

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/30/2024 1:07:59 AM

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Last name: Leentjes

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Supervisor,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the current Over the Snow Travel Vehicle Recreation management plan, which permits unrestricted access to forest service trails and roads by motorized vehicles during the winter months. This policy would effectively eliminate the grooming of trails that are vital for Nordic ski clubs and recreational skiers.

With winter temperatures consistently on the rise Nordic skiers have had to go to higher elevations for a consistent snow base as there is not enough snow in town.

As a resident of Archuleta County and an active member of the Pagosa Springs Nordic Club, I have personally witnessed the significant positive impact that well-groomed trails have on our community. Our club is responsible for grooming both the West Fork and Fall Creek trails, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Rio Grande National Forest. These trails are essential for skate skiers, who require a level and groomed surface to practice and enjoy their sport.

The presence of snowmobiles on these trails would make it impossible to maintain the necessary grooming standards for Nordic skiing. The resulting conditions would not only diminish the experience for local enthusiasts but also for the many tourists who visit our area specifically for these outdoor activities. Nordic skiing has grown into a substantial sport, attracting participants from near and far, and contributing valuable economic benefits to our community.

Therefore, I urge you to designate the West Fork and Fall Creek areas for non-motorized vehicle use only during the winter season. By doing so, you will support the continued growth and enjoyment of Nordic skiing, preserve the quality of our groomed trails, and sustain the economic benefits that this sport brings to Archuleta County.

Thank you for considering my request. I trust that the Rio Grande National Forest will recognize the importance of protecting these areas for non-motorized winter recreation.