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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Stanislaus OSV Designation

Please review my comments contained in my attachment. I look forward to hearing your response.

Howard D. Aitchison

Comment on DEIS

I'd like to comment on the DEIS and NEPA process to designate trails and areas for OSV use.

I am concerned with the SNF closing hundreds of thousands of acres to snowmobile use. The SNF need only designate routes and specific routes available to grooming. They also need to create a new designation that allows "winter time motorized use". Snowmobiles don't require roads or trails and have no effect on the permanent landscape. Minimum snow depth is an ambiguous and unnecessary measurement. We can't ride in dirt. I support Alternative 2 with additional designations for OSV routes and grooming.

My family has owned a cabin in Bear Valley since 1967. We use our snowmobiles for transportation from the village to our cabin and around the subdivision. We also use the trail from the village along the Hwy 4 corridor to Lake Alpine, to Highland Lakes and as far as Wolfe Creek. I've also taken the Hermit Valley trail to Blue Lakes. The only legal trail to and from this area.

I believe the entire Pacific Valley to Highland Lakes Road area should be designated open to cross-country OSV use, as it was in the proposed action in 2015. There are well-defined ridges that define the wilderness boundary. We need Lookout Mountain and the surrounding area open. Also, the bowls from Bull Run to Henry Peak to the Wilderness boundary by Peep Sight Peak should be open. This area offers the only true "big mountain riding" and skiing off of the Hwy 4 corridor.

In the Spring, many of us ride from Bloods Ridge to Corral Hollow, Beartrap Basin and Cabbage Patch. As stated in Proposal (Alt 5) closing the north ends of Jelmini and Beartrap Basins is not realistic. The slopes leading from this area are extremely steep and offer a natural wilderness boundary. The entire North Hwy 4 area should be managed as presented in Alt 4 and Cabbage Patch/Mattley Ridge area should be designated as demonstrated also in Alt 4.

We've had a long-standing tradition of snowmobiles gathering at the Bear Valley Ski resort once the ski season closes. We get together with neighbors and friends to picnic and ride the hill after the ski area closes. I'd like the SNF to designate this as a seasonal use area so we may continue this long-standing tradition.

My friends and I have ridden from the Spicer staging area off Hwy 4 to Spicer, Utica and Union Reservoirs and surrounding area. I'd like to explore the area west of Whittakers Dardanells which provides an endless network of roads and meadows that sit above 7k elevation and provides great low consequence riding in high avalanche conditions. This area is accessed from a small bridge under Spicer Meadows Reservoir and from FS52/5N14 out of Dornington. This area is labeled as South Hwy 4 on the maps and needs to be designated open as it appears in Alt 4.

As a member of the Bear Valley Area Snowmobile Riders, we conduct ourselves with the utmost respect for cross-country skiers, snowshoe and hikers as well as other OSVs. I have never witnessed any type of

conflict or incident between non-motorized and OSV. I've personally helped people who have gotten lost or needed a ride due to fatigue. We're not out there tearing up everything. We love and appreciate our natural resources.

Everyone is entitled to access to a quiet recreation. My wife and I enjoy the solitude and serenity snowmobiles provide when you get out away from other people. Both Mokelumne and Carson-Iceberg Wilderness offer access to quiet for non-motorized recreation within only a few miles from multiple parking areas. Modern machines are quieter and cleaner running.

My wife, friends and I would like the opportunity to explore other areas (Hwy 108) that are open now but are being proposed for closure. (Alt 5) presents a guessing game for the users and USFS on boundaries designated as Hwy 108 area. I would like the entire area designated open from the east side of 108 by Strawberry, all the way to Dardanelle and Kennedy Meadow south of 108, to the northern Emigrant Wilderness Boundary. This would present a clear boundary.

We're not just trail riders. We would like the Herring Creek Loop area designated as open, not just the road, as well as, Willow Meadow, Hammil Canyon and the surrounding area. Alt 5 designates ZERO high alpine, big mountain terrain for snowmobile use within the Stanislaus. We need Eagle meadows area open because Sonora Pass isn't always reachable from Hwy 108 Snopark. The Waterhouse lake, to Cooper Castle Rock to the Three Chimneys offers an obvious ridge that defines the wilderness boundary. We're not just meadow riders either. Alt 5 only designates the Long Valley lowlands open to OSV. Opening the slopes around Long Valley and use the ridge up to the Three Chimneys and the ridge overlooking Relief Reservoir as logical boundaries.

Both sides along Eagle Creek from 108 are currently in use and need to be designated as open for OSV use.

Grooming the route on Hwy 108 from Kennedy Meadows to Sonora Pass to ride the Bridgeport Winter Recreation area would help access this area and reduce impact of use on the rest of Hwy 108 riding areas. Alt 5 also designates the area just west of Sonora Pass as closed on April 15. This small meadow and hillsides are the only places to ride late in the season. By removing the closing date on the pass, plenty of snowmobilers will drive up to use this zone.

It is my hope that these carefully suggested alternatives will help to balance the use for both OSV and non-motorized users. Using the obvious natural boundaries to the wilderness area will help take the guesswork out for the SNFS, OSV and non-motorized users.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my comments. I look forward to your response.

Howard D. Aitchison