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Comments: Comment on Draft assessment - Recreation

Hi,

Thank you. I appreciate the efforts that have gone into preparing the draft assessment documents.

I read the section in the Recreation assessment on public comments on recreation conflict with great interest as I believe in places there already exists user conflicts based on types of recreation. Several of the existing conflicts were mentioned but I believe one more needs to be added and that is the conflict between people snowshoeing and cross-country skiers. I participate in both sports.

I especially appreciate the non-profit, Grand Mesa Nordic Council, that puts in the groomed trails on the Grand Mesa and I contribute to their funding when I visit the area. For years I had thought it was ok for people snowshoeing to use the groomed flat part as long as they stayed well away from the two-track grooves. Later I learned from a skate-skier that snowshoes can churn up the flat part and spoil the glide of the skate-skis. So now I head elsewhere for snowshoeing. I think the Ntl Forest needs to work with and assist GMNC to better educate snowshoers on the impacts of their recreation. Permitting more signs near the two main trail heads (Skyway and County Line) might help (such as "Snowshoers please walk in single file"). The Ntl Forest should work with REI to find a location for their snowshoe demo events that is neither Skyway nor County Line. Working with REI to have them include education during their demo events on the conflicts of snowshoeing and x-skiing. Years ago I attended an REI snowshoe demo event and it was held at County Line. Not the right message, I believe.

I can appreciate why so many snowshoers head to the Skyway and County Line trail heads as 1) those two locations are the best known locations 2) there is a sense of security of not getting lost if you follow the groomed trail 3) there is a sense of security that the area has enough users that if problems arise that help will be more readily summoned.

Looking at the GMUG website:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/activity/gmug/recreation/wintersports/?recid=32366&actid=91>

The topic is "x-skiing and snowshoeing areas" and for the Grand Mesa the list does not include any mention of snowshoeing on the list of trails only "ski". None of the locations are listed as "Ski/Snowshoe Trail". If the intent is to encourage snowshoers to areas other than Skyway and County Line then those trails should be listed with "Snowshoe and ski" instead of just ski. It is odd that Mesa Lakes is not even listed on that wintersports trail list.

I believe that more downloadable maps would help move snowshoers to other trail locations. Both "Geo-referenced" but also GPX or KML files should be available. There is a recommendation on the Skyway page that snowshoers should use Mesa Lakes trail system (as well as a few others), but the map for that trail system is hidden under "Glacier springs cut-off" on the "wintersports" trail web page I list above.

Some of the GMUG web pages point to other non-GMUG web pages that might be useful, for example Grand Mesa Nordic Council is listed on some GMUG web pages under "Related Links". GMUG should consider contacting the author of GJHikes.com for permission to include links to his excellent trail write-ups. For example consider this very useful page:

<http://www.gjhikes.com/2012/12/grand-mesa-nordic-trails.html>

Both Skyway and County Line have Ntl Forest signs pointing to their location complete with a symbol of a skier. How about some symbols with snowshoes for some of the other locations?

The availability of maps that people can print as well as both geo-referenced and either kml or gpx files is very important. Through my volunteer work with the BLM I know that it is fairly easy to export a kml file from ArcMap for a trail system. Exporting the GMUG trail system would be a great benefit to the visitors to the area. Whether those visitors are coming to the Ntl forest in the winter or in the summer.

I'm surprised that the recreation assessment has so little mention of maps.

I appreciate the Zoomify maps that GMUG has and have used them quite a bit.

It is my experience that many hikers drive passenger cars (vs higher clearance) so continuing to note on maps which roads are passenger car accessible is very important (with the assumption that roads are dry). I certainly appreciate it when I'm planning my outings.

Sincerely
Janice Shepherd

