

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/15/2023 6:00:00 AM

First name: Mark

Last name: Wiedeman

Organization:

Title:

Comments: please read attachment

To the deciding official: I am glad to have the opportunity to comment on the Kootenai National Forest Over-snow Motorized Use Travel Plan. I am not as familiar with Troy, Libby, Eureka as I am the Trout Creek area. I hope the Kootenai will reach out to those user groups and I will keep my comments specific to the Cabinet Ranger District. I have concerns on the process of how this document was developed. This document was created outside of standard practices compared to other Kootenai NF projects. The Kootenai didn't collaborate with local user groups and public, to help develop a proposed action. After the comment period I would like to see another alternative developed utilizing comments and local people of interest. Kootenai National Forest Over-snow Motorized Use Travel Map looks to be a very course mapping exercise. The map has very hard boundary lines and segmented parcels. Some parcels have no access and encourage trespass to get to these areas. I understand that the Kootenai NF has no authorization on non-public lands. I would like to see a better product developed through collaborating with the public and figure out way to legally access these segmented parcels. Closing upper elevations on 03/31. These are the area's that have the majority of spring snow for over the snow use. This goes directly against the purpose and need for "Improve the quality of the recreational experience". Specific areas of known habitat use needs to be protected and should be addressed area by area. A course filter of all elevation over a certain number doesn't seem effective improving experience or protecting habitat. Let's protect areas of spring high elevation wildlife use and open the rest. The vermilion watershed has an abundant area of 3/31 closure. I would like to see a more comprehensive plan than a course elevation model that would open lesser suitable wildlife areas to winter motorized recreation. The vermilion pass area has high recreation value. Combination of deep early/late snow depth, open burn areas, and open hillsides create lots of winter recreation opportunities well into the springtime. Two Trees Peak to Vermilion Peak area that is closed 3/31 should be open to 5/31. The map legend states: Roads open to highway legal vehicle's only, yearlong (Not all MVUM roads shown). This is very confusing. Why highway legal only roads if this is an over snow map? Roads need to be displayed for users' safety and navigation. People may only have this map available while recreating over the snow. A map that only shows some roads, and of those roads they are segmented confuses users and poses a great risk during an emergency. It also confuses the users and increasing the possibility of unintended trespass. Having road labels would be useful for navigation. Appears the area adjacent to the swamp creek powerline corridor has been adjusted to simplify open areas. I agree with using discernable features as boundaries. The Chicago Peak area in the Rock Creek Watershed has an arbitrary boundary that goes from open to closed. Having an open road within a closed area is confusing and has potential for unknow trespass issues. Again, according to the map this road is only for highway legal vehicles. At a minimum this should be Ungroomed Route: open year-round. It appears this closed area is a buffer to the wilderness. The wilderness is already close to mechanical uses. There is no reason to buffer a closed area. Are there are any documented trespasses into the wilderness or documented conflicts between users? If law enforcement can't deter trespass, additional closure areas will not be any more of a deterrent? This is an unnecessary closure area. Part of multiple uses is being respectful of others. I personally have never been involved in user conflicts or heard of any. I know this is a heavily used area for the Noxon community, and the rockslides are becoming more popular, as high elevation areas void of trees/brush area being closed. This new closure area has high recreation value and should stay open. It's an unusual combination of open tree riding, and open rockslides. This area has always been open for all uses and is in a management area that allows these uses. The area accessible to motor vehicles compared to the areas of non-motor users are significantly less. Non mechanical users have all the openings in the wilderness to use. Non-motorized use also expands north and west of this area as well as Star Peak area (BMU4 and proposed wilderness). The trailhead access point is a great separation point if the Kootenai is looking to separate motor/non motor users. The nonmotor users access this area with motors so access will be denied for both users, again conflicting with the purpose and need for "Improve the quality of the recreational experience". I would like to see this

closure area removed from consideration and allow all uses. Dry Creek on the Bull River highway appears to have been closed. This area is also in a management area that allows motorized over the snow use. During the Forest Plan Revision much effort was given to keep this area open. This area is part of BMU 4 and has had road closures and motorized trail closures recently. Removing winter motorized travel makes this whole area non-motorized and reverse all the work that went into the Forest Plan Revision. The Dry Creek Road systems should be designated ungroomed route as well as leaving the current motorized area available 12/1-5/31. Non-motorized users still have Star Peak/Billiard Table area to distance themselves from motorized recreation. Once motorized access becomes closed, history says those areas will never be motorized again. I ask the Kootenai NF to reevaluate this course filter mapping exercise that has significant impact to the public that uses these lands. Historically users of the Cabinet Ranger District have been communities of Thompson Falls, Trout Creek, Noxon, Heron and resident on the Bull River Highway. Given recent events the Cabinet area has exploded and is a huge draw for people in eastern WA, North ID, Missoula and Kalispell MT. This is a huge economic boost of the community as well as users on the trails. The more we can encourage use and spread out, the better it is for the community and the users experience. It is also safer for all users if we don't congregate everyone into one small area.