

SNOWLANDS

Bulletin

Promoting opportunities for quality, human-powered winter recreation and protecting winter wildlands

Inaugural Issue of Snowlands Bulletin Reports Major Success Story

What is the sound of success?

When it comes to backcountry skiing and snowshoeing, it can be the sounds of silence. Such is the case at Tahoe Meadows, located near the Mount Rose Summit between Lake Tahoe and Reno, Nevada. Tahoe Meadows, or Sheep Flat as known to long time residents of the area, will have the sound of success this coming winter season. District Ranger Gary Schiff announced the decision to close a large portion of this popular cross-country ski area to snowmobile use. The change will take place this winter, and comes after two years of efforts by local advocates of human-powered winter recreation.

Why is this a success? This beautiful and accessible four-square mile area is the destination of over 1000 skiers on a beautiful winter day. In this relatively crowded area, snowmobiles were driving in excess of 60 mph near skiers, children on sleds and dogs — all pedestrian users at the “Meadows.” Snowmobiles had also been running over areas barren of snow, destroying grass and plant life. The closing of approximately 80 percent of this area to snowmobiles will allow self-propelled snow players the opportunity to enjoy their recreation safely and peacefully. This opportunity had been destroyed when snowmobiles operated uncontrolled in this small area.

Why didn't the Forest Service control the abuses of the snowmobilers? Like many agencies, the Carson Ranger District does not have the resources to protect sensitive areas from snowmobiles and to enforce regulations governing snowmobile use. Four tickets were issued by the Forest Service over the last two winters to snowmobilers. However the abuses and violations by the users of these machines were continuous, documented weekly through the winter season by local ski advocates.

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Snowlands' Survey To Measure Conflict In Brockway Summit Area

There are those who say that there is no conflict between motorized and non-motorized winter users on the Mt. Watson Road at Brockway Summit. And their claim would be supported if you asked most anyone there including the few skiers that continue to use the area.

However, the untold part of the story is that the reason there is no conflict is that anyone who has had a problem with the conflict has been “driven” away by the snowmobile use that has reached approximately 9,000 user days per year. That is the claim of Snowlands Network and other human-powered winter recreation user groups.

The issue of unreported conflict is critical at this point in time because the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit of the Forest Service is in the process of developing the North Shore Snowmobile Environmental Assessment (EA) that is supposed to analyze commercial snowmobiling and snowmobile trail grooming in the area from Brockway Summit to Tahoe City, including their effect on other forest users. The commercial use and the grooming are closely related because the commercial use accounts for 85 percent of the snowmobile use in the area, and the commercial use relies on the trail grooming.

Snowlands Network and other human-powered winter recreation user groups believe that the steady increase in snowmobile use in the Brockway Summit area has resulted in a steady decline of skiers and snowshoers who would otherwise use the area. On the flip side, the California State Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division (OHMVRD), which pays for most of the trail grooming, claims that skiers like to use the groomed snowmobile trails; in particular, skaters use them early in the morning immediately after they are groomed (which is not every day). The Forest Service has

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Dick Simpson Receives Award From Senator Costa

There is one thing that has stayed unchanged ever since the original SnoPark legislation was passed in 1984 – Dick Simpson has been an active member of the SnoPark Advisory Committee. On October 5, at the final meeting of the committee, Jane Leonard Brown on behalf of Senator Jim Costa presented Dick a well-deserved certificate of appreciation for his continuous and helpful service to the program. Dick has also acted as secretary for the committee since its inception.

The SnoPark Advisory Committee was a non-mandated committee whose purpose was to act as a sounding board for SnoPark managers as to how proposed projects were viewed by recreation user groups and state agencies such as Caltrans and the Highway Patrol.

This was the last meeting of the SnoPark Advisory Committee because new SnoPark legislation (see article on page 3) signed into law and effective January 1, 2002 mandates that the director of the Department of Parks and Recreation appoint a Winter Recreation Committee to advise on issues related to SnoParks and winter recreation in general.

Dick deserves the thanks of all of us not only for his dedication to the SnoPark Advisory Committee, but espe-

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The mission of Snowlands Network is to promote opportunities for quality, human-powered winter recreation and protect winter wildlands through education of the public and government agencies about winter environmental and recreation issues.

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Snowlands Network

P.O. Box 230
Livermore, CA 94551
E-mail: info@snowlands.org
Website: www.snowlands.org

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For Love of the Wild

Vandalizing the Soundscapes

For too many of us, everyday life is frequently bombarded with raw, ugly noise. Sure, many claim that they are able to “block it out,” but they too are adversely affected by the roar of poorly muffled engines, airplanes, almost constant construction and heavy equipment somewhere nearby, or our neighbors rudely or desperately trying to drown out unwanted noise by cranking up their stereos or radios.

Think of the magical experience of hearing only the breeze whisper through the trees, the subtle song of first one bird species and as one focuses his magnificent hearing ability...the music of myriad species. There might be the sound of moving water, clicking insects or chirping frogs woven into the symphony of natural auditory beauty.

The noise and the desire to find a quieter, more tranquil setting drives me, and I suspect many of you, in search of wilderness-like landscapes. But for me contemplation of a more serene environment is emotional for at least two reasons. The first is that I realize how hard it has become to experience extended periods of quiet in our part of the world. The second reason I am sadly moved is the realization of how difficult it will be for us to restore peace for a powerful technological juggernaut is enveloping the biosphere and it abhors the idea that the noise it creates is pollution. Such an acknowledgement would spell lost profits after all! Nowhere is it more obviously prevalent than in the embodiment of motor vehicles that tame our national forests and other public lands where we venture for escape.

We need to restore the beauty of the soundscapes in our hometowns and on our public lands, for the sake of our mental and physical health and for the quality of life, which rises from being surrounded by things and conditions beautiful. The pace of our lives is being quickened by the noise of machines, and the disease of anxiety, which pervades our culture, can be traced at least in part to the raw, ugly noise pollution that is externalized by our technologies.

It is wise, it is possible, and it is your and my duty to us and to all who come in our footsteps to change the rules of behavior and marketing. We have the power to proclaim that “if you can’t make it quiet...you can’t make it” is the rule for all consumer machinery. The ethical foundation for all humans is the same... “What I do for me is not ethical if it results in undue harm to others, the land or the future”. When we work on restoring peace in our local and recreational soundscapes, we’ll be working on peace for the living planet at the same time.

Robert Burke

Continued from top of previous column

cially for his early support that helped make SnoPark a reality. Thank you for your time and efforts on behalf of the winter recreation community.

SnoPark Legislation Good for Non-Motorized Recreation

Senate Bill SB 477 that Governor Gray Davis signed in September contains a few words that may result in a portion of the \$380,000 SnoPark account balance being used for non-motorized recreation projects and not just for SnoParks. Senator Jim Costa, who sponsored the original SnoPark legislation in 1984, also sponsored the new legislation, which focuses on facilitating and enhancing the program by authorizing SnoPark managers to enter into long-range agreements for the utilization of private and public lands for the program. In addition, managers will have more flexibility for contracting for services such as snow removal, signing, etc. and are permitted to spend funds to inform and educate the public about the program.

But the legislation also allows funds in the program to be spent on "facilities designed to promote the safety and well-being of persons engaged in winter recreation." Based on this wording, the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division (OHMVRD), which manages the SnoPark program, has expressed their desire to spend a portion of the program's fund balance on non-motorized projects that can be off-site with respect to actual SnoParks.

This decision to support non-motorized winter recreation projects is the result of a great deal of work by Board Members Jim Gibson and Marcus Libkind to persuade the OHMVRD to work toward a better balance between motorized and non-motorized winter recreation opportunities.

Some of the ideas that are being considered for funding include the Van Vleck emergency shelter (which when constructed will allow the Van Vleck Bunkhouse to be open for winter use), a ski hut or yurt on Huckleberry Ridge to the south and above Echo Summit, and a SnoPark at the intersection of Foster Meadow Road and Highway 88 which will provide access for skiers and snowshoers. Please contact Snowlands Network if you have additional ideas.

The SnoPark legislation also requires the Director of Parks and Recreation to appoint a committee, that shall be known as the "Winter Recreation Committee," to advise the director on the location of designated parking areas and other winter recreation issues. The committee will be made up of representatives from motorized and non-motorized recreation and will have non-voting members from Caltrans, the Highway Patrol, the Forest Service and possibly other agencies.

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Special Note: Snowlands Network, on behalf of the OHMVRD, is looking for people to assume a key roles in the planning and construction of the ski hut or yurt on Huckleberry Ridge. This position requires a responsible person or persons who can dedicate considerable time and energy over the next two years, and attend occasional meetings in Sacramento. It should be an exciting project and an opportunity to make a significant impact on the future of the sport we love.

Forestdale Controversy Comes Full Circle

In the past three years we have come full circle. Discussions now center around a seasonal closure of the Forestdale Creek area. The controversy began more than ten years ago when backcountry skiers started to complain about the intrusion of snowmobiles into the Forestdale Creek area.

A 1997 lawsuit that resulted in an out-of-court settlement led to the Forestdale Creek Area Environmental Assessment (EA) in 1998. As part of the comments received by the Forest Service on the EA activists suggested that the Forestdale Creek area be closed seasonally, from sometime in December until early spring. This alternative would provide snowmobilers access to the area early and late in the season when there is insufficient snow lower down at Blue Lakes Road for snowmobile access. The use of a seasonal closure to meet the needs of both the non-motorized and motorized users was rejected by the Forest Service and not even considered as an alternative in the EA.

On September 1, 2000 a lawsuit was filed challenging the Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the EA. Only weeks before the judge was to hear the case a settlement meeting brought together many parties. In attendance were District Ranger Gary Schiff, Department of Justice attorney Pamela West from Washington, DC, representatives for the plaintiffs (Debbi Waldear from the Friends of Hope Valley, Patty Brissenden, John Bowers and Marcus Libkind), attorney for the plaintiffs Debbie Sivas (Earthjustice Environmental Law Clinic), two of her law students at Stanford University (Melissa Schatzberg and Emily Bruce), Leonard Turnbeaugh (Director of Public Works, Alpine County) and

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Snowland's Survey

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consistently claimed that there is no conflict in the area and allowed the trail grooming and commercial snowmobile operations.

The purpose of the survey that Snowlands Network has released is to give backcountry skiers and snowshoers the opportunity to express their opinion of the situation at Brockway Summit. The Forest Service has not taken the initiative in the past to survey the public, but we believe that it is necessary to give everyone the opportunity to voice their opinion even if they currently do not use the area. The results of the survey will become part of the official record of the EA.

Enclosed you will find the Brockway Summit Winter Use Survey Form. We urge you to complete it and return it immediately to Snowlands Network. The deadline for the survey is not known because the schedule for comment on the EA has not been released. So please do not take any chances, fill the survey out and mail it today. It will take you only a few minutes to complete the survey. Just think of the time and 34 cents for postage as your effort this month on behalf of the backcountry ski and snowshoe community.

The Sound of Success

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What motivated the Forest Service to take action now? Snowlands Network, Coalition for Safe and Appropriate Winter Sports (CSAWS), other local and regional groups, and individuals wrote letters to the Carson Ranger District urging them to close the Meadows to snowmobiles due to the high level of user conflict. Comments were received from supporters from Nevada and California, and as far away as Colorado and Idaho. In fact, 2000 letters were received by the Forest Service requesting closure of the Meadows to snowmobile use! So many comments were received that one of the employees of the ranger district was overheard saying, "We have never received so many comments on one issue as on the Tahoe Meadows."

This letter writing occurred during the legally required public comment period for an amended Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) for the Northern Sierra area, which is referred to as the Northern Sierra Amendment (NOSA). It took two years to write the NOSA, but the research began long before and addressed management on issues like grazing, wildfire policy and recreation uses. Of special interest to human-powered recreation enthusiasts was that the NOSA addressed issues such as snowmobile and off-road vehicle use.

What is next? This coming winter, Snowlands Network, and its sister organization in Nevada, Coalition for Safe and Appropriate Winter Sports, will monitor snowmobile trespass in and around Tahoe Meadows. Snowlands and CSAWS will request a total closure of this four square mile area if snowmobile users violate the new restrictions.

For information on how you can participate in monitoring Tahoe Meadows area contact:

Coalition for Safe and Appropriate Winter Sports
P.O. Box 18554
Reno, NV 89511
CSAWS@pointers.reno.nv.us
Phone: (775) 853-2931
Fax: 775-853-1054

What is the lesson learned here? The ban on snowmobile use in 80 percent of the greater Tahoe Meadows area is a perfect example of how the dedication and persistence of local activists can result in significant changes on our public lands. Getting involved starts with becoming a member of the activist community (hint ... join Snowlands Network!) through which you stay informed. Then it takes a letter from you, now and then, to support the needs of human-powered, backcountry, winter recreation users.

Gail Ferrell

Board Member, Snowlands Network

President, Coalition for Safe and Appropriate Winter Sports

Forestdale Controversy

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Judy Molnar (Assistant to the Board of Supervisors, Alpine County). A member of the local snowmobile club was invited, but did not attend.

The settlement meeting began with a site visit to the Forestdale Creek area. Using 4-wheel drive vehicles the participants drove from Red Lake to Forestdale Divide, stopping to view points of interest and discuss the importance of the areas to the user groups. A meeting was held afterwards at Sorensen's Resort where the basics of a seasonal closure of the Forestdale Creek area were hammered out.

Although the lawsuit only involves the plaintiffs and the Forest Service, Alpine County claims jurisdiction over Forestdale Road and therefore became a key player in the negotiations. The following are the main points agreed upon at the end of the meeting.

1 Stay the litigation until February. A further stay will be considered if necessary.

1 During the stay, Alpine County would move forward on a resolution and ordinance to close Forestdale Road from Red Lake to Forestdale Divide during the winter season when there is adequate snow at Blue Lakes Road for snowmobile use. Final settlement of the lawsuit will be contingent on passage of both.

1 The Forest Service would close to snowmobiles all the lands they administer in the Forestdale Creek area from Red Lake to Forestdale Divide.

Of major significance, and what prompted optimism for a settlement, was District Ranger Gary Schiff's understanding that the local snowmobile club would support the settlement.

The Alpine County Board of Supervisors discussed the issue of a resolution and ordinance to create a seasonal closure of Forestdale Road on November 6 and then again on November 20. At the second meeting snowmobilers showed up and reneged by opposing the settlement.

Of five supervisor positions, currently only three are filled, therefore to pass the resolution and ordinance requires a unanimous vote. At the November 20 meeting Herman Zellmer and Chris Gansberg Jr. favored the settlement, but Donald Jardine did not. No vote was taken.

Alpine County then drafted a resolution and associated memorandum of understanding to be voted on by the Board of Supervisors at their next meeting. The plaintiffs informed the county of deficiencies in the documents such as (1) the resolution was for a period of only one year, (2) no ordinance was considered, (3) it required buy-in on expansion of the Blue Lakes SnoPark, (4) the continued seasonal closure was contingent on the outcome of a future winter recreation plan, and (5) there were requirements that were deemed illegal.

At the December 4 meeting of the Board of Supervisors the motion for a vote on the resolution and memorandum did not receive a second and died.

So what lies in the future? If the case goes before the judge

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OHV Stakeholders Propose Changes

After more than a year of monthly meetings and deliberations, the OHV Stakeholders Roundtable has agreed to changes in California's Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) program. The changes include:

- † Add law enforcement and non-motorized recreation representation on the OHMVR Commission.
- † Permit grants to educational or non-profit organizations for scientific research or conservation projects.
- † Lower the allowable noise level for off-highway vehicles and apply the standards to all vehicle types, not just motorcycles.
- † Allocate all gas tax funds attributable to unregistered off-road vehicles to the Conservation and Enforcement (C&E) Fund.

- † Allocate 30% of the C&E fund to land restoration.

Numerous other minor changes in the program and the wording of the legislation authorizing the program were approved by the Stakeholders.

The OHMVR program was begun in 1971 to help manage and provide off-road vehicle recreation in the state of California. Known informally as the "Green Sticker" program, it is managed by the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division under the Department of Parks and Recreation. The Division has an annual budget of about \$30 million. Ten percent of revenues are from green sticker registrations of non-street licensed vehicles, and the other 90% is derived from gas taxes.

Half of the Division's budget goes to administration of 7 State Vehicle Recreation Areas. The other half is made available to federal and local government agencies to support OHV programs. Most of this goes to the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management for the maintenance of OHV trails and facilities. About \$2 million each year goes to National Forests for snowmobile trail grooming.

The Stakeholders Roundtable comprises 50 representatives from off-road vehicle enthusiasts, non-motorized recreation, environmental organizations, law enforcement, and government agency land managers. It was formed last year to assist the OHMVR Division in revising the legislation, which was due to expire in 2003. Last year, the program was extended to 2007 without any changes. This year, the Division is attempting to introduce changes that will improve the program and make it less controversial among the environmental and non-motorized communities.

The changes proposed by the Stakeholders Roundtable will now be put into legislative language and presented to the State legislature early next year. Changes in the legislation are possible any time in this process, but the legislature is aware that any recommendations coming out of the Stakeholders group will represent a consensus of diverse user groups.

Details about the OHMVR program may be found at the division's website:

<http://www.calohv.ca.gov>

Winter Grants Approved

On October 24, the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Commission approved \$2.5 million in grants for the upcoming winter season. The bulk of the grants will go to the Forest Service to support the grooming of snowmobile trails throughout Northern California. Lesser amounts will be spent on the snowplowing of roads and parking areas, patrolling, and the study of the impact of snowmobiles on wildlife.

Twelve National Forests within the State of California applied for and received snowmobile grants. As in previous years, none of the Forests performed analysis on the impact of the snowmobile grooming on the environment or on non-motorized users. Instead, the Forest Service claimed a "categorical exclusion" (CE) for snowmobile grooming on the basis that it comes under the category of "trail repair or maintenance," one of the allowable justifications for an exclusion.

Snowlands holds the opinion that the grooming "creates" new trails rather than "maintaining" existing trails, and an environmental impact report (EIR) should be done as part of the grant application, as required by state and federal regulations. Before the approval meeting, Snowlands wrote a letter to the OHMVR Division protesting the use of categorical exclusions for snowmobile trail grooming. Snowlands also met with representatives from the Division and the Forest Service to discuss our position. During that meeting, the Division reiterated that it would accept the use of categorical exclusions as adequate environmental analysis for the grants.

However, in a more encouraging position, the Division agreed to require that, starting next year, the Forest Service grant applications shall include an analysis of the conflicts and the balance between motorized and non-motorized winter recreation opportunities in the area affected by the grant and a discussion of how the Forest Service plans to minimize the conflicts or reduce the imbalance.

Snowlands will monitor the grant approval process next

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Forestdale Controversy

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without amendment then he would only be ruling on the lands surrounding Forestdale Road because the Forest Service relinquished jurisdiction over the road to Alpine County. In this case there could be no closure of the road. However, a recent court ruling lends credence to the position that the Forest Service made an error in relinquishing jurisdiction of the road. The plaintiffs may choose to amend the lawsuit and challenge Alpine County's jurisdiction. If a judge rules in favor of the plaintiff on such a claim, then the Forest Service may end up with the authority to create the seasonal closure.

So we have come full circle and there remains hope for a seasonal closure that was very much like one proposed three years ago. It should be noted that Gary Schiff was not the District Ranger when the EA was developed and this alternative rejected. The plaintiffs are pleased to see him in favor of a seasonal closure which was rejected by his predecessor.

Volunteer Corner

Logo, Masthead and Brochure Designed by Jeff Ball

Snowlands Network is truly indebted to Jeff Ball for his volunteer work in the design of the Snowlands logo, masthead and brochure. The Board of Directors includes many hardworking, dedicated people, but none possess the talent necessary to create what Jeff did for the organization. By no means does our modestly-priced reproduction method fully show the quality of the work done by Jeff. We urge you to visit the Snowlands website (www.snowlands.org) to see what he really created. On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you Jeff for your volunteer work.

Brenda and Dave Giese Pitch-In

Brenda and Dave Giese took time mid-week, just days before Thanksgiving and ahead of a storm, to scout the Martis Peak area in order to fill in the gaps so that Snowlands Network's Board of Directors could make a knowledgeable decision on issues related to the North Shore (Lake Tahoe) Snowmobile Environmental Assessment.

In volunteering their time to do this, Brenda and Dave solved one of Snowland's greatest difficulties — getting on the ground information in a timely fashion.

Brenda's and Dave's current and past support of winter recreation and environmental activism is truly appreciated.

Volunteers Feast on Pie and Ice Cream

Last month you likely received an announcement describing establishment of Snowlands Network. That mailing of 1750 letters and postcards, stuffed in envelopes, and labeled was the work of 13 people at an October "mailing party." A hearty thank you goes to Bob Bastasz, Bill Flower, Jim Gibson, Lee Griffith, Janet Hoffmann, Marcus Libkind, Sophie Libkind, Joan Lindberg, Kevin McCarty, Dick Steeper, Stanley Steeper, Kathy Tonnensen and Clara Yen.

With this much support we were able to complete the



Good times had by all at mailing party

large task in only one-and-a-half hours, which gave plenty of time afterwards to enjoy fruit pies topped with rich, smooth ice cream, and accompanied by Peet's Coffee and tea. The party was so much fun that even 8-year olds Sophie and Stanley never strayed from the task.

Find Satisfaction in Volunteering

Snowlands Network is aggressively working to improve its reach and effectiveness. This requires the efforts of many people, both skilled and unskilled. Please contact us if you want to help us shape the future of human-powered winter recreation. Below is a short list of volunteers that are urgently needed. Please let us know if you can help in these areas or provide us with other types of help.

Forest Specialists – Individuals are needed to monitor specific areas (for example, Bear Valley or Pinecrest) and keep the Board of Directors apprised of issues that require attention. No experience is necessary, but prior knowledge of the winter recreation opportunities in the area is needed. These positions are best suited to people who live nearby an area where winter recreation takes place or have a cabin in the area that they frequently visit, and engage in skiing or snowshoeing in the area. Duties include contacting the Forest Service once a month, scanning the Forest Service's quarterly list of NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) projects for issues, monitoring local newspapers for issues and information, keeping a general eye open for local issues that need attention, and reporting once a month to the Board of Directors. Estimated time: 2-4 hours/month.

Business Sponsor Coordinator – Coordinate efforts to recruit business sponsors for Snowlands Network. This position requires planning the program, crafting letters, and making one-on-one contacts with prospective business sponsors (can be by telephone or in person). Estimated time: 4-8 hours per month.

Grant Researcher – An individual is needed to research potential sources for grants to support the expansion of Snowlands Network's effectiveness. The work requires visiting the Foundation Center in San Francisco to use their computerized database and make use of their professional help. This position is to do research, and does NOT require grant writing. No experience is necessary. Estimated time: 4-8 hours per month.

Fundraising Advisor – An experienced individual is needed to advise the Board of Directors about fundraising. Initially this would entail making a presentation to the Board about alternatives for fundraising. Follow-up support would be desirable. Estimated time: Minimum of one meeting and presentation totaling approximately 2 hours.

Please see page 2 for details on how to contact Snowlands Network to volunteer or obtain additional information on volunteer work with Snowlands.

Business Sponsors

Snowlands Network is proud to have the following businesses as sponsors.



The Adventure Pages
P.O. Box 11476
Pleasanton, CA 94588
(925) 460-9300
www.theadventurepages.com

Publishes a guidebook and website to spark ideas, make information available, and simplify research and planning.



Bittersweet Publishing Company
P.O. Box 1211
Livermore, CA 94551
(925) 455-4826

Publishes *Ski Tours in the Sierra Nevada* and *Ski Tours in Lassen Volcanic National Park*.

Sierra Nevada Alliance Provides Funding

Snowlands Network is indebted to the Sierra Nevada Alliance for a \$1000 "Futures Fund" grant to support our first constituency building campaign. Newly formed, Snowlands must attract members in order to be effective in its work. Building a membership gives legitimacy in the eyes of state and federal agencies, is a major source for letters promoting sound winter recreation and environmental policies, and is a source for money to publish this newsletter, which is a major part of our education program. Their grant has in part paid for you to receive this newsletter.

The Board of Directors of Snowlands Network greatly appreciates Sierra Nevada Alliance's financial support, and we look upon the grant as a statement of our acceptance into the community of grassroots organizations that are working to preserve and restore our beloved Sierra Nevada wildlands.

President's Corner

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threaten to sue the Forest Service and State of California in order to "put a halt to all snowmobile trail grooming in California."

I ask you, do you think that the non-motorized winter recreation community would be in a very strong position if we did not express our belief that the snowmobile trail grooming is illegal? We have made it clear that our goal is to improve non-motorized winter recreation, not to shut down the existing snowmobile trail grooming. The ball is in their court.

Marcus Libkind, President

Winter Grants Approved

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year to determine if the Forest Service adheres to the new requirements. If not, Snowlands will consider legal action to force compliance.

Join Snowlands Network Today ... together we will make a difference!

Our success depends on generous individuals like you who care about the future of the winter environment and backcountry winter sports. Through your support Snowlands Network will be effective in representing human-powered winter recreation enthusiasts who seek a wilderness-like experience on our public lands.

Your membership in Snowlands Network will give you:

- The peace-of-mind that someone is representing your interests on winter environmental and recreation issues.
- The benefits of an organization networking with state and national environmental and recreation organizations on winter issues.
- Regular updates on current issues, both through e-mail alerts and a subscription to the *Snowlands Bulletin*.

Please be as generous as you can. Your membership contribution is tax-deductible.* Checks should be made payable to Snowlands Network.

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President's Corner

It brings me much joy and high hopes for the future to be writing my first article for the *Snowlands Bulletin*. The formation of Snowlands Network marks a significant milestone in the history of winter environmental and recreation activism – now there is an organization whose sole purpose is to be a leader in this area of work in California and Nevada.

Snowlands Network could not have gotten off to such a powerful start if it were not for the past 15 years of work by such people as Jim Gibson, Janet Hoffmann and Terri Michel, and others who have worked to give human-powered winter recreation a voice.

The number one issue we as a community are facing today is the imbalance between motorized and non-motorized winter recreation opportunities on our public lands. This imbalance has been due in no small part to the \$2 million annually given by the California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission to the Forest Service to fund snowmobile trail grooming. Furthermore, the Commission and the Forest Service claim that these projects are legally exempt from environmental review. Therefore these projects, which enhance snowmobile opportunities at the expense of recreationists who seek a wilderness-like experience, are never examined for their impact on us.

I am proud not only of Snowlands Network's challenge of this situation, but the manner in which we have challenged it.

The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division and the Forest Service say they recognize the problem and desire to remedy it. Past inaction on their part resulted in Snowlands presenting to them a list of site-specific proposals that improve non-motorized winter recreation with a minimum of impact on current snowmobile use.

We have given them a choice between alternatives that are win-win situations – improved non-motorized winter recreation and minimal impact on snowmobile opportunities – or face a legal challenge to nearly every snowmobile trail grooming project on national forest lands in California.

This approach to dealing with the imbalance between winter uses clearly takes the middle ground. It uses both the carrot and the stick. It puts the government agencies on the spot – they can rise to the occasion and act on what they have said in the past or see a serious challenge to their winter motorized recreation program.

We believe that working with all those concerned can lead to acceptable solutions. However, everyone must be at the negotiating table. Major representatives of the California snowmobile community are not at the table because they have expressed a policy of “no new snowmobile closures.” This is not a new statement, but was repeated with addition of the charge “we are back-stabbing environmentalists” because we

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