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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for inviting public comment on the proposed changes in over the snow motorized vehicle use in the areas that I recreate. I am strongly in favor of an Environmental Impact Study to determine the possible irreversible harms that might come from a new designation.

First, I am a "quiet sports" enthusiast, and recreate as a cross-country skier and a backcountry skier. I have lived in the eastern Sierra for 35 years and have witnessed the invasion of motorized over-snow usage increase over the years. Lighter, faster sleds have opened up more terrain and snow conditions over the years. Places I used to be able to find solitude and quiet in are now regularly invaded by snowmobiles.

Not only do I find the noise and smell offensive, but I am concerned by the impact motorized over-snow vehicles make on wildlife. Here in Hilton Creek, when I see and hear snowmobiles high marking, I fear for the impact on our local endangered species, the Sierra Bighorn sheep. What other species might be affected by these impacts? Bears in hibernation, coyotes, snowshoe hares, birds and the tiny creatures who spend the winter under the snow.

Safety concerns also come to mind when I think of this new designation. Backcountry skiers are educated in avalanche safety, but what about motorized over-snow vehicle users? High marking is dangerous, and we have not seen any accidents yet...Additionally, the tracks left by snowmobiles can create unsafe skiing/boarding conditions. Slopes that are cut up by machines create unnatural hazards, and I have my own experiences to prove this.

Over-snow motorized vehicles serve a different crowd than mine, but we are all impacted by their use, whereas the "quiet sports" hardly impact the motorized crowd. How do we reckon with this?

Allowing snowmobiles near to homes in the eastern Sierra can't be allowed. There needs to be a buffer zone between over-snow motorized vehicle use and homes. Additionally, what about speed limits, curfews, and the like?

We cannot blindly go forward with this designation without some hard thinking and some respect for those who prefer to go quietly and under their own power.

Thank you again for allowing me to comment.