Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/19/2021 11:00:00 AM
First name: Mike
Last name: McGarity
Organization:
Title:
Comments: Shoshone NF Travel Management Planning Project

Dear Mr.:

I am writing to share feedback regarding the Shoshone Travel Management Plan. I enjoy recreating on public land and want to express my support for keeping access open in the Shoshone National Forest for all types of recreation uses. I believe through proper management and education trails and roads can remain open without negative impacts. Spanning through Wyoming, this forest is a large area where various types of recreation activities occur.

I do not support the High Lakes Wilderness Study Area proposed in Alternative 3 as there are already vast amounts of land managed as wilderness within the forest, which is the most restrictive form of management. Only 17% of the forest is open to motorized use. The USFS should look at making more restrictions to avoid concentration of use, which will help to mitigate impact and avoid user conflict. With all alternatives, closures are proposed and users will see a decrease in land and trails available to motorized use. I believe there should be an alternative that proposes more areas open to use than are currently available to give a true range of options.

There is already very restrictive management in the areas bordering the forest and Forest Service lands should be managed for the greatest good for the greatest number of people. The planning process also shouldn't be used to identify more lands with wilderness characteristics - especially if identifying lands with wilderness qualities requires road closures and restrictions on motorized travel. If lands have roads and are currently receiving motorized use, then these lands don't have wilderness characteristics.

I am concerned with the use of "adequate snow depth" as this term could be used to create arbitrary snow depth requirements that could be used to unnecessarily restrict OSV use with no proper science and guidelines. OSV use in Yellowstone National Park is showing that with proper management, there is not significant impact. I also support November 1 - June 15 as an appropriate season of use for winter motorized recreation.

Regarding potential wildlife issues, Yellowstone National Park has been studying the impacts of OSV use on wildlife and has found over the course of many years that there is relatively no impact. I believe that the USFS could use the studies produced by Yellowstone as the Shoshone NF is in close proximity and has similar landscapes and habitats. The USFS should recognize that OSV use does not create a large enough impact on wildlife to use this as a reason to restrict access.

I am also concerned with the term "minimum road system." The USFS should be looking at what the user needs are and create roads and trails based off of what is adequate and necessary rather than a "minimum". Recreation around the nation has increased in popularity and there should be enough flexibility to adequately adapt to these trends and needs to develop systems that would accommodate use rather than exacerbate the issue by setting such limited areas for users. None of the roads proposed to be decommissioned should be.

The USFS should finally begin to reverse its decades-long systematic discrimination against those with mobility impairment-related disabilities. Travel management policies focused on "minimizing" the environmental impacts of motorized recreation have resulted in a dramatic increase of lands that are closed to those who can only access public lands with motorized assistance. Trail densities need to follow best available science and not arbitrary proposals and numbers.

In conclusion, I believe in shared use and that there is enough public land for all to enjoy as long as agencies use best practices. Please refrain from closures as roads and trails are critical to the forest.

Sincerely,

Mike McGarity