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Organization: Winter Wildlands Alliance

Title: Policy Director

Comments: The attached comment letter is on behalf of Winter Wildlands Alliance members and supporters.

Anthony Botello Forest Supervisor Flathead National Forest 650 Wolfpack Way Kalispell, MT 59901 Flathead Forest Plan Suitability Changes: Winter Travel Management and Recommended Wilderness Dear Supervisor Botello, The following comment is on behalf of Winter Wildlands Alliance members and supporters: Thank you for implementing the important travel management changes prescribed by the 2018 Flathead Forest Plan. We appreciate the Forest Service's action to prohibit non-conforming recreation uses in Recommended Wilderness Areas. Many people tirelessly advocated for these special places to be protected during the Forest Planning process, and this Environmental Assessment follows through on the commitments that the Forest Service made to the public. We also commend you for the thoughtful Information and Education strategy outlined in Appendix D. I appreciate the considerable thought the Forest Service has put into preventing OSV use outside of designated areas. However, this should be complemented by an enforcement strategy. In designating new areas for OSV use, the Flathead must do more to minimize impacts to other uses, wildlife, and natural resources than what is currently proposed in the EA. Assuming that non-motorized users will simply adjust to OSV use and/or go elsewhere is not how you minimize impacts between OSV use and other recreational uses - what you're proposing is simply to have OSV use displace non-motorized recreation from areas - like Flattop Mountain - where it currently occurs. To better understand and minimize impacts to wildlife, the EA should include a finer-scale analysis of potential OSV impacts to winter-dependent wildlife like lynx and wolverine, as the current forest-wide scale is too broad. And, the final plan should include adaptive management measures to close late-season OSV areas early in times of low snow or if bears are documented in the area. Thank you for your consideration, H. Dettmering, Columbia Falls MT John Dunkum, Missoula MT Joan Fouty, Polson MT Rochelle Gravance, Columbus MT Lizzie Kozar, Columbia Falls MT Jill Paul, Billings MT Mark Schulein, Livingston MT Tim Stevens, Livingston MT Dan Struble, Livingston MT Ruth Swenson, Helena MT Joel Vignere, Lakeside MT