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Organization: San Juan Sledders Snowmobile Club

Title: President

Comments: The San Juan Sledders Snowmobile Club has several concerns over the current Ice Creek Expansion Plan that must be addressed.

Primarily is our parking concern. Parking for snowmobilers is extremely cumbersome. The way the parking is now, snowmobilers must drive to the top of Purgatory parking lot, negotiate turning around in a tight area, unload their snowmobiles, drive down to an access road to park, and then take a long walk back up the hill to their snowmobiles. Oftentimes this creates a bottleneck of vehicles waiting for their opportunity to unload. It is the top priority for snowmobilers in the southwest to have Purgatory follow through with its commitment to the Forest Service and the snowmobile community in its 2005 agreement to build and maintain a convenient snowmobile parking area.

An additional concern is a safe reroute for all backcountry users including snowmobilers to access public lands. The current snowmobile by-pass excludes snowmobilers off of Forest Service owned road 578 so it could be used exclusively by beginner downhill skiers for Purgatory customers. This by-pass is an unsafe snowmobile trail. The by-pass is too steep and difficult to navigate for beginner snowmobile users to safely access public lands. The by-pass also faces south creating unsafe snow or lack of snow conditions due to melting. Solutions could be the by-pass needs to be completely rerouted to a safe gradient or Forest Service 578 should go back to being the main year-round access point for all backcountry users and reroute Purgatory's exclusive downhill-only skiers to a route that safely separates them from other National Forest users.

The problem of safe and convenient winter access to the National Forest for all users has been a long-standing issue. Back in 2005 there was a project to reroute snowmobiling and add a snowmobiling parking lot. The reroute happened (not to a standard safe for all ability levels), and the parking lot did not. Here is the reference in the original document regarding snowmobiling and also a link to that document:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2005/10/20/05-20964/durango-mountain-resort-2004-master-development-plan-san-juan-national-forest-la-plata-county-co>

"Re-route the existing snowmobile access route.

Install snowmaking infrastructure, make snow on the first 400 feet of the proposed re-route, and groom the re-route periodically to create a smooth rideable surface for snowmobile riders of all ability levels.

Develop a snowmobile parking/staging area along Hermosa Park Road, north of Purgatory Village on the west side of Highway 550, which would accommodate cars, trucks, and trailers."

The San Juan Sledders Snowmobile Club is committed to working with the National Forest and Purgatory Ski area to resolve these long-standing issues and to implement the 2005 commitment made by Purgatory Ski area for convenient parking and unrestrained access to the National Forest via Forest Service road 578. Please see the attached maps and suggestions with which we agree.

Sincerely,

Bryan Meador

President, San Juan Sledders Snowmobile Club

