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Organization:

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Comments: Rio Grande National Forest

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Dear Supervisors,

We are writing to express our opposition to implementing CFR 212.81 Subpart C, specifically the provision that would involve the Rio Grande National Forest in managing Over the Snow Vehicles (OSVs). Our concern stems from the forest's historical approach to public access, which has often resulted in undue restrictions and limitations that negatively impact the community's ability to enjoy these public lands.

The Rio Grande National Forest is a valuable resource for a wide range of recreational activities, including the use of OSV's. These activities not only provide significant economic benefits to the local communities but also offer important opportunities for residents and visitors to experience and appreciate the natural beauty of the area during winter months. Roads and areas for snowmobiling have been well established, and there is no evidence of harm to underlying vegetation or wildlife caused by snowmobiles. In fact, this form of travel in the National Forest in the winter has substantially less impact compared to wild animals in the area.

However, past actions by the Rio Grande National Forest have demonstrated a tendency to limit public access rather than facilitate it. Examples include restrictive travel management plans and decisions that seem to prioritize exclusion over inclusion. Given this track record, we are deeply concerned that granting the forest additional regulatory authority over OSV's will lead to further unnecessary restrictions and diminished recreational opportunities of the public.

Additionally, it is concerning that our government has accrued unsustainable national debt. Adding more costs through additional regulatory measures is reckless and unjustifiable at this time.

Effective management of OSVs can be achieved through collaborative efforts that involve local stakeholders, recreational groups and community members who have a vested interest in maintaining access while ensuring environmental sustainability. Therefore, we urge you to reconsider the implementation of CFR 212.81 Subpart C in the Rio Grande National Forest and instead seek alternative approaches that balance access and conservation without imposing overly restrictive measures.

Thank you for considering our perspective on this important issue. I hope that any future actions will reflect a commitment to preserving public access and fostering a cooperative spirit with the communities that rely on and cherish our public lands.

Sincerely,

Ron & Cecelia Russell