

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/6/2024 10:20:52 PM

First name: Steven

Last name: Earle

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposed winter travel management plan. I have several comments for your consideration.

First, I appreciate that the Lobo area is designated for non-motorized use only. This area is very popular and well used by families for sledding, by cross-country skiers, back-country skiers and snowshoers. The popularity is largely because snowmobilers are not allowed here while the south side of 160 is heavily used by snowmobiles. I have recreated in this area for all of these activities over a good number of years and hope I can continue to do so in relative peace.

I would agree that the south side of 160 should generally continue to allow snowmobile access. That said, I would like to suggest that you consider a buffer around the Wolf Creek Ski Area. I downhill ski there and there have been occasional intrusions into the area. This is a potentially huge safety issue as a skier/snowmobile collision would be very catastrophic for the skier. Also I think it would help lower noise pollution and thereby enhance the skier experience there. I suggest a half-mile buffer would help keep snowmobiles out.

One other issue in the Wolf Creek area is the SNOWTEL station near the pass. While I'm not aware of any snowmobile intrusions onto the site, I've seen tracks come right up to it. These tracks were at least partly by folks who help manage the site, but clearly not all. The information gathered at this station is important for water management so if there is some way to protect the site from unintended impact, I think this would be a good idea.

Another area that I have recreated in is the Big Meadows area. While the road into Big Meadows would clearly need to be multi-use, the area south of the road into the campground has been groomed for use by cross-country skiers. I think that designating the area south of CR-410 for non-motorized use (with an exception for ski groomers) would open up a significant area for cross-country ski and snowshoe use, especially if it was linked all the way up to the currently proposed Lobo non-motorized area. With the large amount of area north of CR-410, plus the nearby Tucker Ponds to Park Creek Road available for snowmobile use, I feel that making this area available for non-motorized use would be a good step towards resolving what is a pretty big imbalance between motorized and non-motorized areas that can be reasonably accessed in a day outing.

I do wonder why there are no areas designated for wildlife winter range. I'm afraid I am not informed about where elk or other sensitive animals like to winter on the Rio Grande side like I am on the San Juan side; however, I certainly think that having some areas set aside would be important to protect the health and well-being of herds and to protect other sensitive areas. I certainly believe this is a topic that needs to be addressed in the next phase.

I appreciate your work to date on this important project and thank you again for the opportunity to comment at this point in the process.