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First name: Eric

Last name: Johnson

Organization:

Title:

Comments: My family has owned a cabin in the Stanislaus National Forest since 2001. Teaching my kids about building, living in the country, and learning about nature and how to enjoy and sustain our resources was something my wife and I felt was important to the education of our kids and necessary for building lifelong lessons and skills. We came up to the area and fell in love with the forest and the cabin we looked at just outside of Bear Valley, CA. Long story short, we purchased our cabin the day we saw it on a handshake with the previous owner before we left the driveway. Over the years both of my kids learned to ski and snowboard, worked at Bear Valley Mountain Resort, ride snowmobiles off the back of our property into forest service area (non wilderness) and make memories that we will never forget. It was awesome seeing my kids grow up in the mountains and become who they are today. As we are now grandparents, we look forward to passing on those same skills and memories to yet another generation.

Since we have owned this cabin, we continually ride over Ebbetts pass in the winter and summer time. In the winter time we love to take our snowmobiles out over the pass. One of my fondest memories occurred while snowmobile riding with my oldest son last season, just north of mosquito lake. I was trying to keep up with him and he went up a hill that was blocked by a row of trees and a sharp turn up the hill. We stopped, talked about how to navigate the move and I watched him successfully do what he said: Drive straight toward a tree, turn to the right putting all your weight on one side, right after the turn hop over the snowmobile with all your weight on the other side, and ride up no problem. I figured heck, I could do that... well, it turned out that I was wrong. I ended up not doing quite as well as he did. I ended up putting it into a tree and getting thrown off. No one was hurt but we had a lot of digging to do to get the snowmobile unstuck and uprighted. While not hurt, I was very upset and a bit embarrassed that I couldn't keep up with my son. Ill never forget what my son said after he came back down the hill to where I was at. He said, "Dad, its just a snowmobile, the important think is that no one got hurt, we can fix the snowmobile." He was right, we were able to get the snowmobile fixed right there on the snow and get it going again. but the memory of my son acting like my dad (and me) in similar situations will stay with me the rest of my days.

It's memories like these that are lifelong. Spending quality time with my sons along Ebbetts Pass. In addition to riding snowmobiles over the pass with my kids, my brother also comes up every year, and every year we take out the snowmobiles to highlands lakes or hermit valley and ride around. This is something we and I have done for years. My brother and I do not live near each other and this is one of the only times that we see each other each year; it's something we look forward to all year. I saw in alternative 5 that the area just east of Highlands lakes is proposed to be closed. That area is a great intermediate zone to ride in. There are meadows, hills and some small hillclimbs for me and my family to progress our riding skills. I think this area is proposed to be closed off because of the Pacific Crest Trail. If that is the case, I would find that very unfortunate and irritating because in all the times I've been there I have never seen any evidence that area has ever been used in the winter time along Ebbetts Pass by anyone other than snowmobilers. It would be a travesty, in my opinion, to close that area to people who actually use it because some group of people who have never used it pretend they do. that part of the Pacific Crest Trail is too far away from the snow-park and it is to indistinguishable with 10+ feet of snow on the ground. Snowmobiles ride on snow, they do not ride on the dirt. When there is dirt, we avoid it. It doesn't make any sense to me why we need to stay away from the Pacific Crest Trail in the winter time, nothing we do could ever effect it.

I noticed that there were a lot of areas closed off due to a term referred to as "near natural". If it is near natural, its not actually in the natural environment fo whatever you are trying to protect. Again, these habitats are not affected by over snow vehicle travel in the winter time when there is 10+ feet of snow on the ground for non-motorized snow sports enthusiasts to take advantage of the beauty and thrill. Those who might make claims

otherwise are either exaggerating or are the ultimate practitioners of leave no trace because they have never left a trace, not even footprints in the snow. I completely understand the need for this in the summer when the natural habitats are directly effected due to over dirt vehicles; but what is the logic behind over snow vehicles?

In the summer time I have hiked along the Pacific Crest Trail, camped/ hiked around Highlands Lakes and Pacific Valley and I have seen no evidence that snowmobiles were ever there. I have not seen any ski or track marks in the dirt, snowmobile pieces or garbage that has obviously been there a long time. I have only come across garbage and rubbish left behind by hikers and campers.

Due to this, I fully support a "Near Natural Winter Motorized Access" plan. This plan would ensure that snowmobiles could continue to access areas like Pacific Valley, Jelmini Basin/ Bear Trap, and several other places along the Highway 4 corridor and Ebbetts Pass.

Snowmobiles are being restricted all over California and North America. Ebbetts Pass/ Bear Valley utilize snowmobiles every single day during the winter time. Our local economy depends on it. The winter economy is what keeps Bear Valley alive, closing off areas could impact tourism to the town and have an immense negative impact on the local economy. We should be wanting people to come enjoy the forest in the winter time, we should not be further restricting public lands from public use.

Every weekend I drive past the Forest Service Office at the edge of the Stanislaus National Forest. Every time I read the sign that says "Land of Many Uses" "Stanislaus National Forest". If these near natural areas are completely closed off without the creation of a "Near Natural Winter Motorized Access" plan, then how can the Stanislaus National Forest promote themselves as the land of many uses, when it is restricting that use. You will need to come up with a new motto and change your sign - that would be a terrible loss for the public

Thank you for allowing me to comment on this proposal and have a great day.

Respectfully,

Eric Johnson