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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am an avid cross-country skier and a member and board member of the San Juan Nordic Club (SJNC) as well as a member of the Upper Rio Grande Nordic Club (URGNC) in Creede as well as the South Fork Nordic Club (SFNC). I enjoy skiing on groomed and ungroomed trails and I utilize the trails these clubs maintain and groom as well as ski on other forest roads and forest areas all winter long.

I enjoy xc skiing for the physical exercise, the fresh air and sunshine and for wildlife tracking, and observation of wildlife, especially birds.

I request that the USFS allow roads that are groomed for skiing to be closed and gated annually on Dec 1st to reduce the destruction of surfaces for skiing. Specific roads that come to mind are: the road to the Rock Creek ski area SW of Monte Vista, the road to Big Meadows, the Ivy/Lime Ck road that the URGNC grooms for skiing. When these roads are not closed and a wheeled or tracked vehicle uses the road they ruin it for skiing conditions both groomed and ungroomed. When there is enough snow to ski but not quite enough snow to groom vehicle traffic ruins these ski conditions. When the surface has been groomed and then driven on by a wheeled or tracked vehicle, the groomed surface is ruined and the time, energy and resources committed to grooming by Nordic club volunteers are wasted. I have specifically mentioned 3 roads for closure but I also request that any areas that are designated for xc skiing are also clearly marked as closed and physically close to vehicles.

As a wildlife biologist I am concerned about the effects of increased winter recreation on wildlife. Winter is a vulnerable time for wildlife and the stress of human disturbance can negatively affect the health and well-being of wildlife. All human disturbance is problematic. To protect wildlife and the forest health I urge the USFS to use a closed unless open policy instead of open unless closed policy for winter travel.

I request that the USFS more equitably designate the # trails and # miles designated for motorized and non-motorized winter travel. The motorized community benefits immensely from the subsidies of vehicle permitting. The non-motorized users do not have funding available to them to support their activities and must rely on volunteer efforts, donations and grant funding to support club operations including preparing trails for skiing. I believe the numbers of people who participate in non-motorized winter travel equal or exceed motorized users so I believe the disparity between acres available or roads or trails should be equalized.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I urge you to prioritize equity in trail availability between users groups, close roads to minimize conflict between user groups, and prioritize wildlife and their habitat when designating areas open to winter recreation of all types.

Sincerely,

Jenny Nehring