

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 7/31/2026 2:46:23 PM

First name: Nathanael

Last name: Ward

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing in support of Alternative 3 for the Rio Grande National Forest Over-Snow Travel Management Project.

I have lived in Pagosa Springs for many years and recreate throughout the Rio Grande National Forest as both a snowmobiler and a backcountry skier. My family and I regularly spend winter days in areas like Tucker Ponds, Elwood, and above Big Meadows. Some of our favorite family memories have been made exploring these mountains together. Because I enjoy both motorized and non-motorized recreation, I don't see this as an "us versus them" issue. I care deeply about protecting wildlife and preserving the character of our public lands while also ensuring they remain accessible for responsible recreation.

From my experience, Alternative 3 provides the best balance.

I've consistently found that snowmobilers, backcountry skiers, snowshoers, and other winter users are generally able to share these landscapes respectfully. While conflicts can occur anywhere people recreate, they have been the exception rather than the rule. I believe management decisions should be based on sound science and site-specific data, with restrictions focused where they are truly needed rather than broad closures that unnecessarily limit access.

Winter recreation is an important part of life in southwest Colorado. It supports local businesses, strengthens our communities, and gives families like mine opportunities to enjoy the outdoors together. Snowmobiling also provides access to terrain that would otherwise be inaccessible, allowing us to experience more of the Rio Grande National Forest and, in many cases, serving as a practical tool for accessing backcountry ski objectives.

I appreciate the Forest Service's commitment to conserving wildlife habitat and the long-term health of the forest. I believe Alternative 3 best reflects that commitment while preserving meaningful opportunities for responsible winter recreation. It represents a thoughtful balance between conservation and public access.

Thank you for considering my comments and for your stewardship of the Rio Grande National Forest.

Sincerely,

Nathanael Ward
Pagosa Springs, Colorado