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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the NF OSV DEIS.

I own a condo in Bear Valley primarily so that I can easily access the snowmobile areas of the Stanislaus National Forest. I've had the pleasure of riding in much of the currently allowed area along the highway 4 corridor. I also attended the open house on September 6 at the Supervisor's office.

I have several concerns with the decisions made in preparing the "preferred" plan.

1. While talking with one of the Rangers he said that much of the lower areas that are currently open to snowmobiling and other areas where you don't think people use the land, either due to lack of snow or steep terrain, it was taken out of the allowed areas. I think this is wrong because in the future especially the lower areas could be usable if we get good snow years. If it is taken away now it will not become available again.

2. I don't have a problem with snow depth requirements for certain areas and I think you should use that same criteria for areas that you are calling "near natural". My understanding is that with adequate depth, snowmobiles have zero impact to plant life and ground conditions. To me that is as near natural as you can get. Set a reasonable snow depth requirement and everyone wins.

3. I have a problem when allowed and prohibited areas are so difficult to distinguish. The current maps would be extremely difficult to use and also enforce. I am not a person to ride where I'm not allowed but as the preferred map is now. I'm not sure I can keep myself safe.

4. I know some of the pressure to do this DEIS was the result of a lawsuit brought by people claiming that there are conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users of the National Forest. I can say that as a rider for the last eight years that (at least at Bear Valley/Highway 4 corridor) that I have never witnessed conflicts. Actually I have helped cross country skiers more than once get back to the parking area when they had a problem. Further almost all non-motorized users don't venture more than a couple of miles from the parking lot. Much of the area your preferred plan removes is well beyond any possible conflict zone.

5. My understanding is that the Bear Valley Ski area would be closed under this plan. I've had the pleasure over the years of riding here after the resort closes along with many families as it provides a clear area for riders of all levels. This should remain open once the resort closes.

While I haven't ridden in the highway 108 area, I am certainly planning on doing that in the future. While I can't comment directly on your proposed changes there, I think my comments above would still apply.

I am a believer that public lands are for all to enjoy within reason. I don't believe it is the job of government to restrict use based on a certain groups agenda.

Overall I would say that most of the areas that I ride are still open on your proposed plan but as I become more skilled your restrictions will effect my ability to enjoy the National Forest. The total snowmobile usage of the forest actually seems very small. Other than weekends it is very rare to see many other snowmobilers on the trails or off trail. Even on the weekend you aren't talking that many people.

I hope you will consider my comments as you develop your final plan.

Thank You,  
Phil LaMar