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Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the scoping letter for the proposed Temporary Winter Shelters in the MBSNF. I am a regular cross-country and backcountry skier and have used similar facilities, primarily in British Columbia. However, the current draft of the scoping letter for the three huts is inadequate to determine their merit as a suitable use for the public Forest Lands.

My greatest concern is the lack of clarity regarding public access to all four shelters. It is stated that the facilities will be "for the recreating public (both commercially guided and unguided)" but it is unclear what that really means. Will all or any of the shelters be available for unguided use or self-access by the public, or will they all be operated by private entities and not openly accessible? It is stated one shelter will be provide a free warming shelter day-use for the general public, but it is not clear which shelter that is. It is also stated that all shelters would provide safe locations for the recreating public during the winter season, but again it is unclear if that is for self-access or reserved private use? If the shelters will truly be a mix of public and private use, what portion of time/space will be allotted for public use? Overall, more details regarding access is needed before I could support the proposals.

A final concern is the larger plan (if there is one) for siting and permitting such facilities across the National Forest lands of Washington. Are these four projects under consideration just because they are first? Will the suitability of subsequent proposals for additional shelters be assessed the same way? Should we be preparing ourselves for pay-for-use shelters at every winter trailhead? There obviously needs to be some long-term, NF-wide planning for such facilities but I am not aware of such plans to date. Given that, at best these should be considered as single year pilot projects with no guarantee for repeating in subsequent years.

Regards,

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