

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/10/2023 7:00:00 AM

First name: Colby

Last name: Nielsen

Organization: Payette Lakes Ski Club

Title: Executive Director

Comments: Please see updated comment file. Wrong file was attached previously. Missing was comment on consideration of motorized corridor through winter closure area.

To Whom It May Concern:

Payette Lakes Ski Club is submitting the following comments for your consideration for the Granite Goose Project scoping.

Payette Lakes Ski Club operates Little Ski Hill and Bear Basin Nordic Center, included in the Granite Goose Project area. We would like to express support for several proposed actions within our Bear Basin and Little Ski Hill permit areas and propose for your consideration additional actions or modifications to current proposed actions.

Bear Basin History:

Payette Lakes Ski Club moved our Nordic ski trails to Bear Basin in 2005, due to the sale of land which our Nordic trail system had been on for many decades. Fortunately, PLSC was able to make this relocation to ensure our community and visitors had a Nordic facility. We are proud to operate our trail system on USFS land and continually work to highlight the virtues of this piece of land to our customers and users.

Though we only operate in Bear Basin November through April, the health of the ground under the snow is a crucial part of our operation. We have seen many new user-created roads/trails in the years we have been maintaining trails at Bear Basin. These unauthorized roads have created erosion problems, destruction of seasonal wetlands, deep ruts, exposed rocks, standing water, fire rings and trash. During early winter season, late season, and low snow years, the damage to the ground has a detrimental effect on our grooming operation. We have damaged equipment and have also had to make minor deviations to trails to avoid these problem areas. We see several opportunities in the Granite Goose Project which will help prevent further damage to this valuable recreation area.

In the winter months PLSC sees frequent incursions of snowmobiles/snow bikes onto our trail system. Some of these instances are minor incursions and minor damage is done, but other times a hazardous situation is created. Damage to the trails can create dangerous conditions for skiers and has the potential to cause a serious ski accident or skier/vehicle collision. Current travel plans do not allow us to adequately sign or prevent motorized users from accessing our trail system. Our organization goes to great lengths to provide high quality groomed trails for our users. Not only do the trail conditions matter, but the greater environment also matters to our users. Trail users do not want to be inundated with the sounds and exhaust of over-snow vehicles or have the risk of collision with one of these vehicles.

Valley County has hundreds of miles and thousands of acres available for over snow vehicles, but under 70 miles of groomed Nordic trails across several facilities. Bear Basin Nordic Center is the only facility on USFS land with only 25 kilometers. This area represents a valuable, accessible location for non-motorized, year-round recreation. Payette Lakes Ski Club supports efforts to further bolster non-motorized use within this area. Bear Basin is a true recreation gem for our community and for the forest.

Support for proposed actions:

A. Vegetation Management: We support any treatment deemed necessary to promote healthy forests within our Bear Basin permit area and Little Ski Hill permit area. We support treatment of the eastern boundary of Little Ski Hill to reduce fuels to the East of "Race Run" to the boundary. This area is densely forested and poses a great threat to our neighbors in King's Pines, as well as ski lift and light infrastructure in our permit area. PLSC also supports meadow restoration treatments in the Bear Basin area. Several locations within our permit area have been seriously damaged by off-road vehicles. See #3 on attached map for rough area of where most of the damage is.

B. Roads and Recreation:

1. We support the proposed actions of closing to public use and designation of non-motorized NFS trails, roads 839, 841, 052. Road 50813 is not mentioned in the narrative for proposed closure. Road 50056 only appears on map 10 but is not shown on map 16. Map 16 indicates 50813 to be included on this list of potential closures, and we would strongly support this action. Please list 50813 in narrative if it is to be considered for closure.

Should this proposed action meet extensive opposition, we would ask you to consider a modified seasonal closure to ensure the ground has sufficiently dried in the spring, and to keep vehicle incursions from happening during early winter season grooming operations.

2. We support the proposed trailhead development at 451/837 and on 052.

3. We support the winter travel restriction proposed for Bear Basin permit area

Considerations:

We would like to submit these considerations to be added to the project.

1. Ensure road 50813 is considered for closure to motorized public use.

2. Consider extending the non-motorized winter travel boundary in the Northwest corner. We would like you to consider extending this boundary to roughly the summer trails "Ditch Witch/Westy" or the 5200' contour line in this zone. Most of our winter incursions come from this area where the snowmobile trail leaves road 813. See #4 on attached map.

3. Consider an additional gate on road 813 to prevent motorized users from entering the permit area. See #1 on attached map. Nearly all of our motorized encroachments come up this road, especially in the early season. If one snowmobile travels up this road, others tend to follow.

4. Please add consideration for winter trailhead use at the proposed 451/837 trailhead. Access to 451 from HWY 55 is much safer than HWY 55 and Club Hill Road. In addition, there are many virtues to this location for a winter trailhead. There is sufficient space for a larger parking lot than the current Bear Basin trailhead. There is access to beginner terrain from the proposed trailhead. The venue would be more conducive to hosting ski race events which have a positive impact for our community.

5. Consider 451/839 as an alternative location for summer and winter trailhead development. See #2 on attached map. A trailhead at this location would help with restricting travel on road 839. This location is right at the boundary to forest land. This could be a potential gateway to forest land and serve to educate users.

6. Please consider allowing grooming on road 488 to Brundage for a one-week duration to accommodate a point-to-point Nordic Race from Brundage to Bear Basin.

7. Consider motorized travel corridor through the winter travel closure area. An established and properly signed route will help prevent incursions on Nordic trails. Payette Lakes Ski Club would be willing be a partner in establishing and maintaining signage along this route.

Thank You for your consideration on these matters. Payette Lakes Ski Club prides itself on providing a high-quality winter recreation outlet for our community and visitors. With improved forest health within our permit areas, we can ensure this area is utilized and cherished by non-motorized recreationists in summer and winter for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Payette Lakes Ski Club Board of Directors

IMAGE - Map (page 4 of 7)

IMAGE - Map (page 5 of 7) Consideration for additional winter non-motorized area

IMAGE - Photos(page 7 of 7) Examples of Damage