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Title:

Comments: My name is Rick D. Shaw and I want to address the comments made in regard to winter motorized use in the Great Burn and the disturbance to wildlife. In the time frame that snowmobiles or other winter motorized use in the Great Burn would occur there is no wildlife disturbance because there is no wildlife at the high altitude that winter motorized users would be recreating. These months would be the first of December through the middle of April. Snow accumulates rapidly and at depths of up to 20 feet in some areas. I started riding in the Great Burn in 1994 until the area was closed. I have a keen eye for wildlife and enjoy observing wildlife at a safe distance. The wildlife that would be in the area move out to lower elevations for foraging and survival in winter conditions much less severe. I venture to say that Mountain Goats, Elk, Deer, Moose and predators of these animals would occupy the Great Burn at these high altitudes from mid April through the end of November when forage is plentiful and after the snow starts to firm up and eventually melt.

The multiple times that I rode the Great Burn wildlife was not observed, no tracks were discovered or any other evidence. The area and conditions don't allow for wildlife to exist in such a harsh environment. Firsthand observance in the area yields only a rare snowshoe hare or magpie or raven. Bears are hibernating and there are claims are that there is wolverine in the area, but my firsthand account is that in all the area that I have covered there has been no sign or track of a wolverine either. I would know if I saw wolverine sign. I believe my firsthand account of no wildlife in the area should be justification for no wildlife disturbance or conflict.

If someone can point me to scientific data with pictures wildlife with identifiable landmarks in the area that winter motorized activity would occur, then I will change my stance. I don't believe that such data or a study has been completed to convince me that Mountain Goats or Wolverine exist in the area during the challenging winter months. Until there is this scientific evidence, firsthand observance of no wildlife is the only way to establish reality.

Furthermore, I don't believe Mountain Goats feel all that threatened by human beings or vehicles. Numerous observances by my family and friends supported with pictures at Logan Pass and Sperry Chalet in Glacier National Park find Mountain Goats coming within a few feet of myself and others. This includes nannies with kids. Even if a snowmobile or snow bike could get within a mile of mountain goats the encounter isn't going to change Mountain Goat behavior.

I see comment that some would like to see the Mountain Goat population increase to the point that there could be a hunting season for Mountain Goats. I'm having a difficult time understanding this. Winter motorized use in the Great Burn doesn't harass or kill Mountain Goats but it would be ok for the Forest Service to issue hunting permits to kill Mountain Goats in the Great Burn. Winter motorized use doesn't threaten the Mountain Goat population in the Great Burn but hunting them is lethal.

As a member of Montana Snowmobile Chapters and Backcountry Sled Patriots I don't support Alternatives X, W, Y or Z. I do support a No Action Alternative With Changes that will not diminish the wildness character of the area with a recommended designation that the current Hoodoo RWA acreage be reclassified as: Semi-Primitive Motorized. Access would be limited to snowmobiles, snow-bikes, and mountain bikes. This I believe will be a workable solution for many of the users of the Clearwater National Forest and for the Great Burn.

Thank you for allowing me to comment.

Rick D. Shaw