

Tensleep Nowood Trailbreakers



C.J. Grimes, President

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Thad Berrett, District Ranger

Bighorn National Forest
1415 Fort Street
Buffalo, WY 82834
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February 21, 2023

Dear Ranger Berrett,

Tensleep Nowood Trailbreakers (TNT) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Washakie County, Wyoming. Our mission is to develop, enhance and maintain trails that are fun to ride, ski or hike; and encourage responsible use, personal well being and economic benefit. Our members have been involved in the Bighorn Basin Outdoor Recreation Collaborative since its inception, and we remain dedicated to connecting our community to the outdoors through building and maintaining public trails, as well as sponsoring outdoor events by partnering with WyoRec, the Powder Pass Nordic Club and the US Forest Service to maintain winter trails in the Bighorn Mountains; and trail-based biking and skiing events.

TNT would like to make the following comments regarding the proposed Pole Creek Vegetation Management Project:

- The phrase “regeneration harvest” does not occur in the scoping document and is not defined where it is used on the map. The public can infer from the documents that this designates much of the Pole Creek Nordic Ski Area as a clear-cut harvest unit. Such an action would eliminate the shelterbelts and shaded canopy that are vital to maintaining Nordic trails and holding snow that would otherwise be blown by wind or degraded and melted by the sun.
- The scoping document makes one mention that “cross-country skiing opportunities exist”. In reality, there exists an established, long-term collaborative effort between the Forest Service, Powder Pass Nordic Club and other organizations to improve and maintain the Pole Creek Nordic trails for public winter recreation and events. These events have been well-attended and bring revenue to the Forest Service through permit fees. These facts could have been easily documented during internal project scoping to signify the importance of multiple-use considerations as a design feature.

- In vegetation management projects across the western United States, it is common practice for the Forest Service to use a project's actions to enhance recreation areas wherever possible. In some places the forest canopy may be so dense that it prevents snow from reaching the ground. In other places subject to high winds, thinning trees could lead to increased risk for windthrow. The expert opinion provided by working with cooperators in project design makes these potential problems almost entirely preventable. Minimum tool use practices and buffering or avoiding sensitive areas during implementation will help improve management for BOTH forest health and recreation management.
- TNT recommends that the Bighorn National Forest work with the Powder Pass Nordic Club to design project features that will protect the integrity of the Pole Creek Nordic Ski Area so it can continue to be used by the public for winter recreation for decades to come.

Sincerely,

C.J. Grimes, President
Tensleep Nowood Trailbreakers Board of Directors