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First name: Sandra

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Organization: Idaho Stae Snowmobile Association

Title: Public Lands Director

Comments: August 21, 2023Mr. Chad W. BensonKootenai National ForestLibby, MontanaRE: Kaniksu Vehicle Travel PlanDear Supervisor Benson:These are comments on winter recreation and travel management planning forthe Kootenai National Forest. These comments are submitted on behalf of theIdaho State Snowmobile Association (hereafter referred to as ISSA). ISSA is astatewide organization representing approximately 4,000 people, includingforty-one clubs, including the Sandpoint Winter Riders, individuals, and manybusinesses from throughout Idaho. We are also a member of the IdahoRecreation Council, the American Council of Snowmobile Associations, and theUnited Snowmobilers Association.All our members highly value the opportunity to ride snowmobiles on ourfederal lands and the Cabinet Mountains area is especially important to ourmembers in northern Idaho and visitors from eastern Washington. Snowmobileaccess is also vital to the winter economy of northern Idaho communities.Hence, we have a strong interest in any action that could impacts this access.The existing condition for Over-snow Vehicles on the Kootenai National Forestis open unless specifically closed. This should be the starting point for anyOSV travel planning and mapping. The existing Scoping Packet andPreliminary Proposed Action Map start from the misplaced statement ofopening areas to OSV use. The vast majority of the forest is open to OSV usepresently, and the proposed action would actually outright close significantlands to OSV use and would restrict use of the remaining lands. The proposedaction appears to be designed to close as many lands to OSV use as possible.This is contrary to multiple-use management and the existing Forest Planadoption and travel planning rule. The existing proposed action should bescrapped and the process started over. Collaborative groups should be formedand used for gathering correct information.In addition, area wide closures for grizzly bear management is contrary tominimization, as it is elimination of OSV use. Not all potential bear denningareas should be closed April 1.There is significant OSV use on the Kootenai National Forest that originates onthe Idaho Panhandle National Forest. This use needs acknowledged and needsto remain open for OSV routes, trails, and areas.We intend to participate in the process as it moves forward.Thank you,Sandra MitchellPublic Lands Director501 Baybrook CourtBoise, ID 83706smitch@alascott.com