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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Please see attached comments regarding the Stanislaus OSV Designation.

Thank you for your time.

Stanislaus NF OSV DEIS

Project 46311

Comments-

My name is Anne Sparks and I currently live in Folsom, California. I'm from the central Valley and have a cabin at the Bumblebee Tract in the Stanislaus National Forest on Hwy 108. We have had the cabin for over 40 years. I begin riding snowmobiles in 2004 with my parents. We bought 3 used snowmobiles and a brand-new trailer and were ready to experience the beauty of the area and the sport.

I belong to 4x4 In Motion Jeep Club, we have adopted the Niagara Rim Trail, located on 5N09 off the Eagle Meadows Rd. We participate in several volunteer projects during the year. We have always had a good working relationship with the Summit District Rangers and they encouraged us to create a snowmobile club for our riding area (Sonora Pass), since there wasn't good representation. At that time, we started the Sonora Pass Snowmobile Club. It was established in 2016, with 3 members. We invited more of our Jeep family to enjoy the sport of snowmobiling, since that time our club has grown. In the last 2 years we've had 9 new members, which means 9 new snowmobiles and all the gear.

We are fortunate enough to be able to ride directly from our cabin to many of our favorite areas, one of which is the Herring Creek area which includes the Hammill Canyon Loop and the slopes up and down the loop. Willow Meadow is part of that loop and needs to be available to OSV cross-country riding. The area between Herring Creek Road 4N12 and 5N31, this section shows as not accessible on the Alternative 5, but it should remain open to OSV riding.

We enjoy riding up Hwy 108, but we are limited on accessing these areas due to the gate being closed at the Sno-Park, even when there is no snow on the ground at the Sno-Park, but there is snow further up Hwy 108. There are multiple gates along Hwy 108 and rather than restrict us to the Sno-Park. Hwy 108 should be opened to the next gate, so we can access our riding areas. In the past, we had the advantage of the gate being opened and we would park at Eagle Meadows on Hwy 108. We pay a lot of money for our machines and the idea of riding on asphalt to access the riding areas is objectionable. Doing so would cause a lot of expensive damage to our skis and tracks.

We ride Eagle Meadows, Long Valley and near the Bennett Jupiter. The area southwest of 5N01 is a common riding area, on the Alternative 5 map, this is in areas 7,8,9,14,15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20. In the area mentioned in the above map #'s is Barn Meadow. We used this area to take our friends young children to enjoy the snow, snowmobiling and taught them to make a fire if it was ever needed for survival. These are valuable lessons and wonderful memories for people of all ages. The area needs to be designated as "near Natural Winter Motorized Access" up to surrounding wilderness boundaries. Part of this riding area includes Mill Creek this is a good area for another access to Hwy 108 via some technical riding. We always use Hwy 108 to access the top of Sonora

Pass and at times Hwy 108 (actual highway) can be a little challenging, with the way the drifts come in. We need to access the area at Deadman Creek past the Que De Porko Overlook. At times, Hwy 108 is impassable in this section, so the creek area is where we can ride to get to the top of the pass.

Hwy 4 was a new riding area to us this past year. We decided on this area, since the gate at the Sno-Park was closed and there was no snow on the road.

Last season - 2018 we parked at the Lake Alpine Sno-Park and rode past Mosquito Lakes through Grouse flat and on the Highland Lakes, part of that included Gardner Meadow. This was a great area to ride and ran into several human powered users and motorized users. Our experience was extremely positive and we hope to ride there again this year and explore the other areas by Spicer Sno-Park.

During my review of the DEIS and the meetings at the Forestry in September. It was made clear to us that the map (Alternative 2) is not accurate and should not be considered an option. Since the study was made based on this map the DEIS is flawed.

The DEIS refers to the need for minimum snow depths, as stated in the report "There is little scientific support for defining a universal, nationwide snow depth for protecting multiple resources." Until a scientific method is established for determining the minimum depths, I feel we should continue with the process "as-is". As a rider, I don't want to ride in vegetation, it can cause damage to my snowmobile and to the area. The majority are self-regulating when it comes to depths and feel the same as I do.

We need a new designation that allows winter time motorized use. The Stanislaus National forest designated the area around Eagle Meadows, Pacific Valley, and on Sonora pass along Nightcap Ridge as "Near Natural, non-motorized" in 1991. These areas are closed to all motorized use, even though there's never been any enforcement, and no one knew this was the case. The current designation is a holdover from summer management. Snowmobiles don't require roads or trails and have no effect on the summer landscape. A new designation would allow both summer and winter users know the availability of the area with more clarity. I support "Near Natural Winter Motorized Access" as the new designation.

We have 19 Sno-Parks in California of those 19, snowmobiles can only access 11 of those Sno-Parks. Snowmobile riders aren't allowed at the other 8 Sno-Parks. All other users (human powered) can use all 19 Sno-Parks. Also, to note the Sno-Parks are funded by a Federal Grant using OHV funds. The OHV funds come from the permits paid for parking at the Sno-Parks and the Green Sticker fees, that only motorized vehicles are required to pay. When reviewing this entire OSV Travel Management, it seems that snowmobile riders should have access to all the Sno-Parks.

I hope that my comments are taken into consideration and we are given real access to our existing riding areas and are given additional riding areas.

Below I have posted some pictures and the riding areas I've experienced. I have so many more photos that show the beauty, comradery and enjoyment we have experienced in the back country.

SEE ATTACHMENT - PHOTOS

Sincerely,

Anne Sparks

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