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Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the OSV Use plan. I and others who live in the Mono Basin cross-country ski or walk in various locations throughout the basin in winter. Where we go depends upon the height of the snow pack. If there is enough snow to cover the sagebrush, then we ski in open areas. We ski without groomed trails, cutting our own trails. We ski up lower Lundy Canyon, lower Lee Vining Canyon, Parker Meadow, the north side of Mono Lake, the south side of Mono Lake, and on the way to Mono Mills. When there is little snow, we ski on the county roads.

The 2019 Inyo National Forest Land Management Plan recognizes the importance of protecting the natural resources the Mono Basin and for the same reasons, the OSV use for winter recreation should too. The proposed areas open to snowmobiles in the OSV Use Designation plan include a large portion of the Mono Basin, including the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. This will have a significant impact on wildlife in the basin, including the Bi-state Sage Grouse. The original management plan for the scenic area only designated the east side of Mono Lake as open to OSV use. In the 1980s, it may not have been known just how rich in small mammal species the east side of the lake is. Small mammals live in the dunes. Plus, snowmobiling recreation was minimal back then. Otherwise, it may have not been open to snowmobiling either.

The 2019 Inyo National Forest Land Management Plan recommends that Lee Vining Creek, Mill Creek, Parker Creek, Walker Creek and segments of Rush Creek are eligible for a Wild and Scenic River status and should be managed for those qualities in winter as well as in summer.

The Harvey Monroe Hall Natural Resource Area is a critical aquatic refuge and an area that supports the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep. The Lee Vining Creek watershed is also a Riparian Conservation Area in the 2019 forest management plan. Please consider an alternative that does not allow snowmobiles in the upper elevations of Lee Vining Creek to protect wildlife and the water quality of the many alpine lakes there and the streams that feed Lee Vining Creek. It would also be difficult to rescue anyone in distress up there.

While recreation helps us to stay healthy, mentally and physically, there are many types of recreation and options available to the public. Snowmobiling, due to its expense, is an option to a small subset of our population. It needs to be balanced with other uses of the forest, especially for ecosystem services and wildlife. The Mono Basin, Lee Vining Canyon and Lundy Canyon are home to a wide variety of animals that live there year-round: bears, mountain lions, bobcats, grey fox, coyotes, bighorn sheep, martens, weasels, mink, beaver, rabbits, squirrels and chipmunks, birds, etc. We need to think about how winter recreation will affect them. Humans have many recreational options while animals have few options for where they can live and thrive. Please consider an alternative that closes the Mono Basin and Lee Vining Canyon to snowmobiles.