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Comments: Please accept these comments with regard to Winter Travel Management and Recommended Wilderness #61460 project.

I support the proposed closure of recommended wilderness to motorized use and mechanized travel, as well as the proposed use of trailheads or other clear geographical features rather than recommended wilderness boundaries to demarcate changes in allowable modes of travel, as these points are more intuitive for users and easier to enforce. The proposed winter closure of the route up Puzzle Creek in the Skyland Challenge snowmobile area will limit illegal riding in the Badger-Two Medicine and protect mountain goats and other wildlife. However, the new boundary should be near the Morrison Creek bridge where the warming hut and bathrooms are located as this will be a more effective, intuitive, and enforceable boundary.

It is also important to include adaptive closure mechanisms to allow late-season snowmobile areas to close early if minimum snow depths are reached as this will protect vegetation, water, and soils, or if grizzly bear sows with cubs are out of their dens in the area. The Forest Service should conduct a finer-scale analysis of potential impacts to lynx and wolverines, as the current forest-wide scale ignores potential loss of secure foraging areas, connectivity, and denning habitat. Additionally, the Marias Pass zone of the Skyland Challenge snowmobile area all the way to the divide should not be opened without a clear plan to prevent illegal riding in the Badger-Two Medicine. The proposed forest plan amendment should state clearly that it is not acceptable for the Forest Service to use ground disturbing motorized or mechanized vehicles to conduct forest restoration work in recommended wilderness, as doing so would degrade the wilderness character that should be optimally protected.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.