

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/9/2018 7:00:00 AM

First name: Don

Last name: Ralphs

Organization:

Title:

Comments: OSV

Dear Forest Supervisor Jason Kuiken,

As a backcountry skier/splitboarder and Nordic skier, I value the non-motorized winter recreation opportunities provided by the Stanislaus National Forest, and I look forward to a thoughtful winter travel plan that balances appropriate OSV use with protections for important non-motorized areas, natural resources, and wildlife.

The Stanislaus has a long history of backcountry skiing and snowshoeing dating back to the 1800s. With easy access to snow provided by Highways 4 and 108, and with ever-increasing numbers of winter recreationists, it's important that the Forest Service protect highly valued non-motorized recreation areas as well as designated OSV areas, and to manage these areas so they continue to provide quality experiences with minimal user conflict and resource impact for generations to come.

I understand that Alternative 5 is the forest's preferred alternative. In general, I appreciate the balance that it tries to establish. The Round Valley zone around Mt. Reba in particular is a longstanding gem for backcountry skiing in the Sierra and I'm glad to see it not designated for motorized use in this alternative. Likewise the terrain on either side of Dodge Ridge.

However, Alternative 5 fails to protect several other important non-motorized areas and therefore fails to provide an adequate variety of conflict-free non-motorized recreation opportunities on the forest. To this end, the following areas should also be protected from over-snow vehicle use in the final plan:

- The Herring Creek area immediately adjacent to the Leland Snowplay Area on Highway 108
- Osborne Hill and other accessible Nordic touring terrain to the immediate east and west of Lake Alpine
- Some portion of the terrain between Cabbage Patch and Black Springs and Mattley Ridge (allowing for continued OSV access to terrain farther out)
- Route 7N02 in the Big Meadow Area to allow for non-motorized touring to the Stanislaus Canyon overlook

Also, very importantly, I feel it is unacceptable the way that Alternative 5 proposes to designate as open to OSVs the Pacific Valley and the Eagle/Night Near Natural Areas. These areas are important roadless areas including recommended wilderness, sensitive watersheds and habitat for endangered Sierra Nevada red fox. They should be managed as semi-primitive non-motorized as indicated in the 1991 Forest Plan rather than the forest simply rewarding years of inappropriate OSV use with open designation.

Finally, I am very concerned about how the forest service plans to monitor and enforce designations, especially in remote areas like Highland Lakes and Folger Peak where snowmobile use may present significant avalanche safety issues as well as unmitigated opportunities for illegal motorized trespass into adjacent Wilderness.

Thank you for your hard work and consideration,

Sincerely,

Don Ralphs

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