

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

First name: Dave

Last name: Bingaman

Organization: Valley County Parks and Recreation Department

Title: Recreation Planner

Comments: Valley County Parks and Recreation exists to help facilitate and manage the needs of the recreating public in and near Valley County. We appreciate the inclusion of Recreation Management in this project and the efforts to restore forest health and improve forest resilience. Within the scope of the project we have several recommendations that will improve user experiences and help to decrease the potential for user conflicts.

#### Winter Recreation-

Valley County Parks and Recreation maintains over 500 miles of groomed snowmobile trails on the Payette and Boise National Forests. We also groom trails in Valley, Adams, Idaho, Boise and Gem Counties. A large portion of these groomed trails are within the boundaries of the Granite Goose Project Area. We applaud the intent of this project and support it with a few specific concerns. We appreciate the inclusion of the Gordon Titus Parking Lot expansion; this is one of the busiest winter parking lots within our groomed trail network. We believe that the Wallace Lane Parking Lot also needs to be included in this project since it is directly adjacent to the project area, accesses the trails and backcountry within the project area, and has become much more popular over the last few years as an alternative to the Titus Lot especially for recreationists coming from the Highway 95 corridor. Expanding this lot adds an opportunity to lessen the crowding at Titus and also provides better dispersal of users rather than concentrating them all into the area near Brundage Mountain Resort.

In addition, Valley County Parks and Recreation does not support the expansion of the Granite Mountain non-motorized closure to a full winter closure without more documented need. The area that is utilized by the Brundage Snow Cat operation has been creating user conflicts since its inception in the 1990's, expansion of this closure will only continue this legacy of animosity. Brundage is not able to build their roads or operate trips in this permit area until the snowpack is at least 60" deep in most areas. Currently, prior to and following the Brundage Cat Ski prime season, snowmobilers and snow bikers can utilize this terrain, this would not be the case under the recommendations in the plan. This is not a popular area for backcountry skiers in the early winter or once the Brundage prime season starts so neither motorized nor non-motorized users will be using the terrain that is closed throughout the entire winter season. Closing the area for the entire winter would result in an area that is being unused by all users.

Before creating a new closure, hold public meetings, study actual use patterns, and gather input from all users instead of making arbitrary travel management decisions. Rather than creating more animosity and opportunities for violations, stick with the current January 15-March closure and work with Adams County Sheriff's Department and Brundage Mountain Resort to provide on the ground enforcement and concentrated education efforts during the duration of the closure. If this closure must be expanded, remove it from the Granite Goose Project and add it into the discussion of possible ski resort expansion permitting when that occurs. Also, the Boulevard shared use route is not shown or described in the project description or Map 13. Make sure that the Boulevard is included in the description and added to the maps prior to the next round of comments.

In addition to our comments on the Granite Mountain Closure, we are opposed to the expansion of the Bear Basin closure as described in the project documents. We absolutely support the efforts and understand the challenges faced by the Little Ski Hill/Bear Basin Nordic Center with motorized incursions. Expand the closure on the west side and north side of the current Nordic permit area so that it starts at the groomed snowmobile routes and extends east to FS Rd 452. Use easily definable boundaries that are intuitive and easy to maintain closure signage from. Arbitrary closures like the state line on the east side of the 451 Rd. make little sense to users especially in the winter in the middle of the forest. In addition, this allows motorized users living on the west side of McCall and especially those near Warren Wagon to continue to have access to the groomed trails via the state

land and the USFS ground east of the 451 Rd from their homes which they have historically had. Keep the eastern boundary at the 451 Rd. utilize groomed routes as boundaries in other areas near the Nordic Permit Area and address the need for a gate or better signage on the 813 Rd. Allow the permit holder to place appropriate signage along these routes to better educate motorized users.

#### Summer Recreation-

Prioritize meeting the growing demand for trails for both motorized and non-motorized users in a manner that limits opportunities for conflict. Continue to improve trail signage and provide more user etiquette and education at trailheads. Listen to what users are asking for and work with partner groups to provide these opportunities and more effective management. Work with local trail groups to create a close to town trail system in the area near the existing Bear Basin trail system that can grow to meet current and future demands for additional trail sections and a larger variety of trails. Trail use by all users has increased exponentially since the COVID pandemic and as the McCall area continues to become more popular to out of area and out of state recreators.

Trails, especially those that are easily accessible and close to population centers have a multitude of well-studied and well documented benefits to local communities. They increase the health and enjoyment of residents. They provide opportunities to connect to the natural world and have many positive effects on local economies. The Greater Bear Basin Area non-motorized trail system has the potential to be a showcase trail system and that opportunity should be added to this project. Continue to work with CIMBA and other user groups to meet current and future demands for high quality trails in the project area. Look at ways to improve connectivity and access points where appropriate. Consider the creation of equestrian facilities and designated equestrian and pedestrian only trails to reduce conflicts with other users. Embrace management tactics that are currently being used on other National Forests with a diversity of recreation.

Please include the Backside Moto Trail aka: The Sheep Driveway in this project as well, it is not currently included in the scope of the Granite Goose Project. This is an important trail and can benefit both motorized and non-motorized users. This is currently the only motorized trail on the west edge of McCall and Payette Lake. Work with IDL, IDPR and CITRA to rehabilitate this trail and maintain it as a single-track multiple use trail.

Valley County Parks and Recreation also fully supports all efforts to harden and designate camping areas where appropriate rather than the current unregulated dispersed camping situation. Hardened campsites with vault toilets close by are required given the increased demand through the summer and fall seasons, consider adding at least one more toilet to this project near the junction of the 452 and 451 Roads. Closing down dispersed camping areas near water sources and in sensitive meadows will result in less resource damage and fewer impacts on water quality. Provide better enforcement and education along with camping regulations and improvements.

Thank you for your consideration and continued stewardship on our National Forests.