

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/1/2024 4:46:37 PM

First name: John

Last name: Varner

Organization: Whatcom County Snowmobile Club

Title: President

Comments: Temporary Winter Shelters #65559

The Whatcom County Snowmobile Club would like to thank District Ranger Louis "Ted" Neff and the staff of Mount Baker Ranger District and Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest for engaging the public via this scoping process.

The Whatcom County Snowmobile Club is a nonprofit organization established in 1982 and has over 100 members. Club members and other snowmobilers have been riding the Glacier Cr. Rd and Canyon Cr. Rd areas since its inception. These two road systems have long been designated as motorized winter recreation areas by the USFS and the State Parks Winter Recreation Program.

The Whatcom County Snowmobile Club opposes the application from Aspire Adventure Running to install a temporary winter shelter at the Heliotrope trailhead parking area at FS Rd 39 and the application from Round Hose Touring to install a temporary winter shelter at the Anderson Watson trailhead parking area at FS Rd 1107. There are several reasons the snowmobile club opposes these shelters, including the following.

*These areas are designated for motorized winter recreation by the USFS and have been since the mid 1980's when the State Parks Winter Recreation Program started their winter grooming programs. Non-motorized users can and do use these areas rarely, but usually on a day use basis not on an overnight stay basis. Allowing commercial huts at these locations for overnight stays will promote overcrowding of these areas by different user groups resulting in conflicts which will eventually result in one of these user groups being restricted in the use of the area and that group historical has been the motorized group.

*These two Sno-Park areas already have limited parking for current users. Adding more users is only making the parking issues worse.

*The Aspire group has stated in their business plan that clients will be able to self-transport into their hut. That means there will be vehicles parked at the snow line for extended periods. What happens when a winter storm moves in while these vehicles are unattended, and the snow elevation drops down the mountain two thousand feet? These vehicles will be stuck in a couple feet or more of snow three miles up the road from the lower "new" snow level. It becomes a dangerous situation for a snowmobiler traveling the road and not expecting these vehicles sitting in the snow three miles up from where they offloaded and started riding. The groomer will also have to navigate around these vehicles making their job unnecessarily more difficult and dangerous for everyone. Anyone who has spent time regularly going up into these mountains in the winter will say that the snow levels can have quick, even overnight, extreme fluctuation.

*The groups that have proposed these commercial huts will be charging their clients a fee to use the huts which will not be open to the public. Unlike the mobile portable warming/safety huts that local snowmobile clubs put into position for the winter riding season which are never locked and always open for public use at no fee. The snowmobile clubs do not promote the use of these warming/safety huts for overnight stays but in emergency situation individuals are more than welcome to spend the night.

It is important to note that the Whatcom County Snowmobile Club does not oppose the Baker Mountain Guides application as it does not overlap with recreational snowmobiling or the motorized trail system.

Again, we would like to thank District Ranger Louis "Ted" Neff, the staff of the Mount Baker Ranger District and the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest allowing us to voice our opinion during the scoping process.

Sincerely,

John Varner

President

Whatcom County Snowmobile Club