Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/30/2023 5:04:15 PM
First name: Bob
Last name: Gates
Organization:
Title:
Comments: Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on the Kootenai winter travel plan scoping documents. I really appreciate that the public was provided the opportunity to see the minimization criteria at this early phase. I also commend the Forest Service for not allowing snowmobiling in wild places like recommended Wilderness and research natural areas.

The Forest Services 2015 Over-Snow Vehicle rule creates a paradigm where areas are closed to snowmobiling unless designated as open to use. I want to ensure that any areas the Forest Service opens to snowmobile use are backed up by a full rationale that takes into account the guidelines around minimizing damaging impacts to soil, watershed, and vegetation; minimizing significant disruption to wildlife habitat; and minimizing conflicts between off-road vehicle use and other existing or proposed recreational uses. Going forward, I would recommend that the environmental analysis include additional components that address conflict that may occur as a result of the noise snowmobiles create. Id also like to see the Kootenai National Forest create a robust implementation, monitoring, and enforcement system that will help keep snowmobiling out of areas where the use is prohibited.

There are some areas that I believe should not be opened to snowmobile use due to the important habitat and connectivity they provide. This includes large portions of the Galena, Barren, and Allen Peak inventoried roadless areas south of the Cabinet Wilderness. I also encourage you to look at collaborative proposals that have been brought forward over the past ten years.

Thank you for considering my comments. I look forward to seeing the environmental analysis.