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First name: Colten

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Shoshone NF Travel Management Planning Project

Dear Planning Team:

I am a snowmobiler who has over 20 years of backcountry snowmobiling experience, with future plans to ride in the Shoshone National Forest. My comments on your Preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) include:

I generally support parts of Alternative 2: Exceptions to my support of this Alternative are noted below.

I support the OSV Season Dates proposed by Alternative 2: The proposed dates of November 1 through May 31 for the North Zone (Beartooths) and Wind River (Dubois) District - and December 1 through May 31 for the Washakie (Lander) District - are reasonable since there is always adequate snow for snowmobiling in these areas during these times.

I support keeping the High Lakes Wilderness Study Area open to snowmobiling as proposed by Alternative 2: I am opposed to closing the northern and eastern portions of High Lakes as is proposed by Alternative 3. Congress made it clear that snowmobiling should be allowed to continue in this area, so that should be done.

I am opposed to allowing full-sized vehicles (trucks and SUVs) equipped with tracks to use snowmobile trails: These vehicles are too heavy and too wide to use on snowmobile trails. They will cause trail damage and create unsafe issues. They do not belong on Shoshone NF snowmobile trails.

I am opposed to the proposed 12-inch minimum snow depth before snowmobile use or trail grooming is allowed: The 2015 OSV travel rule only requires that there be "adequate" snow depth for OSV use. It does not require that any numerical minimum depth be set. Snow depth is far too variable depending on wind and weather conditions, so this rule would create an unwelcome tool for groups to try to shut snowmobiling down when snow is actually adequate enough to snowmobile.

I support adding the new ungroomed Ghost Creek trail to Painter's Store in the Beartooths. I also support adding the ungroomed trails in the Sublette Pass area near Togwotee Pass to your mapped trail system since they've actually existed and been signed on the ground for decades.

I support allowing OSV operation on snow-covered roads outside the designated OSV season dates: Allowing OSV use on designated wheeled routes will keep public access open to roads and trails during shoulder seasons when snow is too deep for trucks, ATVs and UTVs.

Your assessment shows that there has not been any significant damage to the Shoshone National Forest from snowmobiling. I believe this shows that snowmobiling is not hurting the forest and that current management has worked well. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Colten Thiel

Lifelong Alaskan & Outdoor Enthusiast