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First name: Cathy

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Supervisor Kuhnel,

I am a backcountry non-motorized enthusiast who has been recreating in the Cumbres Pass/La Manga Pass area for the past 15 years. I seek a quiet non-motorized winter experience and have had numerous conflicts with snowmobiles over the years, and I ask you to address this issue. To minimize conflicts between OSV use and other winter recreation uses (skiing, snowshoeing, etc.), the Forest Service must consider how OSV use affects 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 non-motorized winter recreation zones on the Rio Grande include: Neff Mountain, Lobo Peak, the Spruce Hole Yurt area, the Pass Creek Yurt area, and the Big Meadows Reservoir Area, south of Forest Road 410.

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.

I support the 12" minimum snow depth included in the Proposed Action as a means to minimize some impacts to natural resources, but 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. The EIS should also analyze a deeper minimum snow depth in addition to the proposed 12" to determine if 12" is sufficient to protect subnivean habitat, soils, and vegetation.

Although it is just the start of the planning process, it is important to think about how this plan will be implemented and enforced once it is complete. Designated OSV areas should have logical, enforceable boundaries following obvious features like plowed roads, ridgelines, and waterways and the EIS should describe how the Forest Service will implement and enforce the final plan.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Cathy Baer