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Organization:

Title:

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To whom it may concern,

As I am reading through previous comments looking for help in starting this comment letter, it's very apparent who actually recreates in the Stanislaus Forest during the winter months and who does not. It's also pretty obvious which side of this debate has done a pretty good job at spreading misinformation. My favorite so far is that one particular writer heard you were opening wilderness to snowmobilers. Nothing could be further from the truth. On paper your proposals are brutal to snowmobilers, I think even you could agree there. I think the truth is somewhere in the middle, and I feel a little for you being tasked with such a job as this. Let me be the first to say, that I understand those whom claim to want more restrictions on snowmobilers. Having grown up in rural Alaska, I have a pretty intimate relationship with the backcountry, its remoteness, and the silence that comes with it. I don't think that there is one snowmobiler out there at some level understands this. We all love the backcountry, and more or less for the same reasons. We ALL have a vested interest in protecting and caring for our forest. I have enjoyed snowmobiling almost exclusively for the past 18 years in the Stanislaus, and I can tell you that right up to the middle of this summer I had no idea that there was some sort of feud between the human powered group and the snowmobilers. I honestly saw it as a community of folks who love to winter recreate in the backcountry, almost an exclusive club, where we all looked out for one another. I spend most of my time on the 108 side, riding anywhere from 20-45 rides a year, and I can count on one hand how many human powered skiers/snowshoers I have ever seen, and all of them have been in the first 2 miles of the snow park, and in which case none of your proposals will help with any sort of interaction between these two groups.

Areas I ride, that I am concerned about in your proposals:

First on the 108 hwy corridor all the way to the top of the pass, the drainages to the north of 108, but south of the ridgeline at St. Mary's pass. I'd like to see these areas remain open. I'm also concerned how close you are proposing to close riding areas to the south and north of hwy 108, particularly past Chipmunk Flats as it is necessary sometimes [for safety] to detour from the highway as the conditions do not always facilitate following the highway. Also I noticed in your preferred alternative you propose stopping riding areas in Eagles on 5N01 at or near Haypress meadows. I'd like to point out that there is a corridor that is not designated near wilderness/near natural. It's a jeep trail during summer along the ridgeline in between Relief Reservoir and Upper Relief Valley that goes all the way to the wilderness boundary. I ride nearly all of the area in, around, and in between the loop road in the Eagles Meadows area. 5N04, 5N87, I'd really like to see these areas left open. Herring creek is another area I was told that was going to be off limits, and not to worry because snowmobilers don't go there. I go there ALLOT. I see absolutely zero skiers/ snowshoers there ever! Some of the designations of Near Wilderness/Near Natural are way off the definition. For example parts of Long Valley on hwy 108, and Pacific Valley on hwy 4. These areas are Near Natural/Near Wilderness designated and there are jeep trails, private property, and cabins.

I'd also like to see a corridor between Hwy 108, and Hwy 4. There is a fire road forgotten about in the 80's from Clarks Fork trailhead to Highland Lakes. Look on google earth it's still there plain as day I believe this to be a cherry stem erased by earlier Forestry Supervisors, illegally to, I may add.

I've heard a lot about the designation Near Wilderness/ Near Natural, and what that means to the OSV plan you are proposing. I'd like to point out that other Forest Districts in Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana have adopted plans working with state and federal representatives that have allowed them to maintain

snowmobiling in certain areas while retaining their Near Natural/Near Wilderness status. So this daunting task of balance has been done before with success.

I'd like to close with a quote from a letter from The Congressional Western Caucus in regards to USFS Travel-management plan for OSV's.

"When properly operated and managed, over the snow vehicles do not make direct contact with soil, water or vegetation, and therefore should not be subject to the same restrictions as traditional motor vehicles. For these reasons, we ask that the USFS re-evaluate these regulations to ensure they do not restrict the use of over-snow vehicles beyond scientific or safety justifications."

Thank you for your time reading,

Conrad Anderson