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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Ranger Neff & USFS,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Temporary Winter Shelters #65559 in the Mt Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. I am writing to oppose, particularly the proposals led by Aspire Adventure Running, Round House Touring and Baker Mountain Guides. First, however, I would like to encourage the NSFS to make a better effort for transparency and participation in the process. These proposals were originally submitted years ago; it seems there could have been ample time for community engagement. Hosting one meeting that starts during typical working hours does not invite public participation, especially considering the expansive region that recreates in the proposed area; this was a challenging meeting to participate in if you work a 9-5pm and don't live in Sedro-Woolley.

Further, the "Proposed Action" and accompanying maps shared with the public do not fully cover the proposals made by the private entities - a fact I understand only because I had the opportunity to attend the public meeting. Aspire Adventure Running's original proposal includes multiple huts in locations other than the Heliotrope location marked on the map, notably multiple huts at Artist Point and another near Grouse Creek. Understanding this, we are presented with conflicting information and someone needs to hold themselves accountable to share exactly what the public is commenting on. My comments, and I can assume many others, would vary greatly if it were clear I was commenting on four huts or eight huts. As we are lucky to know as visitors, each area is unique and should get its own unique attention and consideration. The Snowmobile Club is the only nonprofit entity that put forth a proposal, and frankly these proposals should not be looped together in one comment period for this reason. And, despite being in attendance, I was unable to find the answer to the longevity of these leases. It appears to be undefined if the leases stick with an individual or a company, what happens if those companies change hands, etc. There is much risk in the precedence this proposal could set, and I don't think ample consideration has been given to that fact by the USFS, the private entities, or the commenting public.

The private entities' proposals are presented under a huge banner of community access while their related business plans and income estimates lurk in the shadows. The business owners for the three commercial proposals were either 1) not present 2) extremely vague about the linked business plans or 3) without a plan for access for the general, recreating public. It is clear that these huts are not, indeed, for the "recreating public" but rather for a specific, paying clientele. Even Aspire's partial plan to use the huts for AIARE courses and other education decreases the supply for the public to book the huts, likely increasing the cost for those of us who were initially intrigued by the idea of getting to spend a night under shelter in the backcountry affordably. Safe backcountry travel education would ultimately increase access, yes, but we don't need these huts to do that.

As a recreational, primarily human-powered visitor to the region, I see no way that these proposals put forth by commercial entities would enhance my backcountry experience. The USFS letter suggests that these would also offer safe havens in dangerous, winter weather. May we all be so responsible as to read the forecast and adventure prepared, but it seems impossible that a privately-operated hut, stocked for clients with cookstoves and the like, would remain unlocked and waiting for a haggard skier or injured snowmobiler. The USFS is simply not prepared to maintain and support the infrastructure required to do this well. I mean parking, but I also mean the likely mess that will be created by the vagueness of the responsibility and culpability should issues arise.

Finally, it is important to consider the wildlife, particularly the wolverine, that would be affected by increased usage. Even BMG owner John Minier shared in his recent article in Adventures NW "Requiem for the Raptors" that the wildlife has been fewer and farther between since his company started making infrastructure changes to the Twin Sisters touring routes just four years ago. The dramatic changes in snowpack and temperature are

enough to seriously threaten the alpine wildlife; we don't need to further accelerate that threat.

I oppose the USFS Temporary Winter Shelters #65559.

Thank you!