

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/19/2024 6:00:00 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: [content pasted from attachment]

March 20, 2024

Lolo National Forest

Supervisor's Office

24 Fort

Missoula, MT 59804

Dear Sir:

The Idaho State Snowmobile Association (ISSA) offers the following comments concerning the Lolo National Forest Plan Revision Environmental Impact Statement.

ISSA is a statewide organization representing over thirty-six clubs, individuals, and many businesses throughout Idaho. All our members highly value the opportunity to ride snowmobiles in Idaho national forests and in the forests in adjoining states. Snowmobiling, responsibly managed, has negligible impact on resources and utilizes both roaded and unroaded areas. Snowmobiling is important not only to our quality of life but also to the economic survival of many communities.

The proposed action for scoping has included mapping that has no detail. The maps show approximately 80% of the entire forest as non-motorized winter ROS. Some are the result of RWA expansion and some are back country managed as non-motorized. Due to a lack of delineation, we are not able to determine which is a current RWA and which is a proposed RWA. This makes it most difficult to make meaningful comments.

On behalf of not only Idaho snowmobilers but also the many visitors from Montana and other states who ride the Great Burn, it is critical that the Idaho and Montana boundaries be contiguous. The Great Burn is one of the few primitive back country snowmobile settings still accessible in the lower 48 States and certainly one of the best. There are no groomed access roads or trails and the terrain can be challenging. All of this has great appeal to a certain segment of the snowmobiler community. While some snowmobilers prefer riding on groomed and/or well-defined trails, others want a more primitive experience with a combination of challenge and magnificent scenery. This is no different than summer users, some of whom prefer the roads and developed facilities and others who want the challenge of backpacking into our wildlands.

There are two areas of concern that are important to Idaho Snowmobilers:

* The Heart Lake, Trio Lakes area on the NE end of the Montana side has no characteristics to qualify for RWA status. A substantial boardwalk was installed years ago to get through some wet areas. It was recently replaced and the old planks were thrown aside and left on site. A motorized rock drill was brought in to blast a nice trail along a rocky sidehill stretch. An outhouse was installed at the head of Heart Lake a couple of years ago. This human-caused improvement certainly does not meet the Wilderness criteria of "untrammeled by man." Man's Footprints remain in this area. This area is adjacent to the North end of the Clearwater NF RWA that was reduced and is reopened to snowmobiles. We urge you to please align your decision with the Idaho side.

* The other area of concern is Irish Basin and Cedar Log lakes area. This is located adjacent to the Surveyor area on the Clearwater NF side. These are historic snowmobile areas and there is no justification for closing them. The areas can easily be removed from the existing RWA boundary.

Thank you for considering our comments. We look forward to collaborating with you in this most important process.

Sincerely,

Sandra F Mitchell

Public Lands Director

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