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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Shoshone NF Travel Management Planning Project

Hello,

I was able to attend the North Zone meeting on Tuesday 8/11, and have read through portions of the proposed travel plan (including appendixes and maps) located here:

https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd771187.pdf. In reference to the alternatives listed, as a snowmobiler, I am very interested in keeping the High Lakes Wilderness Area (discussed in section 3.7) open to over snow vehicle use, as it is today. As a result, I would be in favor of either alternative 1, or potentially alternative 2 of the plan, but would be strongly against alternative 3 as listed in the document.

As you guys mentioned during the meeting, you stated you would love to go up and explore the area on a sled. Everyone we take up there loves the area, and it's unique ability to cater to both experienced riders and beginners (with it's easy rolling hills and tight technical areas as well). Living in Roberts, MT, I end up traveling hours a day to go riding every time I ride (at least 4 hours round trip). The reason is that there are already extensive potential riding areas nearby classified as Wilderness, and as such, are closed to snowmobiles. I backpack, hike, ski, and hunt, and can appreciate those areas. But we already have an abundance of them (disproportionately so compared to other areas in the west that I have lived). If I want to get in the backcountry to get away from folks and vehicles, that's already very easy, and only minutes from home; there are tons of opportunities for that nearby in the Beartooths. We only have a small area in these mountains to ride snowmobiles currently, and eliminating that small area does no favors for those of us that like to get out and use the mountains in multiple ways; it makes the mountains single use. Also, due to the long sled ride required (from Chief Joseph junction up the 212 highway) to access the area, anyone trying to use the area (say, for skiing or other non-motorized travel) would also likely be a snowmobiler just to get there, and as such would appreciate access to the same areas proposing to be closed. I don't see a ton of potential conflicts being avoided because there are very few (zero from personal experience) to begin with. I also never see animals up there in the winter; it's too high and everything seems to either be hibernating or moved to lower elevation. Due to it's remoteness, I don't see the area being used by non-motorized users if it gets closed to sleds, as there are MANY opportunities for this MUCH closer to home that are just as unique; it likely just won't be used, which is a shame.

Please consider this viewpoint in your decision moving forward. I believe all snowmobilers would feel the same (including those from out of state that likely aren't aware of this study).

Reference website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/shoshone/home/?cid=stelprd3846526>

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Brandon Crane

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