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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for hosting the recent open house events in Sonora for public input on proposed OSV closures. The Stanislaus National Forest represents an important component to the economic well-being for all small rural communities located around this forest.

I support Alternative 4. It is reasonable. The Forest Service preferred Alternative 5 calls for restricting use of upper bowls of Pacific Valley, the ridge connecting Pacific Valley to Mosquito Lake, and the area toward Highland Lakes. Currently it is a very popular off trail snowmobile riding area. In my 30+ years of riding there on a weekly basis I have never seen a non-motorized user. It is very far from the snow park. The off-trail snowmobile riders are an important economic segment of forest users that would be lost if riding in these areas is further restricted.

The restricted access to backcountry areas will prevent Search and Rescue from effectively searching for lost winter users and the Sierra Avalanche Center from operating remote data collection sites. Without avalanche prediction, the Forest Service will be putting all snow country users at risk of death.

There are negative economic consequences to Bear Valley and that forcing OSVs into a smaller space will likely result in more accidents.

Alternative 5 also restricts use of Bear Valley Ski Resort. Traditionally families ride their OSVs on the ski slopes after ski operations have closed for the season. OSV use should not be restricted after ski operations have closed for the season.

In addition, in 1991 the Near Natural classification was created. The OSV users agreed to give up Round Valley to motorized use in exchange for unrestricted use of Pacific Valley. This was a sacrifice but made sense to have this large and beautiful non-motorized area easily accessible from the Lake Alpine snow park. I also enjoy snowshoeing in Round Valley and on the other side of the Lake Alpine snow park on Osborne Ridge. Signs are needed to direct non-motorized users to these 2 areas and off the groomed trail if they want to avoid OSVs. I also want to note that I had said "sacrifice" as we had already lost most of the riding areas to wilderness designation.

My preferred alternative is #4.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jim Burton,  
Bear Valley business owner and resident