

Doug Nishek
Bonners Ferry Ranger District
6286 Main Street
Bonners Ferry, ID 83805

August 28, 2023

Subject: Kaniksu Over-Snow Vehicle Use Designation Project Final Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Nishek:

We are writing on behalf of the North Idaho Working Group (NIWG) to submit an objection regarding the Modifications set forth in the Draft Decision Notice for the Kaniksu Over-Snow Vehicle Use Designation Project, as noticed by the letter dated July 14, 2023. As you know, the NIWG includes snowmobilers, backcountry skiers, conservationists, hunters, county commissioners and community members at large. The NIWG provided collaboratively developed recommendations for the plan. This objection is in support of the recommendations of the NIWG that were provided to the agency in July, 2022, September, 2022, and the follow up support submitted April, 2023. The NIWG supports the Action, with certain concerns regarding the modifications.

The removal of over-snow vehicle access to the east end of the area generally accessed by the 120 trail is a concern. The recommendation had a large open area for access, but concerns over winter range for wildlife arose. The access via the trail route was a compromise. Any parking concerns on public right of way should not be the basis to close access. The parking issues can be addressed in several manners not part of this action. Also, for example, an alternative to removing the trail access would be to create a larger swath to provide multiple possible routes.

The implementation of a set starting date is a concern. The NIWG recommendation was based upon a sufficient snow coverage basis, not a set calendar date. Any starting date should be early enough to accommodate off-route travel when sufficient snow is likely to exist (for example on or after November 1). In addition, the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) motorized routes that are open year round should not be limited to a starting date. Similarly, any MVUM motorized routes with established dates should conform to the existing dates.

In closing, the North Idaho Working Group would like to thank the Forest Service for the opportunity to provide objections and to request to participate in all objection proceedings. We look forward to continued engagement regarding the decision and implementation. Please refer to the next page for the objection process elements.

Sincerely

/s/ John Finney, Sandpoint Winter Riders, Inc. Snowmobile Club

/s/ Brad Smith, Idaho Conservation League

/s/ Tom Dabrowski, Idaho Trails Association, Inc.

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For the purposes of the objection process:

Name: North Idaho Working Group

Address: c/o National Forest Foundation, Bldg 27, Ste 3, Fort Missoula Road, Missoula, MT 59804

Telephone Number: 406-542-2805

Signature: /s/ John Finney

Lead Objector: John Finney 208-263-7712

Project Name: Kaniksu OSV Project

Responsible Official Name And Title: Doug Nishek, Environmental Coordinator, Bonners Ferry Ranger;
Heather Degeest, Acting Forest Supervisor, Idaho Panhandle National Forests

Name Of Affected National Forests or Ranger Districts: Idaho Panhandle National Forests (Kaniksu National Forest), Sandpoint, Bonners Ferry, and Priest Lake Ranger Districts

Reasons For And Suggested Remedies To Resolve Objections: See above.

Description Of Connection Between Project And Prior Comments: See above and see prior NIWG comments and members' comments.