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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Shoshone NF Travel Management Planning Project- A skiers perspective

Dear Planning Team:

I am a backcountry cross country skier. I access areas to ski using OSV parking and roads cleared to support OSV parking. I sometimes use OSVs for long road approaches. Nobody thinks about us backcountry cross country skiers as advocates for OSVs, but the truth is that many areas would be effectively inaccessible without an OSV. I'm not sure the small backcountry cross country community could support the road clearing efforts without the OSV-only users.

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. This is a very unique and beautiful area.

I am open to allowing full-sized vehicles equipped with tracks to use CERTAIN snowmobile trails, particularly the wider groomed trails. I support choosing trails that will be of interest to tourists, and with consideration for the current snowmobiling community.

I am opposed to the proposed 12-inch minimum snow depth before snowmobile use or trail grooming is allowed. As any backcountry user knows, snow depth can vary dramatically over just a few feet of land. This well-intentioned requirement will only cause headaches. I think the 2015 OSV travel rule requiring "adequate" snow depth is sufficient.

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, on years when the snowpack will support it. I also support shortening the season when low snow years occur. Bottom line, I support keeping public access open to roads and trails during shoulder seasons, using the appropriate method.

I seriously doubt that anybody even considers the backcountry skier who uses OSV related transportation. Even though our tracks are gone with only a few minutes of wind, and other OSVs rarely bump into us, we're out there. And we love to ski on our public lands.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Monica