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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Mt. Baker District Ranger Neff,

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed Temporary Winter Shelters project on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. While I understand the desire to provide shelters and services for winter recreationists, I have serious concerns about the impacts this plan would have on existing backcountry user groups in these areas.

The backcountry zones around the proposed shelter sites are already heavily used by self-guided skiers, splitboarders, snowshoers, and others seeking a quality non-motorized recreation experience away from crowded ski areas. Allowing three commercial guiding operations to build semi-permanent structures and host overnight guests would dramatically increase the number of people in these areas. This concentrated use would degrade the natural setting and solitude that draws the existing users. Conflicts between different parties are likely to increase as well.

Furthermore, enabling expanded commercial guided use sets a concerning precedent of privatizing public lands for the profit of a few businesses. The backcountry should be open and available for all to enjoy in its natural state, not turned into a pay-to-play environment. The non-guided public would essentially be subsidizing these private operations through tax dollars while seeing the quality of their experience diminished.

I urge you to consider the negative impacts to longtime backcountry skiers, splitboarders, snowshoers and others who have enjoyed these areas responsibly for generations. Please reject this proposal or explore alternatives that avoid commercializing and diminishing public lands. These are lands that belong to all citizens, not just those wealthy enough to pay for guided experiences.

Thank you for your consideration.

- Ari