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Organization:

Title:

Comments: attached please find my letter of recommendation for map #4

Thanks for your time and patience during the open house on Thursday September 6th at your offices in Sonora. In general I thought there was good dialog, genuine concern and listening from you and your staff. As you are well aware snowmobiling in the Stanislaus Forest is a strong attraction for winter recreation. Small mountain towns rely heavily on tourism and all types of outdoor activities, snowmobiling is certainly one of them.

I have had a vacation home in Bear Valley since 2000 and before that my parents had a cabin in Arnold between 1972 and 1985. The Highway 4 corridor in the winter has 6 main attractions that draw people to this area. Bear Valley ski resort, Bear Valley Cross Country center, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, sledding and general relaxation of this winter wonderland. Surprisingly all of these different ways people enjoy this area get along and respect each other for the sports they enjoy. The most unique part of Bear Valley is that in the winter months snowmobiles are the main form of transportation. I believe there are over 500 registered snowmobiles in town.

It is important to have and retain plenty of open space for snowmobiles to be able to ride off of the groomed trail system. Highlands Lake is one of the most sought after riding areas in all of Northern California. It benefits from high altitude and above the tree line for plenty of open areas for safe off trail riding. The more areas there are to spread out the different activities the safer it is for everyone. Your proposed preferred option on map #5 basically makes this area around Highlands Lake un-ridable. This will make the other riding areas more congested and with that make the sport less safe. Furthermore the other area (south of the BV subdivision) for off trail snowmobiling isn't suitable for beginner riders. The access is much steeper, off camber and with lots of trees.

I own and operate Mancini's Sleepworld throughout the Bay Area and several times a year I use my cabin to entertain suppliers and advertising partners. By far the most sought after activity is snowmobiling up Highway 4. Then after they feel comfortable operating their machine I take them out to the Highland Lake area and let them enjoy open riding in fresh powder. I receive more thank you letters and "when can we go back" after they have seen the beauty of this area and the thrill of riding out there on a snowmobile. This has included executives and on-air personalities from Pandora radio, Channel 7 ABC television, CBS, NBC, Fox Broadcasting, KGO, KCBS, KNBR and KQED Public Radio station along with many more.

All of them would be disappointed to hear that this area was being taken away. I encourage you and your team to find a way to keep this area open for everyone to enjoy. One of the options we spoke about was having a 2' minimum snow depth. I support this option as well. Having 2' feet of coverage would have less impact, in my opinion, than hikers walking in the summer months on the PCT where they could possibly step on an endangered species, disrupt the flow of water within the trail system. Sediment flowing into the stream system due to creating dirt and dust from using the trail.

I strongly recommend for you and you team to make the decision for map #4.

https://www.fs.usda.gov/nfs/11558/www/nepa/100952_FSPLT3_4407566.pdf

Please feel free to reach out to me via email or by cell at 408-892-1700. I would also be more than willing to meet with you and your team out in the Highlands area so you could better understand the terrain and how this ties in well with the groomed trail system.