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Organization: Eastern Peninsula Motorized Community

Title:

Comments: Good Morning to All,

My name is Samuel Schilling. I represent the Eastern Peninsula Motorized Community. This community is not just those who ride, but all who live, work and play in the area. The Eastern Peninsula is made up of more than 4,000 people. The communities in this district majorly stand up for protecting their areas in which they use on a day-by-day basis. These communities are Seward, Moose Pass, Crown Point, Summit Lake, Hope, Cooper Landing, and Primrose. The families in these towns are pretty humbled and wish not to make a commotion, but also don't wish for others to impede on their beliefs for their area. The snowmachine community in this area stands firmly on protecting their riding areas as well. That would include summertime access. Before commenting fully on the topic at hand, I'd like to describe myself to paint a little better picture of why I believe in my comments.

I was born in Anchorage. When I was five, my father moved us to Moose Pass while working for the Alaska Rail Road. Here, I would spend the rest of my life until I would become an adult and adventure on. The Moose Pass area does not have a lot to offer to keep youth entertained as the bigger city areas would. We do however have the freedom of the forest for us to explore. My mother was not so much of a fan of me exploring it, especially a majority of it I would do alone with our two dogs. As my brothers, friends and I would get older, we would grow and learn to use ATVs and Snowmachines.

We first learned of these problems of closures in the early 2000's. Carter Lake/Crescent Lake was to be closed due to the complaints that nonmotorized recreational users had. Carter Lake was a prized hot spot, with easy access for us to enjoy our time free from school and parents. We could fish, snowboard and ride our machines. Gates started showing up in areas and trails that we used to ride. Park Rangers would stop us, threaten to take our machines and arrest us, even for riding down a power line trail that was not on forest service land. What a lot of people didn't see from the outside was a massive closure and aggressive push to stop motorize recreation in the whole Eastern Peninsula. Over time, this push would settle down but it has not gone away fully.

The motorized recreational community is not thrilled to see the forest service submit plans that could risk the areas that we use. The four alternatives that have been drafted were very well presented. I would like to thank Karen Kromrey, a former Moose Pass resident, and her colleagues for answering and presenting these drafts for the ROS. As a snowmachine rider myself, I am pleased to see the Forest Service attempt to offer so much more land for us to use. At the cost of our summer uses in the Eastern Peninsula, I would humbly refuse such a generous offer. It is exciting to see Alternative C with so much more land, but I would like to see the same land offer for the Cordova area, and the restriction of the Kenai Peninsula lifted as well. The offering of Alternative C is realistically out of reach for your everyday rider. Riders of the Anchorage area and south onto the Peninsula would have difficulties reaching such areas along with still losing summer uses. As riders, we need such a wide diverse area to access so that no matter what time of the year it is or conditions of the weather, we have availability to use areas.

With more than 1,500 community members, families and myself, we are in favor of Alternative B. It's not much of a change to the Eastern Peninsula area and the community is content with what is in place now. We would like to ask for more, such as every other summer the riding community may access trails like Carter Lake and Johnson Pass. Not all of us have the bodies to hike into such areas and enjoy the beauty it has to offer. The key point I would like to make is the wide range, we riders would have.

These areas may not always be easily rideable depending on the season and weather. The Crown Point Mines are a great example. In the spring, the winter snow is not always melted off the trail to ride all the way up to the top. Even the break up can cause the trail to soften and become a muddied hole, or the runoff melting snow or heavy rains will wash out the trails. Grant Lake, Falls Creek, Cooper Lake and Summit Lake areas have these same problems. Some are not as severe as others and we can move over to another area and continue our riding. Having the options of other trails and areas open, can allow us to evenly disperse riders over areas to keep down heavy wear on the terrain. When trails become difficult to ride, we have noticed a mass shift on

where riders relocate. This applies in the snowmachine world as well; when trails are too rutted out or iced over, the riders have to find other alternative places to ride. These limited areas that are left are slammed with heavy traffic that causes additional wear and tear to the trails. When this happens locals will find their favorite riding trail for the kids and family a disaster, or even packed and no longer a safe trail for their kids to ride without running a risk of an incident. There are many others factors that need to be addressed but a key point I would like to stick to is having the wide range available to keep the riding community spread evenly.

Another example of this was last winter. The Turnagain Pass was excellent in the start of the New Year, Lost Lake was not open yet and Johnson Lake, Resurrection Pass, Cooper Lake, Placer Glacier and Carter Lake areas were not easily accessible. As the weeks past, Turnagain became tracked out and no new snow was falling. At this point, other areas started to open or access became available. Our group moved onto the Johnson Lake area but the Turnagain trailhead was still lacking snow. The Moose Pass trail head did have enough snow and was a mellower trail to enter the area. Later the Lost Lake area had become open finally, but like Johnson Lake, two trails heads with different levels of difficulties entering the lake. Over a few days, the Seward trailhead would become tracked out and iced over. A little while later, the Primrose side would follow; however, it is not as steep and still manageable to gain entrance. The further we get into winter the access to other areas would follow, Placer Glacier, Cooper Lake and Nellie Juan area as well. Toward the end of the season, Placer, Turnagain, and Lost Lake would become iced over and tracked out leading to damaging riders' machines. The Resurrection Pass area didn't hold enough snow to make the trip worth trying to gain access. Whether it is Summer or Winter, these are the troubles riders face in order to fully enjoy the area. Weather conditions may not always permit riders with the opportunity to enjoy the limited access that is set forth.

The local community wants to preserve the areas close to home for them and future generations to ride, whether be summer or winter. The motorized community would like to hold the wide range of opportunities to evenly distribute the riders. Evenly disbursing the motorized community by allowing more access to the lands would cut down the number of riders hitting only the limited spots available in masses. This would effectively cut down congested riding areas, which would help preserve the environment. Allowing the disbursement of areas for riding will prevent excessive wear to the trails and prevent risk to others on their safety. I thank you for your time in taking this comment into consideration.

Samuel Schilling