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Comments: This is a comment on the Temporary Winter Shelters recreation project. Specifically I want to comment on the shelter proposed by the Baker Mountain Guides near the Twin Sisters Range.

First I want to establish that the principle on which I base my comment is that of causing no harm. The purpose of any proposal is to bring benefit to one or more groups, but that benefit should not come at the cost of harm to others.

The Twin Sisters Range has a long history of informal recreational access via the private land accessed off of the Middle Fork Nooksack road (FR 38). Indeed the Cascade Alpine Guide Volume 3, published in 1981, includes directions and a map for driving up these logging roads to the N end of Dailey Prairie, then hiking up a spur road to the same location as the proposed winter shelter. Back then the Olivine Corporation was the main user of these roads and often left the gate open. This gate is located at the bridge over the Nooksack River and to this day the Olivine Corporation still owns the bridge over the river and its quarry which is located north of North Twin.

These days the gate is most often closed. This being the case, recreational users now park at the gate, then bike or hike up the logging roads to access the Twin Sisters, in all seasons. The West Ridge of North Twin is a classic summer scrambling route, and the North Face of North Twin is well known as a winter or spring ski objective. Both of these routes are described in the Cascade Alpine Guide, though using skis as the mode of travel is a more recent development.

There is also logging interest in this private land, with Hampton Lumber being the current owner. Different logging companies have owned this land over the years and as far as I am aware there has never been conflict or property damage from recreational users passing through.

In more recent years since the ownership of the logging land passed to Hampton, the Baker Mountain Guides have taken a keen interest in the Twin Sisters range. They were able to secure a deal with Hampton giving their guides motorized access so that they can drive and snowmobile clients up the logging roads and access the Twin Sisters Range more directly. For them this offers a great venue to guide backcountry skiing and mountaineering activities, in a location that is far less crowded than, say, the Heather Meadows and Artist Point area.

This guided access has been very beneficial to the recreational user too. The "spur road" described in the Cascade Alpine Guide is now just a trail, and it is being crowded out by alders. The Baker Mountain Guides, with their motorized access, are able to more easily maintain this trail and clear brush so that it remains usable. This trail also contains many old culverts, and the guides cover these with wood at the beginning of winter so that snow is able to accumulate and make a smooth trail for skis. Before they did this, in mid-winter the culverts were often deep ditches with running streams at the bottom, and were difficult to cross with skis.

But it is not clear what the long-term intentions of the Baker Mountain Guides are. On their website where they advertise guided ski trips in the Twin Sisters (<https://www.bakermountainguides.com/adventures/twin-sisters-backcountry-skiing/>), it says:

> Best of all, roads into the Twin Sisters Range are gated, and Baker Mountain Guides has the key. Exclusive access and a snowmobile approach all but ensure that we have the entire Twin Sisters Backcountry to ourselves, all winter long.

"Exclusive access" is not true. Recreational users access this area from the gate all year long. Hampton also offers motorized permits to the general public, so anyone who is willing to pay upwards of \$300/year can have the same access as the Baker Mountain Guides. I have participated in this program and not infrequently run into Baker Mountain Guides while out skiing. Most encounters have been quite friendly but a couple of times a guide has clearly been unhappy to see me there and asked me how I got my key.

The Baker Mountain Guides also freely copy and share their access key with their guides and friends. I would say that about half of time I have encountered the Baker Mountain Guides up in the Twin Sisters, it has been guides with clients, and the other half just guides and friends out having fun. I fully support this, but I do worry that there is an attitude of the Twin Sisters being an exclusive recreation area for the Baker Mountain Guides and their friends.

In the interest of full disclosure, before the land was owned by Hampton and before the Baker Mountain Guides had their agreement, some recreational users including me would pick the lock at the gate and drive up. Since Hampton took ownership and replaced the locks, this has not been possible, though there may still be some way of forcing the gate open that I am not aware of. But with Hampton providing a motorized access program, I have been happy to pay for legitimate motorized access.

With that background in place, I can address the issue of the proposed winter shelter. I want to make it clear that I want good things for all the relevant parties. I want the Olivine Corporation, Hampton Lumber, and Baker Mountain Guides to continue to run profitable businesses and to be good stewards of the land. I think the three of them have worked out agreements of mutual benefit and that seems like a good thing.

What I worry about is harming the informal access that the recreational user has enjoyed for over 40 years. The Baker Mountain Guides desire an exclusive playground for their guides, clients, and friends. By placing a winter shelter at the gateway to the Twin Sisters, they will establish their presence in the range even more strongly. They may decide to enforce the letter of the law rather than its spirit, and make recreational users feel unwelcome.

But the truth is that the Baker Mountain Guides are benefiting from the decades of recreational access via these private roads. Starting with the Cascade Alpine Guide and continuing into the modern day with online trip reports and photos, the routes and knowledge of the terrain contributed by the recreational user are significant. And the trails into the range which the guides use were created and informally maintained, however imperfectly, by recreational users. For example, long before the Baker Mountain Guides would drive up and cut brush with power tools, I used to bike up the road with a hatchet and loppers and cut back brush by hand.

If the Baker Mountain Guides intend to challenge recreational users' presence, to intimidate or bully them into leaving, or to report their names or license plate numbers to Hampton, then I cannot support their proposal for a winter shelter. They would be in the legal right but ethical wrong to do so, and they would be cutting off the very community on which they depend. If, however, the Baker Mountain Guides are willing to publicly state that they will not challenge recreational users' presence, and will accept it without question as would one recreational user to another, then I have no problem with them pursuing plans to make more money and provide better experiences to their clients.