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Comments: Thank you for taking the time to read my comments on the Rio Grande National Forest (RGNF) Winter Travel Management Plan. I have been cross-country skiing (XCC) in the backcountry and front country for many years. I treasure the few places across the forest that have groomed XCC trails.

I search out quiet places to enjoy my public lands but that has been very difficult on the RGNF where motorized over-the-snow-vehicles (OSV) have free reign currently, which does not follow the USFS's own rule of "closed until designated open", and is proposed to have over 74% of the forest designated for OSV. The ROS maps only show proposed areas to be open to OSV use outside of natural areas and wilderness areas. That feels predecisional immediately and is not equatable to non-motorized uses. The early open house included many quiet use recreationists that suggested many areas that should not be open to OSV but they were not included in the maps. The RGNF staff is fully aware where the conflict zones occur and should have proposed those areas to be for primitive, quiet recreation.

Areas that have multiple user conflicts on that RGNF that I've experienced negative interactions from OSV users and should be analyzed closely to eliminate conflict include but not limited to:

- Big Meadows Groomed XCC trails
- Rock Creek, Ivy Creek groomed XCC trails
- Lobo Peak on Wolf Creek Pass and connecting to the Big Meadows area.
- Cumbres/La Manga Pass Yurt Systems
- West San Francisco Creek Trail (critical big game winter range)

Many Forests have had designated non-motorized winter recreation areas for many years with much lower population numbers. I encourage the RGNF to explore more than one large area that is for quiet recreation. Lobo Pass to Big Meadows is a perfect area, as is the Cumbres/La Manga Pass area, to provide backcountry skiers unbroken snow from OSV's and front country using the groomed trails.

During the zoom meeting the RGNF could not address the question of the number of miles of groomed XCC trails and number of miles of OSV groomed trails. That needs to be addressed to understand the inequity of the use and how far ranging the impacts of OSV use is to people and wildlife. This would include understanding the emerging work done on noise impacts to wildlife. How noise pollution impacts people is included in a summary from the EPA website of the Clean Air Act Title IV - noise pollution, "Noise pollution adversely affects the lives of millions of people. Studies have shown that there are direct links between noise and health. Problems related to noise include stress related illnesses, high blood pressure, speech interference, hearing loss, sleep disruption, and lost productivity." I go to our public lands to get away from the world of noise that we are surrounded by 24/7.

It was also stated during the zoom meeting that in part the RGNF doesn't know the miles of groomed OSV trails because they have flexibility in their permits to groom elsewhere if there isn't enough snow. The Nordic clubs do not have that luxury in our permits to groom ski trails. To address a small portion of this inequity between user groups the RGNF should first designate the Big Meadows area for primitive use only. Skiing there can be a very unpleasant experience because of OSV users but this is our first reliable snow on this side of the Pass. The Nordic Clubs don't have the flexibility to groom elsewhere. OSV users continually destroy 100's of hours of volunteer groomers time packing and setting track. OSV users also drive all over the campground and the road behind the campground that can connect to the Lobo Pass area. Having quiet use in the area would protect the lynx around the Big Meadows area. The parking lot can not accommodate OSV users. Only a couple of trucks and trailers can completely block the parking lot from anyone else to safely park. There are many other reservoirs within the RGNF OSV users can easily reach to fish. Having quiet use at Big Meadows would give

anglers a prime location to fish because of less use.

Secondly, the Big Meadows road gate should be closed Dec 1 to motorized vehicles. Too often people are getting stuck, destroying the trail and restricting the nordic clubs from grooming. Hunting in that Hunt Mgmt Unit can be done elsewhere during the late season. Ungulates have typically moved down the mountain by that time. Thirdly, the RGNF should give all the nordic ski clubs a number of miles of trails that could potentially be developed into the future. Those miles should be accordingly reduced for the OSV users to keep trail miles within the restrictions of the Lynx plan to reduce disturbance to lynx habitat.

At the zoom meeting it was stated that the proposed action "can spread out the OSV use". That management does not support protecting wildlife or quiet recreationists.

Also at the zoom meeting it was unknown how many quiet recreationists are out there. That is understandably difficult to track but I'm sure we are grossly undercounted. As a board member with the San Juan Nordic Club our membership is about 130 people annually. We all ski multiple times a year resulting in potentially 1000's of visitor use days. And everytime I'm out on the trails there are many skiers and snowshoers that are not members. Our numbers are potentially very high but we are quiet so more people can enjoy a single area.

In summary, all high value quiet recreation areas such as nordic ski-trails and terrain around backcountry huts or ski areas should be designated primitive, non-motorized with a realistic buffer from OSV users. Please consider the snow quality, noise pollution, air quality and public safety to provide quiet recreationists and wildlife motor-free experiences on my public land.

Thank you.

Sincerely, Suzanne Beauchaine