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Organization: Bear Valley Business Association

Title: Secretary

Comments: See attached letter from Bear Valley Business Association.

The Bear Valley Business Association supports Alternative 4 and opposes Alternative 5, the Preferred Alternative. We are in agreement with the Alpine County Board of Supervisors on this.

25 years ago, the growth in popularity of both snowmobiling and cross country skiing took planning agencies by surprise. Conflict prevailed between motorized and non-motorized people in most areas. In our area, however, all recognized the need to craft a lasting solution. With a series of meetings at which motorized, non-motorized, and environmentalist groups were represented, compromises were agreed upon. The result was essentially what we see in Alternative 4. Since then, the motorized and non-motorized recreationalists in our area have gotten along fine. It never would have occurred to anyone on the ground in our area to reopen the discussion. The solution works for all here.

Alternative 5 proposes to close motorized access in Bear Trap Basin, at the Skyline Bear Valley ski area (after it closes for the season), and between Pacific Valley and Highland Lakes Road. Leaving just a narrow corridor as in Alternative 5 would destroy recreational snowmobiling in our area by changing it from wide-ranging freestyle riding to a narrowly restricted tour, merely up and back.

The community of Bear Valley has over 500 snowmobiles registered. Snowmobiling, both recreational and utilitarian, is an essential part of our economy, with riding, rentals, sales, and repairs. The severe restrictions on motorized use proposed in Alternative 5 would mostly bottle up the snowmobiles in Bear Valley. The serious recreationalists would leave. There would be an immediate effect on property values and a noticeable decline in business at shops, restaurants, and the two ski areas of Bear Valley.

We urge you, therefore, to retain the option to ride in Bear Trap Basin, the downhill ski area after seasonal closure, and between Pacific Valley and Highland Lakes Road. The non-motorized interests in our area long ago agreed that these areas are non-critical for them, partly because of tradeoffs made, and partly because most of these areas are well beyond the range of the majority of non-motorized users. The current situation reflects years of interactions between the motorized and non-motorized users in our area. Representatives of the USFS have always been part of these interactions. The map we use today grew organically and amicably over time. It seems a shame to throw it out over technicalities, or to please faraway intervenors with no stake in our community.

The Sierra Avalanche Center indicates that they must stop or greatly reduce their avalanche hazard reporting on the backcountry if snowmobile access is reduced. The loss of this service would be a serious safety issue for recreation.