noting a 2014 study that highlights the importance of limiting the duration and spatial footprint of winter recreation disturbance to protect ungulates).

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Here*

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