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Title:

Comments: I am a resident of Pagosa Springs and a frequent over-the-snow recreational user of both the Rio Grande and San Juan National Forests. I enjoy both backcountry skiing and snowboarding, cross country skiing, and snowmobiling. I would like to thank the Forest Service for making every effort to involve the public in the planning of this Over the Snow Management Plan.

I have reviewed the Proposed Action and have the following comments and concerns:

I would like to start by noting there is long history of mixed over-the-snow use on the Forest without significant conflict between user groups. I believe this should provide a starting point for the process as it indicates that historical use areas currently observed are working as they stand and only need to be officially defined.

I understand that this Proposed Action is only for the RG National Forest and not for San Juan. However, the maps included with the Proposed Action include designations within the San Juan National Forest, which I think creates confusion over whether the Proposed Action from RGNF applies to these areas. I strongly suggest revising the map and removing the overlays/notations from anything in the SJNF.

All this planning and the resulting designations will be ineffective at conservation of resources and elimination of user group conflict if signage and education is not executed well. Please place as much emphasis on these stages of the process as you are the planning and designation stages.

I strongly support designating areas for motorized and non-motorized over the snow travel to define the rules of the road and minimize future conflict between user groups based on current word-of-mouth restrictions or preferences. Additionally, I support limiting or restricting over-the-snow travel, either motorized or non-motorized, from known big game wintering grounds to avoid negatively impacting big game herds and health. However, I strongly disagree with restricting any motorized or non-motorized travel from areas where there is historical use and no immediate impact to big game wintering grounds.

There is one area designated as primitive just north of Summit Peak that I disagree with. I have spent much time in this zone, both in summer and winter, and have both skied and snowmobiled in that specific area that is to be designated primitive. I do not believe this is appropriate to be designated a primitive area, as the wilderness area close by is already an appropriate and known boundary.

Regarding the snow depth provision of 12 inches minimum, I support the flexibility in site-specific analysis but I disagree that this should pertain to all surfaces. Roads, specifically parts of roads with southern aspects and rock bases, can melt down to the ground in the middle of winter. An example of this is where Pass Creek (FS390) meets Park Creek (FS380) at Trail Park - even with several feet of snow next to the road, this area of the road can melt to the ground in spots in midwinter.

In the project design features, the item "to reduce impacts to Canada lynx, groomed snowmobile trails that overlap suitable lynx habitat are open and groomed from December 1 to March 31" does not specify how these areas will be classified or treated outside that timeframe. As it stands, that item is a very open-ended statement that does little to nothing to detail out the implied restrictions.

Regarding the provided maps and the colors/legend, it is unclear at this time if the area surrounding the continental divide is designated as Primitive or a Forest Boundary. Using the same colors for these two very different designations (without a dashed line for the boundary or similar) is ambiguous and I would highly

recommend adjusting this.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Proposed Action and look forward to continuing my involvement during the planning process.