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Comments: When one looks at snowmobiling up the Hgwy 108 corridor, its pretty plain to see the ONLY ACCESS for backcountry riding that is available is the Herring Loop/Mill Creek/Eagle Meadows/Long Valley region. For as long as anyone snowmobiling remembers, this area has been open to unimpeded riding up to the surrounding Wilderness boundaries on all 3 sides with the fourth side being dictated by the hgwy and the gorge holding Donnelly Lake. To now propose restricting this singular zone is borderline madness? Under the Forest Service policy of "NEAR NATURAL" it is now making public, the PREFERRED PLAN is to restrict most of the ENTIRE backcountry zone for off trail riding to meadows, roads and drainage bottoms? Looking at the maps proposed, ALL available "alpine terrain" which includes our sidehills, chutes, ridge tops, etc has been removed? The sport of snowmobiling IS NOT a "trail riding" sport. It has its roots in that, but since the advance of mountain sleds and riding techniques beginning around 2000, a LARGE population of snowmobiling is now "backcountry". First thing I want to HIGHLIGHT: THIS ALL BEGAN WITH A LAWSUIT FILED AGAINST THE USFS BY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS LIKE Winter Wildlands Alliance, Snowlands Alliance, etc. The users these groups are advocating for...the "non-motorized" community...are NO WHERE NEAR THESE ZONES of snowmobile riding! Just to reach the ACCESS points of Herring Loop or Eagle Meadows intersection off 108 is 5 MILES! A non-motorized skier or snowshoer would have to undertake a 10 MILE round trip by foot JUST TO REACH the ACCESS POINTS! In more than 2 decades of snowmobile use here, there is literally NO REPORTS of skier/snowmobiler conflict. Snowmobiles are just TOO FAR INTO THE BACKCOUNTRY. The removal of these riding areas is being proposed due to that "Near Natural" designation of 1991. The FACTS are snowmobiles in this mountain terrain ride on top of DEEP SNOW. Even 12" of snow is enough to prevent any trace left by use. Because of "land mines" (stumps, boulders, etc) snowmobilers do not venture off trail with low snow conditions. Land Mines wreak HAVOC on snowmobiles and repairs will cost the owner HUNDREDS of dollars along with weeks of downtime. The "Minimum Snow Depth" requirements leave everything in a GREY area? A snowmobile access backcountry via the roads. roads cannot be damaged by snowmobiles. Snow levels obviously burn off much faster at lower elevations. So...if riding is closed at a Snow Park in May because of patchy snow on the highway or forest road. then that basically by default closes off all the HIGH ELEVATION snow that can last as late as July! IF these proposals are based on SCIENCE, IMPACT STUDIES or EVIDENCE of ENVIRONMENT DAMAGE...that info needs to be presented in this process.

The FACTS are this...there is a LARGE COMMUNITY of off trail backcountry users venturing as far back into the Herring Loop, Mill Creek 5N21 road, Eagle Meadows, Long Valley up to the Wilderness boundaries. There is NO USER conflict and NO DAMAGE to the environment. This ENTIRE region, as displayed on the current (as I understand?) USFS ISSUED maps should be left accessible and designated NEAR NATURAL WINTER MOTORIZED ACCESS!

ATTACHMENTS: Photographs