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Organization:

Title:

Comments: RWA's Clearwater National Forest

I support the release of Recommended Wilderness to historic winter use. Recommended wilderness area is just that; "recommended", and not congressionally designated. It was meant to be studied for a short period of time to determine if the characteristics are there to designate it as wilderness. I don't think that should take 40 years and be at the mercy of an idealistic Forest Service administration and wilderness advocate groups that have never accessed the area in winter.

I have been snowmobiling in the HooDoo and Surveyor Cr. areas of the Great Burn since 1998. I have not encountered any winter sports users in that amount of time that were not with our group, the access for skiers, snowboarders or snowshoers is not drive up and would require a lengthy ride on a snowmobile. The snowmobile community would welcome backcountry users such as skiers, snowboarders and snowshoers, there is plenty of country for everyone. Historically snowmobilers have made up the majority user the winter user group. There have been no user conflict/social value issues in these areas.

I also have never witnessed any wildlife conflicts. Typically the only sign of wildlife may be some pine squirrel tracks or an occasional ermine hunting pine squirrels, (in 20 years I have seen only one ermine.) The deer, elk and moose winter in the lower valley floor as the snow levels in the alpine areas where we ride are typically very deep and make travel by hooved animals difficult if not impossible. No agency or study has ever shown any factual animal conflict issues.

Snowmobiles also leave no trace of activity once the snow pack melts.

It is time users and administrators come to the table in the spirit of compromise and resolve these issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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