

Kootenai National Forest

9/29/23

Attn: Over – snow Motorized Travel Plan

I appreciate the opportunity to express my thoughts and concerns.

As an avid snowmobile rider, an enthusiastic small game trapper and hound hunter, I found portions of the Over-snow Motorized Use Travel Plan quite alarming.

If the Over-snow Motorized Use Travel Plan is adopted without revision, it will severely restrict snowmobiling within a large portion of the forest.

I've never been one to complain unless I have a potential solution, and the following is intended as a means to begin communication amongst the Forest Service and the snowmobilers, hunters, and back woodsman in the affected area of the plan.

I live in the West Kootenai where many people enjoy snowmobiling on the forest roads directly from public access points on the West Kootenai. With all the roads surrounding the West Kootenai designated as Highway Vehicle use only it will completely eliminate that activity. Once the snow becomes too deep to drive these roads it will also end all hunting and trapping in that area.

Next let's go to the Yak. The Vinal Lake Access Road designated as MVUM generally snows shut by Christmas that would eliminate access to the popular ice fishing on Hoskin Lake. According to the map you would be able to access it going cross country but everyone familiar with that area knows that is not possible because of heavy timber. In fact, there are many areas in the Yak with the same restrictions. Long Meadow Road, Hensley Hill Road, Solo Jo Road just to name a few. All these areas are open to over the snow cross country but not allowing snowmobiles on the roads. All these roads are generally inaccessible to over the road vehicles by Christmas but too heavily timbered to cross country snowmobile.

While I understand the concerns of cross country over the snow vehicle usage. Very little of that happens outside of the Ten Lakes region. 95% of the Kootenai Forest is too heavily timbered for that to be even possible. I suggest just dropping the MVUM designation entirely.

I hope my comments will generate a conversation between all parties, allowing us time to see the plan from varying points of view, and come to a resolution on how best to provide the proper protections and benefits to all interested in the care and use of our National Forests.

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