

*We are human power in action.
We promote wilderness values.
We preserve and protect our public lands.*



Winter Travel Management

In response to years of advocacy by Snowlands Network, six national forests in California are currently reviewing their winter motorized travel restrictions. As of May 24, Lassen, Tahoe and Eldorado national forests have formally commenced their reviews. Snowlands Network has submitted to each of them a comprehensive proposal, including new non-motorized recreation areas. Detailed information with regard to each of these proposals is published on our website at

www.snowlands.org/wtm

Plumas and Stanislaus National Forests will begin winter travel management planning shortly, and Snowlands Network will submit detailed proposals for these forests as well. Pursuant to a settlement

agreement, these five national forests are required to give detailed consideration to the Snowlands Network proposals. Although our focus is recreation opportunity, we have worked with environmental organizations in developing our proposals and have urged the national forest units to fully protect wildlife, ecosystems, and air and water quality in this process.

Public participation in this process is critical. Government agencies are responsive to public concerns as well as environmental science. If the agencies receive disproportionate feedback from groups that oppose restrictions on motorized recreation, the result will not accurately reflect public concerns.

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Upcoming Events

Banff Mountain Film Festival Radical Reels Tour

September 20

Atlantis Casino Resort Spa, Reno, NV.

September 24

California Theatre, Berkeley, CA

September 25

Mayer Theatre, Santa Clara University

Tickets on sale August 1!
www.snowlands.org

Banff Radical Reels Tour Coming to Reno

Snowlands Network is bringing the Banff Mountain Film Festival Radical Reels Tour to Reno, Nevada in September 2015. This new venue is in addition to the Berkeley and Santa Clara areas where we have hosted this exciting event in past years.

The Radical Reels Tour is an evening of the best high-adrenaline films from the Banff Mountain Film Festival. It's a night of jaw-dropping bike jumps, nail-biting kayak drops, and mind-blowing powder.

Last year both the Berkeley and Los Altos (now Santa Clara) venues sold out. Tickets go on sale August 1 for the September 20 (Reno), September 24 (Berkeley) and September 25 (Santa Clara) shows. Mark your calendar to buy tickets early or risk missing a great experience. Visit

www.snowlands.org/events

for additional information, including film list.



From the film Unrideables: Alaska Range © Scott Serfas - Red Bull

Chairman's Corner By Bob Rowen, Chairman

In advocating for Snowlands Network for the last five years, I have had many discussions with fellow skiers, snowboarders, snowshoers, land managers, and motorized users. Of course, I always enjoy discussions with fellow non-motorized enthusiasts. I have also enjoyed my discussions with land managers, who have to make and defend tough decisions, and with many motorized users.

We, the skiers (et al.), do share many common likes with motorized users. We both appreciate an active outdoor lifestyle and the incredible recreation opportunities found in America. I understand when a motorized user resists restrictions because of his or her own personal desire; there is nothing wrong with defending one's self-interest. It is up to the responsible land manager to decide what is the best result for the common good, as well as future generations, and the environment.

What I find most distressing is when individuals oppose government restrictions through ignorance. I refer to those who oppose government restrictions as generally unnecessary or as un-American. These individuals reveal a depressing lack of knowledge of both recent history and American tradition.

I (as well as many of these individuals) am old enough to have known what our world was like before the government began serious regulation of environmental impacts in the 1960's. I know what the air was like in Los Angeles before government restrictions on car emissions. I know what the water was like in our eastern rivers before government restrictions on discharge of waste. I know how rare bald eagles and other species were before government restrictions on pesticides. I have seen in my life how government restrictions can and have vastly improved our air and water quality and protected many species. Clearly, there is more that needs to be done in many areas, and there are new areas of concern, but the point is that government restrictions have vastly improved our lives, including the lives of those who resist them.

America was founded in the pursuit of liberty. But America

was also founded on recognition that government is necessary, beginning with the Mayflower compact. Even before the colonies revolted from King George, they began creating the governments that would replace the British Parliament. Men like Thomas Jefferson and George Washington may be most popularly remembered through their acts of defiance, but they made equal contributions in their creation of a new government of laws that bind everyone for the greater good. America was also founded in the pursuit of good government.

Unfortunately, radicals who oppose the most basic government restrictions – individuals who claim “sovereign rights” but are really anarchists – have deeply injected themselves into the land management process through acts of violence. This brand of home-grown American terrorism has exerted a hugely disproportionate impact on our land management agencies, forcing them to focus on their own security and making it even more difficult for these agencies to fulfill their job responsibilities, especially at a time of increased budgetary pressure. I hope that we, Snowlands Network, can work together with motorized user groups to combat this influence.

I wish we lived in a world where restrictions were unnecessary; where humans as a group did not have the impact on their environment that is now unavoidable. Were the world population today the same as it was in 1776, we simply would not have the need for many of the restrictions that today are necessary.

Today we face many issues with the democratic process, and there are many ways in which government can be improved. But we should never forget that it is our government, and government is necessary, and that government laws and restrictions generally make our world much safer, healthier, and better. We at Snowlands Network look forward to continuing to work with our land management agencies to make their laws and restrictions work better for We, the People.

Backcountry Experience Reports By Jeff Erdoes & Marcus Libkind

The last four winters in the central and northern Sierra have been famously deficient of snow; this past winter being the most extreme. This was the backdrop for blatant, environmentally-damaging over-the-snow vehicle (OSV) use on the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (HTNF) this past winter.

Both the LTBMU and HTNF failed to close OSV access when conditions were plainly unsuitable. Instead they posted low snow “warnings” that, without enforcement, allowed OSV motorists to travel at their own discretion. The lack of assertiveness by the Forest Service resulted in Snowlands Network receiving 18 Backcountry Experience Reports, a significant number for such a low snow season, of which 50% reported impacts due to the use of OSVs in areas with insufficient snow-cover.

Other comments were: 61% reported OSV trespass into Wilderness and other areas designated closed to motorized use, 50% reported unreasonably OSV-rutted snowscapes, 44% reported excessive OSV noise or exhaust, and 17% reported trespass on the Pacific Crest Trail. Reports covered the LTBMU, Humboldt-Toiyabe, Tahoe and Eldorado national forests. All reports were forwarded to the Forest Service.

The Backcountry Experience Reporting project administered by Snowlands Network is a voluntary, easy-to-use online system whereby non-motorized forest visitors can report problems on the ground. Snowlands verifies all reports, sends them to the appropriate agency(ies), and archives the data.

It's easy to become a contributor to the project. Visit www.snowlands.org/report.

Winter Travel Management (continued)

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Snowlands Network keeps you apprised through emails, our website, and our Facebook page of the timeliest opportunities to submit your opinions. Please stay connected to us through at least one of these methods.

A sixth forest, the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, which manages lands in the Lake Tahoe basin, is also starting a formal review of its winter travel management, though not on the same track as the other five. At the urging of the LTBMU, Snowlands has engaged for the last three years in a collaborative effort to improve winter recreation in the Tahoe basin. This effort included representatives of the California Nevada Snowmobile Association and other motorized users and groups. Although we have had some success in collaborative discussions with snowmobile groups, this particular effort ended with no tangible agreements.

None of the representatives of motorized recreation were

willing to agree to any increased restrictions in the basin in any area. We had specifically asked (among other requests) for closure to motorized vehicles of a snowplay area popular with families and children and for closure of a ridgeline area that sees a concentration of hundreds of non-motorized users on popular weekends. Even these changes were unacceptable.

With these six forests engaging in a formal review of restrictions on winter motorized travel, this is a critical time for Snowlands Network's advocacy. Your continued support is critical to obtaining significant improvements in non-motorized winter recreation opportunity. Although several of these forests already have some snowmobile restrictions, the restrictions do not provide a fair balance of recreational opportunity or adequately protect forest ecosystems due to increased population, changing demographics, and more powerful snowmobiles.

Pacific Crest Trail **By Jim Gibson**

The Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) runs for 2,560 miles between the Canadian and Mexican borders. Little-used in the winter, the PCT now poses a management problem for the Forest Service in designating where over-the-snow vehicle use will be allowed.

The PCT was designated as a National Scenic Trail in 1968. The route for the PCT was selected in 1973. Overall responsibility for management of the PCT was given to the Forest Service, with coordination with the Department of Interior's Park Service and Bureau of Land Management and state and local agencies. A PCT Comprehensive Management Plan was published in 1982.

Winter Use

Although some winter use does occur on the PCT, most skiers would be hard-pressed to locate the trail in the winter. The trail crosses major winter highways at Donner Pass, Echo Summit, and Carson Pass, and crosses Highway 49 just east of Sierra City. Winter use of the PCT was publicized this last season when the first winter through-hike was completed by Justin Lichter and Shawn Forry. Starting at the northern terminus on October 21, 2014, they arrived at the southern terminus at Campo, CA, on March 1, 2015.

Motor Vehicle Restrictions

The 1968 legislation states "*The use of motorized vehicles by the general public along any national scenic trail shall be prohibited ...*" The 1982 PCT Plan further states: "*Snowmobiling along the trail is prohibited ...*" and "*... any motorized use of adjacent land should be zoned to mitigate the noise of conflict.*"

Forest Service Management

Because of lawsuits by Snowlands Network and Winter Wildlands Alliance, the Forest Service is doing Over-the-snow Vehicle Use Designation analysis in five forests in California (see the article on Page 1 of this newsletter). By law and regulation, the Forest Service is required to manage the PCT as nonmotorized, except

for designated crossings and small sections where the trail is co-located on a road or motorized trail. Four of the forests contain significant sections of the PCT.

The Lassen NF published a Notice of Intent on January 14, including a Proposed Action that listed 106 miles of the PCT "where OSV use would be prohibited..." No designated crossings were identified.

Tahoe NF published their NOI on February 20. The Proposed Action recommended designation of two OSV crossings of the 105-mile section of the PCT, as well as two sections where the PCT is located on roads used as OSV trails in the winter. The mention of the PCT in Tahoe's Proposed Action ignited a firestorm of controversy in the meetings held by Tahoe NF about the plan.

Eldorado NF published its NOI on February 26. Eldorado contains 26 miles of the PCT in non-wilderness areas, including 7 miles at Forestdale Divide. No OSV crossings were designated in the Proposed Action.

Plumas NF, with about 80 miles of the PCT, has not yet published its NOI. For the most part, the PCT avoids the Stanislaus NF altogether.

In the past, the Forest Service has mostly ignored the presence of the PCT in their winter recreation plans. It is difficult for motorized and non-motorized recreationist alike to tell when they are traveling on the PCT in the winter. Also, the meaning of "along the trail" is vague, and there are no guidelines as to how close motorized vehicles may approach the trail, except for the guidelines on mitigating noise. Nevertheless, the prohibition of motor vehicles on any National Scenic Trail is absolute and deserves the same level of respect as the prohibition against vehicles in a National Wilderness. This is a fact with which the Forest Service will have to contend in the coming years as the OSV Use Designation proceeds.

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Mission

We promote opportunities for quality human-powered winter recreation and protect winter wildlands. We educate the public and government agencies about winter recreation and environmental issues.

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