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Comments: * The preferred Alternative 5 is unfairly skewed toward non-motorized designations. The purpose of a Winter Travel Management Plan is to regulate OSV travel in a fair and balanced manner. It should be an OSV management plan, not a non-motorized enhancement plan. Alternative 5 is not a balanced use model for winter recreation. I would respectfully request that you go back to the drawing board to create more realistic and balanced use models.

* Many people use snowmobiles and other OSV's to access areas which ultimately result in quiet use - aka, backcountry skiing and snowboarding. Many areas would be basically unreasonable to access without motorized assistance.

* Great non-motorized areas already exist close to parking areas. Carson-Iceberg Wilderness sits only a mile away from the Lake Alpine Snopark parking lot. The meadow across the street from the town of Bear Valley offers great non-motorized recreation in a tame environment. Both Mokelumne and Carson-Iceberg Wilderness areas are accessible within only a few miles from multiple parking areas. Areas that are farther from trailheads are better accessed using motorized methods. Keep most of these hard-to-reach areas open so we can enjoy them!

* In order to prevent resource damage, the SNF is proposing a variety of minimum snow depth requirements. If you know snow, you're well aware that not all snow is equal. Ice, powder, sun-baked, this is far too ambiguous a measure. Snowmobiles cannot travel very far at all on dirt (<0.25 mile) before melting the hifax and overheating. Minimum snow depths aren't necessary. I respectfully suggest the following definition be used in lieu of a hard number: "Adequate snow cover is defined by a layer of dense, packed snow, or deeper fresh snow sufficient to support your vehicle, and prevent damage to forest resources."

*The Stanislaus planned for the area around Eagle Meadows, Pacific Valley, and a small area on Sonora pass along the Nightcap Ridge to be "Near Natural, non-motorized" in during their overall Forest Plan in 1991. However, this was never actually implemented, though the closure is included in the preferred Alternative 5. These have been popular riding areas both before and since 1991. The 1991 non-motorized designation is a holdover from summer management. Snowmobiles don't require roads or trails and have no effect on the permanent landscape. Please consider creating a new designation that allows winter time motorized use, such as a "WINTER SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREA".

*Preferred Alternative 5 has confusing boundaries. Boundaries should be easily distinguishable using roads, creeks, ridges or other significant features to avoid confusion. Most of Wilderness boundaries are based on this topographic sense and OSV management should follow suit.

*The Proposed action (Alternative 5) designates the area just west of Sonora Pass as closed on April 15 to match the Bridgeport Winter Recreation area. After the pass opens and the hundreds of skiers show up to ski the pass, this small meadow and hillsides are the only places to ride most years on the Stanislaus late in the season. Closing this area on April 15 is not acceptable! Plenty of snowmobilers drive up the pass once it's open to ride this zone. Please do not impart a closing date on the Pass.

* The Proposed Action leaves the Bear Valley ski area as closed to OSV use. There's a long history of locals and visitors having this area open for snowmobile skiing and snowmobiling after the ski area closes. Please consider designating this as a seasonal use area. No one needs to ride the ski area during business season, but families have a long tradition of great spring days spending time with neighbors riding the hill after the ski area closes.

This has no detrimental effects.

Thank you for your consideration.

Steve Gosselin