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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Lolo National Forest Revision Team,

I am writing to express my strong desire to see an increased investment in local Avalanche Forecasting services and products. I am an avid winter backcountry recreationist, and I would benefit from a consistent and reliable forecast that only a Type 1 (7 days/week) avalanche center can provide. I regularly travel through avalanche terrain in the Lolo National Forest, and I feel it is the responsibility of the Forest Service to inform me of the ever-changing risks that such travel poses.

The Forest Service also believes it is responsible for keeping the public informed, as is outlined in Forest Service Manual 2300 in section 2357. I would like to see our local Forests comply with these directives, as outlined in 2357.14 and 2357.18. Both of these speak to staffing being the responsibility of the Forest Service, especially if there is a demand for such products from the local community. Many winter backcountry users venture into avalanche terrain on Forest Service land within the West Central Montana Avalanche Center (WCMAC) forecasting region. Despite its ongoing efforts, the non-profit West Central Montana Avalanche Foundation (WCMAF) has been unable to meet the growing community's needs. With backcountry use increasing steadily, I believe it is time for the Forest Service to help make that happen so everyone can enjoy and benefit from a seven day per week avalanche forecast.

It seems the Forest Service is not fulfilling its directive to "maintain control of public safety products, ensure the consistency and quality of field operations and educational content" or its responsibilities to "address public and employee safety and (avalanche) awareness in the backcountry on NFS lands" through the current configuration of the WCMAC. I would like to see more involvement by the Forest Service to ensure reliable products.

Thank you for taking the time to review my comments.