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Organization:

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Comments: Regarding the Nez Perce-Clearwater travel Plan Revision.

I have been snowmobiling since 1972 and have seen many great places in the state. I am past president of the Missoula Snowgoers Snowmobile Association, am currently on their Board of Directors, have been on the Montana State Groomer Appropriations Committee for 6 years, and spent 6 years as a board member of the Montana Snowmobile Association. I began snowmobiling the Great Burn (Hoodoo) shortly after I moved to Missoula in 1989. My comments pertain to this RWA area and its geographic boundaries, as well as the North Fork Spruce-White Sands and Sneakfoot Meadows RWA areas as these are the areas I am familiar with.

There are four alternative proposals presented as well as a "no action" option. I feel the "no action" with adjustments might be more appropriate for this area. To begin with, areas designated as RWA's are being managed as wilderness, when in fact they are not wilderness. I feel that this is not the correct interpretation of the planning rules, and it is nothing more than a work-a-round to create de-facto wilderness.

The entire Great Burn (Hoodoo) area is not accessible to snowmobiles anyway. This leaves plenty of areas for "peace and solitude" for those looking for it during the winter. In all my years I have never seen anyone except snowmobilers up there anyway. I have never seen elk, bears, or goats either. There is just too much snow. They get driven out of there earlier in the season. However, it is truly a spectacular area to snowmobile.

I feel the Hoodoo RWA should be reclassified as Semi-Primitive Motorized allowing for snowmobiles and snow bikes. Because it has been proven in studies, http://www.snowmobileinfo.org/snowmobile-access-docs/Vegetation-and-Soil-Snow-Compaction_part-8.pdf for example, that snowmobiles have virtually zero impact on vegetation in lower elevations with minimal snow pack, the assumption can be readily made that there is NO impact at the level and snow depths experienced in the Hoodoo RWA. And since there are no people, and no animals short of squirrels and birds, there is no justification for restricting snowmobiles and snow bikes from the area.

All said and done, it is important to realize that motorized recreation is here to stay, and if it can be managed with no impact in areas such as the Hoodoo RWA then there will be less user conflict in other areas where those seeking solitude cannot find it. And besides, there are MILLIONS of acres of countryside that motorized recreation cannot access for one reason or another that are available for those looking for a different form of enjoyment.