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First name: Mariko

Last name: Tatsumoto

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom It May Concern:

OSV in backcountry Rio Grande National Forest is a very poor idea. OSVs are already allowed in a great deal of the forest. How much is enough? I have grave concerns about your current proposal to designate 74% of the Forest to OSVs. I am a downhill skier, cross-country skier, skate skier, snow shoer, and general forest lover in our winter wonderland. I have been doing all of these things in the Rio Grande NF for 28 years. I love all the animals who live in them and want them protected. Once the beautiful forests are mutilated, it is very difficult to get them back. If ever.

I have seen devastation in summer months, as well, and understand all too well the horrors that will happen if you allow this proposal to go through!

The Proposed Action is not in compliance with the Over-Snow Vehicle Rule's "closed unless designated open" framework. All alternatives developed for this EIS must designate and analyze discrete, delineated OSV areas.

Minimizing Conflict: To minimize conflicts between OSV use and other winter recreation uses (skiing, snowshoeing, etc.), the Forest Service must consider snow quality, noise impacts, air quality, and public safety. The final OSV plan should not designate high-value non-motorized recreation areas, such as Nordic ski trails and terrain around backcountry huts or adjacent to ski areas, for OSV use. Important quiet winter recreation areas on the forest include:

Wildlife Protection: To minimize impacts to wildlife, the Forest Service should follow recommendations from Colorado Parks and Wildlife pertaining to big game winter activity areas, winter wildlife areas, and riparian/wetland areas. The plan must also comply with the Southern Rockies Lynx Amendment.

Minimum Snow Depth: Support using a minimum snow depth as a means to minimize impacts to natural resources. The EIS should also analyze a deeper minimum snow depth to determine if the proposed 12" is sufficient to protect subnivean habitat, soils, and vegetation. The EIS must also consider how OSV use will affect natural resources that may not be protected by a minimum snow depth, such as water quality and trees.

Enforcement: Enforcement should be a consideration from the start of this planning process. The EIS should describe how the Rio Grande will implement and enforce the final plan. Designated OSV boundaries should follow obvious physical or topographic features like plowed roads or ridgelines.

Please do not allow this Proposed Action!

Thank you.

Mariko Tatsumoto