

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/30/2024 11:37:19 AM

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Comments: This is a plea to halt efforts for cross country skiing in the Gold Creek Road area.

Located East of Missoula on post-industrial timberlands, the Gold Creek area is expressly NOT suitable for development for cross country skiing. Simply expressed, Gold Creek is NOT Pattee Canyon!

Gold Creek in Winter is:

- Unsuitable due to hazardous contour cut one-way plowed logging roads
- Includes an ecosystem struggling to recover from the harshest treatment by past forest management practices
- An important rare carnivore habitat, as well as being a Winter habitat for Wolves, Lynx, Moose, Grizzly and Black Bears, Wolverines, Mountain Lions, Bobcats, Coyote and more
- Actively managed by large-scale commercial logging operations including for wild fire hazard reduction to protect Missoula County
- Gold Creek itself has the potential for restoration as a thriving Bull Trout hatchery along with the reintroduction of Beaver populations.

For the past century, previous timber company owners of the land did not allow any type of organized cross country skiing due to the obvious legal and safety issues

With there and many more considerations, it is abundantly clear that it is foolhardy at best to invite unsuspecting families into an environment with so many potentially lethal and legal consequences.

Anyone who has grown up in Montana understands the inherent and genuine dangers of an interaction between a Moose and a dog. When you compound the danger by adding a child to the situation the risk becomes unconscionable. And a carload of children on a one-way logging road in the path of a logging truck headed downhill is an even more terrible prospect.

Clearly, Gold Creek is rife with an unacceptably high number of risks for ANY plan to develop any cross country skiing in the area. Attempts to gloss over the facts furthermore have zero regards for the negative environmental impacts to the area which include:

- abandoned garbage and dog poo becoming bear attractants
- environmentally toxic ski wax getting into riparian areas, Gold Creek and the Blackfoot River through watershed systems
- wild and unpredictable wildlife being disturbed during vulnerable overwintering period
- impossibility of any actually safe Winter parking
- treacherous road conditions being exasperated by Winter use

From yet another human health and safety perspective, Gold Creek is remote, blocked from cell phone reception and any injured person is seriously distant from prompt medical attention, again, with potentially lethal and legal consequences.

An argument is being made that climate models predict higher snowfall in the area and that interest in developing Gold Creek is high.

However, let us consider that the ONLY a voice in this discussion is from humans who can speak, write and go to meetings. Who is speaks for the environment? The forest? Who speaks for the wildlife? The Lynx? The Bull Trout? And in this case, no one appears to be speaking for our children!

The facts are undisputed. At this juncture, we have a monumental opportunity to make the correct decision to protect not only our children FROM a this area but also to protect Gold Creek FOR our children and future

generations.

Just because a few selfish and myopic guys want to ski does not make any effort to encourage cross country skiing at Gold Creek safe or anything but a truly terrible idea.