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Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit OSV Plan Scoping Background and Comment Tips

Use of 'conflict' to close OSV areas

As in the other Forests, the LTBMU is using conflict reports from non-motorized users to close an important area to snowmobilers. The Forest needs to concretely define real conflict, and realize that one user group simply complaining about another is not justification for removing that user group. That's at least partially on the Forest for not adequately informing non-motorized users that they are entering a motorized area. Tell the forest they need to better inform users of what they can expect in motorized areas. Tell the Forest that they should create a user map showing human powered users where they can go for a non-motorized experience. Let them know that simply closing an area is short-sighted, and unfair to a legitimate user group.

OSV Season

The LTBMU is proposing to only allow snowmobile use in the basin from November 1 to April 15. As part of the Travel Management rule, the Forest has to *consider* dates of use. There's nothing in the rule that says they have to implement hard dates. With the winters of 2017 and 2019 fresh in everyone's mind, we're not sure how this makes sense. Let the LTBMU know this is not acceptable. We were safely riding on tens of feet of snow, well through May and into June this year at higher elevations, all with no damage to resources whatsoever. Winters in Tahoe sometimes hit hard and they hit late. Tell the forest their plan needs to reflect this. Neither wildlife, nor snowstorms use a calendar for their activities. Tell the Forest that using adequate snow cover to define the season makes far more sense in this area.

Blackwood Canyon/Barker Pass

The LTBMU is proposing closing the ridge north of Barker Pass for 3 key reasons:

- The Pacific Crest Trail
- It's near a Wilderness Boundary
- It's in an inventoried roadless area

None of these mandate that this ridge be closed to snowmobile use. In fact there are many provisions that specifically state that buffer zones are not provided for in the Wilderness Act. The Pacific Crest Trail is a designated non-motorized trail but no one is using it, and good luck even finding it. If skiers or snowshoers want a non-motorized experience, there is virtually no snowmobile traffic in the adjacent Ward Canyon from Twin Peaks to Stanford Rock, and the entire nearby Sugarpine Point State Park is non-motorized. Going to Blackwood Canyon for a non-motorized experience, the only public staging area available for snowmobile access on the west shore makes no sense. The stretch between Barker Pass and the Rubicon Trail is the **ONLY PLACE** from Interstate 80 to Hwy 4 where OSV users can legally access the Sierra Crest if the OSV plan from the nearby Tahoe National Forest goes into effect. Echo Summit and Carson Pass are already all closed. This ridge provides a unique experience for OSV users and

sled skiers especially. Send them pictures if you have them. Tell them about the views from this ridge and how truly unique they are. They can implement one designated crossing on the PCT and comply with the law. Let them know this.

Hell Hole

This area is proposed as a closure to protect a small population or an individual Sierra Nevada Yellow-Legged Frog. These amphibians hibernate all winter underground or under lakes and are nowhere near the snow surface where snowmobiling happens. Tell the Forest a complete season long closure of this area makes no sense. They specifically did not recommend the area for Wilderness Designation in their forest plan just three years ago. Now, because of the frog, they want to go back on that.

Chickadee Ridge

Although not the most popular area for any user group in the Mt Rose area, this location offers something Relay Ridge doesn't: safe avalanche free tree riding terrain on storm days. Skiers and snowshoers currently have the entire Incline Lake property, the Galena Creek drainage and everything else east of the pass for this if they don't want to be around sleds. We have nothing else. The alternating days proposal doesn't work for mountain bikes and it won't work well for snowmobiles. Tell the LTBMU that checking the calendar every time you are able to go snowmobiling is an unnecessary added burden that only complicates recreation.

Freel/Jobs Sister

The LTBMU specifically did not designate this Inventoried Roadless Area as recommended for Wilderness in their Forest Plan in 2016. They stated this was primarily for two reasons: popular mountain bike trails and the popular Hellhole snowmobiling area. Now they want to remove OSV use from Hell Hole 3 years later. If the LTBMU wants to take away what they acknowledge is a popular snowmobile destination, they need to do more than just close areas. The south side of Freel Peak is open to snowmobiles on the Humboldt-Toiyabe Forest. These peaks are so remote, there's virtually no skier traffic, and most of it midwinter is from snowmobile access from the south. Tell the LTBMU to add something meaningful to the available OSV terrain in the basin. Tell them to look at opening Freel Peak and Jobs Sister to snowmobiles.

Incline Lake

The Forest is proposing to open the area around the Incline Lake Property to Snowmobiles. This makes sense from the existing parking pullout, but it is a tiny exchange for losing half of the season on Chickadee Ridge. Without Chickadee Ridge on storm days, there's almost nowhere safe to ride on storm days.

Subtracted OSV lands are all above 8k

The Forest is presenting their proposal as a change from only 51% open to snowmobiles to 49%. But the Forest Service only manages 78% of the basin, with most of the remainder being state land between both Nevada and California. All of the state parks are open to non-motorized use in the winter, but not motorized. So it's really a change of around 39-41% open to snowmobiles in the basin. So with the majority of area in the basin already closed losing more really matters. Of the 'added' acreage, only the small Incline Lake property is above 8k elevation. Everything else is around 7k and below, meaning what's being lost is far more significant than what's being proposed as new openings.

Glenbrook

We're still not sure why this area was added, perhaps just to balance out the numbers. But it's low elevation, faces predominantly southwest, on the east side of the lake, and receives a fraction of the snow of the areas being proposed for closure.

Tahoe Vista Grooming

This area has been groomed by a resident of the neighborhood for ALL users for years. We're glad to see the LTBMU recognize that local community appreciates this. Tell the LTBMU you appreciate this being groomed and available for ALL users, not just one specific user group.

Provision for Plowing

Part of this plan provides for allowing for community groups (like us, like the Tahoe Backcountry Alliance etc) to provide plowing on FS parking lots. Tell the forest you support this. The more parking access to non-motorized recreation there is, the less pressure we have on our ever dwindling riding areas.

Ground Truthing Use Patterns

There's some logic in some of these proposals. In others (like north of Barker Pass), there's not much supported by reality. Ask the Forest to better observe conditions on the ground in places like like the PCT location north of Barker Pass. Ask them to take a tally of how many hikers they see on the trail midwinter.

YOUR STORY

This is the most important part, and why scoping matters. Tell the forest where you ride, where you ski or snowboard, how you get there. Tell them what you'd like to see OPENED to snowmobiles. The above are just suggestions and some background. Your usage matters the most. Send pictures of yourself in the locations you want to see remain open. Tell the forest where you ride with your family and friends. Be specific. Areas to ask the Forest to consider opening:

- Freel Peak
- Part of the Dardanelles Drainage
- Any other non-wilderness area you've looked at for years and wondered why it was closed

Submit your comments here:

<https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public//CommentInput?Project=47342>

Questions for the Forest can be directed at the Project leader, Ashley Sibr:

ashley.sibr@usda.gov

Just keep in mind that's only for questions. Comments must be submitted at the above link
And as always, feel free to reach out to us on social media or through email:

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kwbazar@gmail.com

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