Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/28/2023 4:49:29 AM
First name: Gary
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: To the National Forest Service,
I strongly oppose the Kootenai National Forest Over-snow Motorized Use Travel Plan. I would first like to ask for a much longer commenting period. More time needs to be given to the public to express their concerns with this plan.
The maps provided are not of good quality. I would like to see better maps where I can read the words in the legend. I would also like to see maps of the current closures in comparison to the maps of what is being proposed.
Throughout this document, I did not see any biological or ecological studies, no corporate datasets were provided, and no scientific, peer-reviewed research was included. Where are these statements coming from that snowmobiles "may cause" harm? There is no hard evidence to suggest this is the truth. Yellowstone National Park says otherwise: Thus, we suggest that the debate regarding the effects of motorized recreation is largely a social issue as opposed to a wildlife management issue (White, Davis, & Troy 2005).
I want to see the reports on the areas that were screened. Where, in these areas, did screenings take place? When were they taken? How was this data, which wasn't provided in the proposed document, taken? Was it done on foot? In the winter? Were observations made of grizzlies, lynx, and wolverines during this time? Seems far fetched to think the many people needed to study the wildlife would be in all of these areas they are talking about on foot, in the middle of winter. I assume it would be easier to access and study by snowmobile.
The US Fish and Wildlife delisted the grizzlies twice in the past 16 years. Once, in 2007, and again in 2017, only to be put back on the list by a judge; one person. Rather than letting the department do their job of observing wildlife, they were not listened to, and instead stopped by lawsuits backed by people who think they are saving animals. Predator and prey management is essential to a viable ecosystem. Throughout the past four decades that grizzlies have been on the endangered species list, snowmobiling has taken place in all of these areas that are being proposed for closure, yet, the grizzly population grew. Not only did it grow, it has far exceeded the expectations and demands of recovering the species to a self-sustaining population.
This document states they are using, "existing data and Forest Service expertise and professional judgment to screen each area" (p. 1), and "local knowledge" (p. 3). Where is this existing data? Who are the experts? Who are the professionals? I can tell you, we the people, we are the locals! And thousands of locals have expressed their disagreement to this proposal. There is no data to back this egregious, careless, restrictive, outrageous plan.
Finally, outdoor recreation should be enjoyed and encouraged by all. Our youth need to be exposed to the beauties of the outdoors. Allowing these closures is just one more push toward kids staying inside addicted to screens. I so enjoy seeing these beautiful mountains in the winter, but the only way to get to many of them is by snowmobile. This is public land, owned by the public. We don't deserve, and we will not accept, being shut out of our own land.