

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/2/2024 5:39:05 AM

First name: Kathryn

Last name: Hiestand

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Greetings,

I appreciate being able to comment on proposed changes by the managers of the Flathead National Forest to winter travel management and considerations for projects in recommended wilderness.

I have spent 45 summers living on the east side of Glacier National Park and of course have explored south of the Park too. I have a great deal of admiration for the wilds of this area and the creatures that call this place home. I feel strongly that the preservation of wilderness habitat is very important for the ecological integrity of the Rocky Mountains. As the human population (sadly) keeps expanding, we have the responsibility to mitigate our impacts and to manage public lands for the perseverance of the flora and fauna that live there. From that sense, come my comments.

For the most part, I support this proposal.

I recall looking at a map a few years ago and thinking this looks fair enough.

As always, one of my biggest concerns is keeping snowmobiles out of wilderness and recommended wilderness areas. Better delineation of boundaries is a must. Education at trailheads is a must with information kiosks with BIG writing in short and simple explanations as to why one area allows snowmobiles and another does not. I would very much like to see something like this at all trailheads that are open to snowmobile travel. Such a notice might appeal to the better part of a person's ethics and concept of fairness.

"The forest service understands the desire of some people to explore winter terrain on snowmobiles and our intent is to determine where the noise and travel of snowmobiles will have the least impact on wildlife that lives on our public lands.

Likewise the Forest Service has determined where areas of critical habitat are for the survival of certain species and as such, the Forest Service has deemed those areas to be off limits to snowmobiles.

We very much appreciate that snowmobile recreationists respect the boundaries of wilderness and recommended wilderness areas. We thank you for your cooperation."

Can't hurt. Might help? Keep trying?

Beyond boundary lines that I wish would zap a snowmobiler if crossed, I am skeptical of the proposed use of motorized equipment in a recommended wilderness area. Of course a project can be accomplished more quickly than without motorization, but at some point doesn't this cross a line and set a precedent for future work in wilderness areas? Couldn't such motorized equipment be an argument from snowmobilers that they should be able to enter recommended wilderness if the Forest Service is going to make noise and have motorized impacts on an area that is off-limits to snowmobilers?

I feel that the non-motorized aspect of wilderness areas is one of THE most important guidelines for use of wilderness. I do not want to see motorization creep into wilderness areas and then become an accepted mode of use.

I'm sure I could continue writing, but I felt compelled to at least write the above.

Good luck. Your job is a balancing act and I hope you find the right position for the fulcrum of this seesaw.

Respectfully,

Kathryn Hiestand