

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/18/2021 11:00:00 AM

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Organization:

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Comments: Hello, My name is Greg Peters. I am an avid backcountry skier living in Missoula, MT. While that may seem far from the Shoshone National Forest, I have skied in the Beartooth mountains and deeply appreciate the opportunities this area provides to backcountry skiers. I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed travel planning for the Shoshone; thank you. In Montana's national forests, limited opportunities exist for quiet, winter recreation. Of course, we have designated wilderness areas, but they are difficult to access in the winter, making other options especially important. In the spring, skiers flock to Beartooth Pass because of the access and late-season skiing opportunities it provides. While I have yet to enjoy spring skiing at Beartooth Pass, it is on my 'bucket list' and I look forward to taking advantage of this unique opportunity. As such, I strongly believe that the Shoshone should NOT extend the snowmobiling season at Beartooth Pass beyond April 30. Extending it to June 30 as proposed would not only reduce the quality of this spring skiing experience, but would also create unnecessary user conflicts and safety concerns. Please maintain the existing April 30th closure to snowmobiles at Beartooth Pass! Additionally, snowmobile use in the High Lakes Wilderness Study Area should be reduced to comply with the Wyoming Wilderness Act of 1984...Preserving wilderness characteristics in WSAs is a critical component of managing those landscapes and allowing snowmobile use to expand runs counter to the intent and purpose of WSAs. Further, adding new motorized routes in other Inventoried Roadless Areas degrades not only quiet recreational opportunities, but also threatens wildlife and seems unnecessary given how many areas of the forest (and other forests in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming) are currently open for on-trail snowmobile use. Once these areas are opened to snowmobiling, it will be extremely difficult to restrict in the future. I do support motorized closures for cross-country skiing opportunities in the Falls, Deception and Pinnacles areas on the Wind River Ranger District, and further support continued grooming of those areas. Again, these are destinations for cross-country skiers throughout the region and ensuring safety is important. Finally, Togwotee Pass is another location on my 'backcountry ski bucket list' and I very much look forward to exploring this area someday soon. Providing a few small areas at this location for non-motorized winter use would provide safety and improved skiing experiences without a large impact on the snowmobiling community which has access to so much terrain already, including at Togwotee Pass. Thank you again for this opportunity. While I was disappointed that the public comment period for this important planning process was only 30 days long (far too short for such important and far-reaching decisions that affect a large community spread across a wide geography), I am glad I was able to participate and voice my input.