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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

To whom it may concern,

I wanted to start off by thanking you for allowing public comment on the Stanislaus National Forest OSV Management Plan.

My family and I have been in action sports for our entire lives. I was recently inducted into the snowmobile hall of fame and spent a lot of my snowboard career in the backcountry. I have utilized snowmobiles to access the backcountry for many years, and that has transitioned to just snowmobiling in the backcountry. I have ridden in the Stanislaus National Forest for many years and absolutely love that forest.

The Stanislaus National Forest presents a unique opportunity for backcountry access. Snowmobilers and Skiers can access phenomenal terrain within a relatively short distance of the snow-park. A few years ago the snowmobile and ski groups got together and came up with a plan; to keep snowmobilers out of Round Valley and to keep allowing Snowmobilers in Pacific Valley and Jelmini basin/ Bear Trap.

Pacific Valley and Jelmini Basin/ Bear Trap are quite a distance from any snow-park for non motorized users to easily access. Many of the people that claim to use those areas utilize a snowmobile to get out there, then snowboard or ski in those areas. I was shocked to learn that in the DEIS the Forest Service has those areas closed off to snowmobiling.

Pacific Valley is an awesome place to ride. I access Pacific mainly by traveling south along the ridge, just south of mosquito lake. Then drop into Pacific Valley on the west side. Pacific Valley has fun, yet challenging terrain where I can push my limits and become a better snowmobiler. The vast bowls, tight trees, drainages and pillow lines are what makes Pacific Valley so much fun. Its awesome to be able to access a place that offers so much. Numerous times I ride Pacific Valley with friends, then meet up with more people at Highlands Lakes. I ride from Pacific to Highlands around Lookout Peak and link up to the groomed trail going to Highlands, not the groomed trail on highway 4. That ride is an absolute blast.

People have been snowmobiling in Pacific Valley for as long as I can remember. In Alternative 5, it shows that snowmobilers can no longer access Pacific Valley from the ridge just south of mosquito lake. It also shows that snowmobilers can no longer access any of the upper bowls within Pacific Valley; we are restricted to only the jeep road area and low elevation areas. In addition, we can no longer ride around Lookout Peak freely, we have to worry about what areas we are in and can no longer ride to Highlands road from Pacific. This is an absolute tragedy. Pacific Valley is the best place to ride a snowmobile on Ebbetts Pass. I strongly oppose the maps drawn in alternative 5 and I suggest an alternative.

These near natural areas were designated and designed for summer off-road vehicle usage. It was not designed for winter over snow vehicle use. Snowmobiles do not effect the soil or natural habitats of animals and plants. When the snow melts, so does any evidence that snowmobilers were in the area. Snowmobiles are not riding on the dirt, and snowmobilers do not want to ride on the dirt because it can severely damage the machines which can cost thousands to repair.

I strongly support and urge the Stanislaus National Forest Service to create a "Near Natural Winter Motorized Access Plan". By creating that plan, it would validate the riding in Pacific Valley, Jelmini Basin/ Bear Trap and numerous other areas over Ebbetts Pass.

Snowmobiling on Ebbetts pass is something that is associated to Bear Valley. When snowmobilers think of Bear Valley, they think of Pacific Valley and Highlands Lakes. Many snowmobilers contribute to the local economy in/ around Bear Valley. I have stayed at the Bear Valley Village Lodge, ate at the pizza company and drank at all 3 bars in the village. Not only myself, by several of my friends and other snowmobilers do the same. If you close off these popular riding areas, I fear that people will no longer go to Bear Valley to snowmobile, and their local economy (which severely depends on winter tourism) will start to worsen. Several times a year I also get massages from Lauren with Trinity Wellness. Trinity Wellness is a very small business in Bear Valley, if Lauren starts to lose clients, then she might go out of business. I do not think the Forest Service is in the business of causing local business to close and taking money out of families pockets.

One of my favorite things to attend with my family is the end of year snowmobile spring family party at Bear Valley Ski Resort. The weekend after the ski resort closes down, My family and I drive to Bear Valley Ski Resort for an awesome family event that has been going on for decades. I was shocked to learn that in your preferred alternative that this will no longer happen. This event brings people together from all over. Often it's a reunion for many of us that only get to see each other this one time a year. My daughter talks about this event all year long. It's the one time a season she gets to ride with many other kids her age. This makes it an awesome platform for us as parents and snowmobile enthusiasts, to introduce and instill all aspects of safety and conservation to our kids in an environment that makes learning as a group fun and sticks with them. The Bear Valley event is the only event of it's kind on the west coast. It would be truly heartbreaking to see it lost!

Bottom line is that the Stanislaus National Forest needs to recognize that there is a large snowmobile community who access the backcountry and rides off trail, and not solely on the groomed road. All the proposed actions in the alternatives close off the high country to snowmobiles when those are the areas we love to access. You know as well as I how hit or miss the snow is every year. Some years its awesome while other years its not so good. By taking away our high elevation areas, you basically take away our sport in those bad snow years. I have not been able to ride Spicer Road for around a decade due to the lack of snow. I do not see that changing any time soon, so please do not close off Pacific Valley and Jelmini Basin/ Bear Trap. Us mountain snowmobilers need/ thrive in those areas and snowmobile tourism to Bear Valley will be nonexistent with mountain riders if those areas close.

Respectfully,

Cameron Beck