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Comments: To whom it may concern,

I would like to address the lack of effort that was put into the public meeting about the Kootenai National Forest Over-Snow Motorized Use Travel Plan. For a plan that has been allegedly thought through, planned and mapped out for many years and to be greeted at the door with, "There's no presentation, have a look around and ask questions if you'd like." Was to say the least, a disappointment.

As the Public Engagement Reference Guide for Forest Service Employee's states:

"The USDA, Forest Service motto is, "Caring for the land and serving the people." And can be best accomplished by focusing on valuing people and places. Because we are entrusted with the stewardship of our Nation's forest and grasslands, we believe relationships matter and that citizens from all walks of life should have the opportunity to be engaged in that stewardship."

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That being said, I and many others did not feel like they were being informed or heard. With little to no information at a meeting that started during the middle of the workday. On a topic that the people who are most passionate about; are unable to leave their jobs to attend. As a young person, trying to be well informed and gain more knowledge about the happenings of our woods and recreational spaces, I did not feel like I was gaining any understanding or knowledge of what the Forest Service's plan entails or exactly was. There was no direction, no discussion. Just some maps and some people standing around "Ready to answer questions." But when asked questions, was told to, "Make sure to go online to leave a comment." I will take it upon myself the next time USFS decides to hold a meeting, it will be held to the standard of their own guidelines as it is apparent that the employee's themselves are uninformed on what their position is. We the people deserve truth and transparency. We demand clarification and factual statements without the insertion of opinion.

In the Kootenai National Forest Over-Snow Motorized Use Travel Plan it states:

To meet the overall purpose, there is a need to:

1.Improve the quality of the recreational experience;

That is an incredibly ambiguous statement. To say that we need to improve the quality of the recreational experience, there needs to be documentation of insufficient quality in the first place. It needs to be brought to the public's attention that there is a discrepancy in quality. Some may argue that proposals for opening areas to more OSV will lead to conflict, however that is a statement based on sole opinion as there is no way to predict the future. As far as I or anyone else I have spoken to who frequents the Kootenai National Forest, there are no qualms between recreational users. Whether it be bicyclists, hikers, adventure motorcyclists, side by side users, snowmobilers, snowshoer's, dog sledders, horseback riders, campers, or tourists. I personally work as a snowmobile guide in the Flathead and Kootenai National Forests seven days a week during the winter. It is very rare to see an animal, even on the easy to travel roads that we keep packed down from snowmobiling. As a person who works and recreates in the Kootenai National Forest, I must agree that there is a need to improve the quality of the recreational experience however I highly disagree with the actions the USFS is trying to take by limiting the areas and times when and where we are 'allowed' to recreate.

2. Reduce Conflicts between motorized and nonmotorized uses;

Again, for this to be a reason to enforce forest closures, there needs to be documentation of these alleged conflicts. If there was such documentation, then it would have been escalated to law enforcement and action would have been taken. As a person who frequents the Kootenai National Forest regularly both motorized and non-motorized, both recreationally and work related, have not had the displeasure of coming across a single conflict with a person who was upset that I was recreating non-motorized or motorized. I know this is the same

for MANY other recreationalists who oppose this travel plan. I disagree that there are quarrels between motorized and non-motorized recreational users significant enough to pursue these closures. It is the Forest Service's job to make these kinds of problems known to the public. And as far as I or anyone else can tell, this is blanket statement used to benefit the alleged "problems." It is the Forest Service's job to maintain our forests and enforce laws that are already in place. Not mandate unnecessary and illegal restrictions based on arbitrary opinions.

3 & 4. Integrate natural and cultural resource into the over-snow motor vehicle designations; and comply with the forest plan direction, including the biological opinion;

With the "planned" (hard to call it that considering there was no local government involved in the pre-scoping process for this outline.) integration of natural and cultural resources, it does nothing but subtract from the historical use of recreational snowmobiling area. It appears there is no integration but only take-over of the area's we rightfully have to use as dictated by congress.

When I addressed a FS worker and questioned them about what conflicts were occurring between recreational users, she started talking about snowshoer's and skier's being the alleged conflicted. However, the area's that are proposed to be closed, can ultimately only be accessed by a snowmobile. Not by someone on foot. When I stated that, she immediately switched to talking about the "denning" of the grizzly bears and the "damage" it causes. With there being no factual science behind those statements, it appears to be a scripted statement that is utilized to shut down anyone in opposition of the USFS's attempted speedy process of shutting down our forests to motorized recreational use.

Many studies were conducted in the 70's/80's about the possibilities of snowmobiling posing a risk to wildlife/environment however studies yielded such insignificant results that they [activists/scientists/biologists/USFS] moved on because there were more important things to be concerned about. (snowmobileinfo.org) (which is the website linked by USFS for snowmobiling information.) If it is such a concern that snowmobiling is causing harm, then these studies need to be re-conducted as 1. The studies done were done in Yellowstone and the Kootenai National Forest is not comparable. 2. There is too little amount of information on the real (if any) damage being done by snowmobiling.

In 1977 the Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area was created by congress. In that act it allowed continued use of recreational snowmobiling unhindered by dates. This travel management plan proposes closures of many areas within the TLWSA to OSV use. It is not within the USFS's jurisdiction to make management actions that restrict historic use without congressional approval.

I would like to see USFS work with Lincoln County Commissioners, Glen Lake Irrigation District, Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club and the general public on a more realistic and reasonable Travel Management Plan.

The International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association (ISMA). Welcome, ISMA (International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association)-Information for snowmobilers: snowmobiling trails and safety; facts and trends. (n.d.). <https://www.snowmobile.org/>  
Kootenai National Forest, Krueger, F., & Savage, C.