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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

Dear Mr. Jason Kuiken, Ms. Katie Wilkinson, and others,

Thank you for taking my comments on the Stanislaus National Forest Over-snow Vehicle (OSV) Use Designation Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). I think this DEIS is critical in understanding the impact that over snow vehicle use has in the Bear Valley area, where I have a home. I appreciate your evaluation of five different alternatives. Of the proposed alternatives, I believe Alternative 5 is the best.

I am a forest ecologist, and have worked extensively with Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks on their natural resource condition assessment and Yosemite National Park on air quality issues. One of the significant results of the work with the National Parks was the documentation of the intense pressure that wild animal populations face from the indirect and a pervasive stresses of increasing fire frequency/intensity, climate change, invasive species, habitat loss and diminished air quality. On the Stanislaus National Forest, we are stewards of the federally listed endangered Sierra Nevada yellow legged frog and the federally listed threatened Yosemite Toad, California red legged frog, and Lahontan cutthroat trout. We are also home to a number of sensitive species, including the elusive Fisher, the Pacific Marten and the Sierra Nevada red fox. These animals are declining throughout their ranges. We have the opportunity and the responsibility to make the Stanislaus National Forest a place where they can persist amidst ongoing pervasive stresses. Over-snow vehicle use can add to the stresses these animals face, so constraining the use of OSVs within the habitat of these sensitive species is appropriate. We all share the national forest and OSV use is a recreation that many people enjoy. The alternative that best balances OSV recreation with vulnerable species protection is represented by Alternative 5.

With respect to air quality and noise issues, I recommend the Stanislas follow the lead of resource managers at Yellowstone National Park and phase out the allowance of two stroke engines on the forest, replacing them with four-stroke alternatives. The California Air Resources Board reports that 2-stroke engines in snowmobiles, operated for seven hours, produce more smog-forming emissions than a 1998 passenger car driven 100,000 miles (California Air Resources Board 1999). From an emissions and noise standpoint, 4-strokes engines are preferred over 2-stroke engines.

Thank you for taking my comments.

Sincerely,  
Jeanne Panek, PhD

National Park Service. 2013. A natural resource condition assessment for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Natural Resource Report. NPS/SEKI/NRR-2013/665. Fort Collins, Colorado.  
<https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2197909>

15 Years Of Wrangling Over Yellowstone Snowmobiles Ends. <https://www.npr.org/2013/10/22/239705610/new-rules-mean-more-and-cleaner-snow-mobiles-in-yellowstone>

California Air Resources Board. 1999. Fact Sheet -- New Regulations for Gasoline Engines, <http://www.arb.ca.gov/msprog/marine/marine.htm>