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Comments: I am opposed to this plan. I have used the Department of Agriculture's US Forest Service, BLM, and NPS sites extensively for years. During this time, I view these areas as one of the primary resources the USA has that are the most accessible for all its citizens. It is a resource that I would hate to have damaged or degraded. During the COVID years, I saw what happens to public lands without supervision and the issues were considerable. I do not wish to see this happen to the Rio Grande National Forest Over Snow Travel Management Project from snowmobile overuse.

The primary guide for most public policy comes from NPS "The Development of Snowmobile Policy in Yellowstone National Park" and its evolution concerning land use. I agree with the policy that most public groups with special land use should benefit where reasonable. I question whether opening 70% of Rio Grande National Forest to snowmobilers is an appropriate use. The Proposed Action is not in compliance with the Over-Snow Vehicle Rule's "closed unless designated open" framework.

Can the Rio Grande National Forest can successfully be managed for snowmobile traffic? My concern is size and critical habitat. The US Forest sites description:

"The Rio Grande National Forest (RGNF) in south-central Colorado is 1.86 million acres (7,530 km²) in size. It's located in a forested ring around the San Luis Valley and includes the Sangre de Cristo Range, canyons, and calderas. The RGNF also has a diverse geography that includes wetlands that provide ecological services to the forest and downstream areas."

The recommendations from Colorado Parks and Wildlife on wildlife areas, and wetland areas should be adopted. The plan must also comply with the Southern Rockies Lynx Amendment.

There is "In 2023, there were 1.26 million registered snowmobiles in the United States." according to the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association. This averages to around 50,000 regional users near the RGNF. Opening more unsupervised areas to snowmobile use can cause harm to wildlife, public land, private land, and infrastructure. Is it worth the possibility of damaging the land for 50,000, when compared to "The Colorado state's ski areas had roughly 14 million skier visits for the season." (according to Colorado Public Radio)? Not all skiers or snowmobilers visiting Colorado will use the RGNF. The public comes to Colorado and the RGNF because of its unspoiled beauty. The plan does not minimize conflicts between OSV use and other winter recreation.

This plan benefits a small minority interest group versus the majority of winter activity users. It will be less costly to manage access and land use enforcement for the public by keeping the current RGNF status quo for snowmobiling.