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First name: Philippa

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom it May Concern,

I am a relatively new implant of Alaska, but within about a year of moving here I knew this would be my forever home. Why? There are several reasons, but the #1 reason is snow machining. Ever since I was introduced to this sport I fell in love. It has been one of the most challenging, rewarding, and exhilarating things I have ever done. When I say that, please don't take it lightly. I grew up scuba diving, riding motorcycles, skydiving, and now work as an engineer on ships that take me all across the globe. I get to see and experience things people pay 10's of thousands of dollars to see. Within the first year of snow machining I was able to see things that many people who have lived in Alaska their entire lives could only dream of being apart of. The mountain ranges, the glaciers, the never-ending views, the experiences you have climbing mountains with old friends and new. Some of us don't have the physical ability to hike up a mountain into the backcountry to see these things. Without motorized access, these life-changing experiences wouldn't be physically or monetarily attainable for many.

Being able to snow machine in Alaska you can see these things any day of the week, weather permitting. I was once told of something called a "2 year day." This is a day that you have, a day that is so incredible, that you know you are going to stick around for at least another 2 years in hopes of having just one more day as amazing as the day you just had. I have been fortunate enough to have some many 2 year days in the past several years, and its all thanks to my snow machine and the areas that I have been fortunate enough to explore in the Chugash National Forest. I know that I will not only spend the rest of my life here, but that I want to raise my children here so that they are able to have those same kinds of experiences that have fed my soul since I moved here.

Most people from the lower 48 think that the winters are the hardest time of year to get through as an Alaskan. While for some that is definitely the case, but as a snow machiner that is far from the truth. Summer may offer some amazing outdoor activities, but none of them fulfill us the way snow machining does. For many us, winter is what we live for, and as a friend recently so perfectly stated "summer is the most depressing time of year, because all I want to do is ride." With winters being so long and the days being so dark, substance abuse, depression, domestic violence, and suicide are something that greatly affect this great state. Without an outlet, something for people to do in the winter, more Alaskan residents will fall victim to the negative effects of the long winters. Snow machining gives residents an outlet, a hobby, a motivation to get outside, and presents with challenges that push you to keep getting out there and to keep learning. Physically it is one of the most challenging things I have ever done, and yet it is one of the most amazing and rewarding things I will ever experience. It always leaves me wanting more.

In addition to the mental and physical wellbeing that snow machining brings to the community, it has a great economic impact as well. Every time we load up and head out on ride somewhere we are purchasing snow machines, trailers, and riding gear from local companies. We are stopping at gas stations, coffee shops, and stores that Alaskan residents own and operate to support their families. We are staying at lodges and hotels that may not even be able to stay open year round if it weren't for the influx of riders to their community. We bring many friends and family members from out of state that see and hear about these mazing places we go, and travel up with the hopes of having a 2 year day just for themselves.

Limiting the motorized access to the backcountry should not even be an option. If anything, for the well being of all Alaskan's we should be opening more recreational zones, making riding areas more accessible. Riding areas that have less travel times for members of the snow machining community will be even more of motivation to get people out there to experience what Alaska really has to offer. Alternative B from the Chugash National Forest

Draft Land Management Plan seems to be the best option of the ones provided. However, I ask that for the good of this amazing state, you explore the option of creating more riding areas for people, in hopes that they too will have their own 2 year day.

Thank you for reading my letter, and for giving me the opportunity to express my opinion in this matter.

Sincerely,

Philippa "Philly" Howe

Submitted: 10/31/18 @ 1030pm

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