

Winter Travel Management Proposals Wind River District – Shoshone National Forest

Submitted by the Sierra Club Wyoming Chapter

The Sierra Club Wyoming Chapter, on behalf of our members and supporters, is pleased to have the opportunity to present these two winter travel management proposals on the Wind River District for consideration in the development of the Shoshone Forest Travel Management Plan.

Our proposals are being advanced with the idea of enhancing and protecting non-motorized recreational opportunities in the Togwotee Pass area of the Shoshone National Forest. Skiers, snow shoers and hikers have used this premier winter playground during the snow season for many decades. Unfortunately, as recreational snow machinery has become more powerful and capable, the areas used to enjoy these quiet muscle-powered recreational activities have all but disappeared. We strongly recommend that the Forest Service designate at least two already popular areas for these non-motorized activities as closed to recreational motorized activity in the winter season.

The Sierra Club Wyoming Chapter is advancing these two specific proposals with a combined area of only a few hundred acres:

- 1. Wind River Lake/Sublette Pass Winter Non-motorized Area**

This area is near the top of Togwotee Pass on highway 287/26, in sections 28 & 29 R 110W T 44N. Much of the south boundary of the proposed area would be FR 515, with the south boundary extending west from Wind River Lake to the Continental Divide in a manner to accommodate existing groomed snowmobile trail that is on the north side of the highway through that area. The proposed area along the south base of Brooks Peak provides spectacular ski touring with a variety of terrain for different skill level skiers. Until about 25 years ago, one never saw snow machine tracks in this area, and certainly not up through Sublette Pass. The bowl on the east side of Sublette Pass is a great ski hill for intermediate skiers and should be included in the non-motorized area. This whole area provides a perfect place for ski touring and snowshoeing. Please see accompanying map for clarification of suggested boundaries.

- 2. Deception Creek/Falls Campground Winter Non-motorized Area**

This area should be designated as closed to motorized winter recreation to enhance its appeal for non-motorized winter recreation. The proposed area would include portions of sections 1 & 12 of R110W T43N and portions of sections 6,7 & 8 of R109W T43N. This area already supports the Deception Creek Nordic Ski trails that the Dubois Association for Recreation and Trails is grooming as of the winter of 2015-16. The larger area we are proposing would allow for future development of more ski, snowshoe, and snow bike trails in this area. Any rule to close this area to motorized recreation should

be written to allow motorized machinery to be used for trail grooming and maintenance.

This area has long been popular with non-motorized winter recreationalists, and its popularity has grown in recent years. Please see accompanying map for clarification of suggested boundaries.

The Wyoming Chapter is also concerned about winter motorized “exclusions” within designated Crucial Winter Range areas within the Wind River District. We have not seen maps from the final plan showing exactly where motorized winter recreation is allowed within crucial winter range areas. We are specifically concerned about winter-motorized use as it impacts moose, elk and deer winter ranges in the Horse Creek, Boroughs Creek, Brent Creek, and Wiggins Fork drainages. We do not support off-trail winter motorized recreation in any crucial winter ranges. We hope the Forest Service will provide maps at public meetings as we proceed with the travel plan process clearly showing areas where off-trail winter motorized uses are allowed by the new Plan on designated crucial winter ranges in all Ranger Districts within the Shoshone Forest.

Thank you for considering our proposals.

Kim Wilbert – Chairperson
Sierra Club Wyoming Chapter

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