

Cross country skiing on groomed trail systems is an increasingly popular recreational activity in Missoula that allows community members to recreate outside during the winter and enjoy the national forest. In particular, Pattee Canyon and Lolo pass are essential trail systems that promote Nordic skiing and youth development as witnessed by the numerous users and packed parking lots during the winter months. However, the marginal weather and conditions during the early and late seasons severely inhibits Nordic skiing opportunities in the greater Missoula area.

The Lolo National Forest Management Plan is a key component to improving the Nordic skiing opportunities in the greater Missoula area. Specifically, the following points would greatly improve winter recreating experience in the national forest:

- Expanded dynamic Nordic skiing trail systems at Pattee canyon would improve the experience. In particular, expanding the trail systems to higher elevations would allow grooming and recreating earlier in the winter season.
- Allowing for more youth winter programs and practices at the Pattee Canyon trails would greatly expand the number of winter recreationists and supporters of trail systems.
- Opportunities for competitive and noncompetitive events at Pattee Canyon and Lolo pass would improve user experience and growth.
- Exploring snow making opportunities would be an exciting prospect for winter recreation.
- The snow at Lolo pass is the most consistent in the area. We are thankful for the grooming that does occur at Lolo. However, Nordic skiing opportunities at Lolo pass are hindered by inconsistent grooming, competition with other motorized users, non-dynamic trails and minimal ski specific trails. Developing a Nordic skiing specific trail system on the highway 12 corridor on the Montana side could address many of these challenges.

Specific areas of the management plan are addressed below with comments. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Pattee

pg 120 3.2.8 02 -Desired Conditions – States that ... parking meets demand of use...

- The parking infrastructure at Pattee Canyon doesn't meet the high demand of nordic skiing in the area which highlights the need for expanded nordic skiing trail development in the area and improved parking development

pg 121 Objectives 02 - Create at least 3 opportunities to enhance trail connectivity.

- This is a low number for a 10 year period covering the greater Missoula area. I support increasing the number of connecting trails.

Lolo

pg 127 Desired Conditions 03 - Backcountry skiing along HWY 12 corridor

- The groomed Nordic skiing opportunities at Lolo pass need improvement (consistent grooming and further trail development), especially considering this is often the only early and late Nordic skiing options in the greater Missoula area.

Concentrated Reaction Use

Table 72

Lolo Pass - 469 Acres/miles for nordic skiing <-- The amount of groomed Nordic skiing trails in this area is significantly smaller.

Pattee Canyon --> Nordic skiing not mentioned as a featured activity despite the high demand.

Rattlesnake --> Nordic skiing is also not mentioned as a featured activity despite the unique opportunities here.

pg 160 Desired Conditions 01 - Concentrated public use areas provide opportunities to recreate that respond to increasing reaction demand.

- In support of this especially in regards to Nordic skiing at Pattee Canyon and Lolo Pass as demonstrated by the parking challenges at these areas in the winter.

pg 161 Desired Conditions 06 - Provide opportunities for competitive and noncompetitive events.

- Strongly in support of this especially at Pattee Canyon where these opportunities are drastically missing. The close proximity to town would make these very popular activities.

pg 161 Objectives 04 - 10 years modify 1 system of trails for user groups (MTB, hiking, equestrian)

- Nordic skiing is a high demand winter activity that is not listed in this objective. Additionally 1 trail system over 10 years will not meet the demand of the growing importance of recreating especially in Concentrated Recreation Use areas.

Appendix 4 Section 4.2.1 pg A3-27 states...consider altering infrastructure to better capture and use natural and man-made snow.

- I strongly support this especially considering the challenges associated with early and late season skiing options near Missoula