

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



# New Round Valley Sno-Park To Open Near Bear Valley

**By Marcus Libkind, Chairman**

Thanks to continued advocacy on behalf of skiers and creative and appreciated action by the State of California's OHMVRD, a new Sno-Park near Round Valley in Bear Valley will open this winter. It affords access to the non-motorized area of Poison Canyon and Round Valley. Both offer excellent ski and snowshoe opportunities.

An opening celebration is planned for January – stay tuned to Snowlands' Facebook page for details. Thank you, California!

The new Sno-Park is located up Highway 207 (the road to Bear Valley

Ski Resort) 0.2 miles from Highway 4, at the spot where a dirt road heads up Poison Canyon.

From the new Sno-Park, it is a straight-forward tour up to one of two ridges in the area. The ridge formed by Poison Peak (8420) and Peak 8605 runs east-west and separates Poison Canyon and Round Valley. The south side of this ridge offers excellent open terrain for testing your downhill skills, especially on the corn snow that forms early here. The other ridge runs north-south and affords access to Round Valley and Mt. Reba. Enjoy!

## In This Issue

- New Round Valley Sno-Park..... 1
- Forest Service Settles..... 2
- Snowlands Wins Award..... 2
- OHMVR Division News..... 3
- Sierra Watch..... 3
- Lake Tahoe Basin..... 3
- Advocacy Update..... 4
- Lake Tahoe Star Draba..... 5
- New Board Member..... 5
- Winter Appeal..... 6



*New Round Valley Sno-Park Under Construction*

## Upcoming Events

### Backcountry Film Festival

December 17 – Nevada City, Nevada Theatre  
January 22 – Reno, Patagonia

### Winter Trails Day - January 11

Tahoe Donner XC (Register in advance through REI)  
Tahoe Meadows



# US Forest Service Settlement and Survey Results

By Laurel Harkness, Executive Director

In 2011, Snowlands Network led a coalition that included Winter Wildlands Alliance and the Center for Biological Diversity in suing the Forest Service over its use of categorical exclusions under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to exempt the review of the Over Snow Vehicle (OSV) grooming program. In September 2013, a settlement agreement was reached ending the litigation. Under the settlement, the Forest Service agreed to initiate environmental review of its snowmobile trail grooming activities on five national forests: Stanislaus, Eldorado, Tahoe, Plumas, and Lassen. The plaintiffs are provided the right to submit an alternative proposal for Forest Service consideration as part of the environmental review process under NEPA. We look forward to working with the Forest Service in this review.

Simultaneous to this settlement, Snowlands Network put out a survey of its members to assess your priorities in managing the impacts of the OSV groomed trail system on Forest Service Lands. Additionally, we wanted to hear your priorities in management objective and what specific additional areas should be set aside for non-motorized winter recreation. We would like to thank you for taking the time to complete the survey; your input will help guide our advocacy strategy as we move forward.

## Survey Results

Here is what you had to say:

### Of the highest priority and importance to you:

- Closing specific lands to snowmobiles
- Enhancing enforcement against snowmobile trespass into Wilderness and other closed areas

### These were the two points of several possible options that garnered the strongest agreement:

*"I would rather see relatively small areas (ten square miles) totally closed to snowmobiles than relatively large areas (100 square miles) restricted to trail-riding only."*

*"Elimination of trespass in Wilderness and other areas that are already closed is more important than closure of new, additional areas."*

### Areas To Protect

Per the survey, you also gave us your feedback as to which areas you would like to see closed to snowmobile use (or for some areas, better enforcement of already closed areas):

- Ludlow Hut/McKinney Creek
- Tahoe Meadows
- Forestdale Creek
- Desolation Wilderness
- Tragedy Springs
- Shot Rock Vista
- Silver Creek
- Sections of Highway 89 between Truckee and Emerald Bay
- North side of Castle Peak
- Loon Lake
- Hope Valley
- Mt Rose
- Top of Highway 431 in Tahoe NF
- Sections along Interstate 80 (e.g., Lake Valley Reservoir, south of freeway), Tahoe Basin

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## Snowlands Wins Golden Pinecone Award

Snowlands Network won the coveted Golden Pinecone Award for 2013, the prestigious environmental award for Nevada. The annual Golden Pinecone Awards celebrate the good work of citizens, agencies, non-profits, and businesses to preserve and enhance the wonderful environment of northern Nevada. The Golden Pinecones are the only awards dedicated solely to environmental achievements. Snowlands Network won the award in the non-profit category.



Gail Ferrell, Mike Wilkin, Jane Grossman, Cathy Karr, Elizabeth Cattell, and Bob Rowen at the Golden Pinecone Award Ceremony

# OHMVR Gets New Chief, Revives Winter Recreation Committee

By Jim Gibson, Director

The Off Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division of the California Department of Parks and Recreation has a new leader: Colonel Christopher C. Conlin, USMC (Ret). A thirty-year veteran of the Marine Corps, Col. Conlin was appointed by Gov. Brown in March, 2013, to head the OHMVR Division, a position that had been vacant since December, 2011. The OHMVR Division manages California's Sno-Park program, and, through grants to the Forest Service, a program of snowmobile trail grooming. These activities are funded by OHV registration fees (the Green Sticker program), sales of Sno-Park permits, and funds from gas tax (the OHV Trust Fund).

The OHMVR Division is also reviving the Winter Recreation Committee, which had been dormant for a long time. The mission of the Committee is to advise the Division on the placement of Sno-Park sites. The Committee met at OHMVR offices in Sacramento on September 4 and again on October 15. The September meeting was well-attended, with four citizens representing cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and dog-sledding and a number of representatives from the US

Forest Service, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and the Highway Patrol. The second meeting was held without Forest Service representatives because of the federal government shutdown.

At the September meeting Terry Harper, the head of the Division's Winter Program, gave a brief history of the Sno-Park program and its current status. A new Sno-Park in Bear Valley will open this year, bringing the total number of sites to 19.

Col. Conlin attended both meetings. At the September meeting he stated that he was trying to get the State to restore some OHV Trust Fund funds that were borrowed by the State in previous years. If successful, Col. Conlin said that he would use some of the money for acquiring new Sno-Park sites.

Snowlands will be sending representatives to the committee meetings and will keep our members informed of future developments in the Sno-Park program. Information about the Sno-Park program can be obtained from the OHMVR website:

**[ohv.parks.ca.gov](http://ohv.parks.ca.gov)**

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## Friend of Snowlands

Sierra Watch works to protect great places in the Sierra Nevada by turning development threats into conservation opportunities. Just recently, Sierra Watch announced details of the Martis Valley Opportunity, where the participants hope to secure a conservation and development plan that will result in the permanent protection of 6,376 acres of land in Martis Valley owned by Sierra Pacific Industries. The agreement is the result of a partnership forged by East West Partners, Sierra Pacific Industries, Mountain Area Preservation and Sierra Watch. Over the past three years, these groups have come together in pursuit of a shared vision for the Martis Valley. The Martis Valley is of particular importance to Snowlands Network as the Brockway Summit area had always been a destination for skiers and snowshoers before it was claimed for use by snowmobile concessions.

### More information

For more information on Sierra Watch, check out their website:

**[www.sierrawatch.org](http://www.sierrawatch.org)**

## Snowlands Network in the Lake Tahoe Basin

By Gail Ferrell, President

Snowlands Network Board members are continuing to work with the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) of the US Forest Service to improve opportunities for human-powered winter recreation in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Snowlands Network, along with 30 other environmental and recreational groups, were surprised to find that the LTBMU did not address winter recreation in their Draft Land and Resource Management Plan, which governs how lands will be managed, among other things, for recreation over the next 15 to 25 years. In an effort to address problems created by snowmobiles, including noise, wilderness trespass, skier and snowshoer displacement, and safety as well as air and snow pollution, Snowlands Network is engaging with the LTBMU and snowmobile users to discuss issues and determine if mitigating measures can be addressed. Snowlands will keep our members posted on changes or progress in these areas.

# Snowlands Network's Ongoing Advocacy

By Bob Rowen, Vice President for Advocacy

Since its founding, Snowlands Network has sought to cause the United States Forest Service to impose greater restrictions on snowmobiles on the national forest lands in California and western Nevada in order to preserve a fair balance of recreation opportunity for skiers and snowshoers. This has required much persistence and patience, with each success taking years of effort.

Several recent developments are converging to give us hope for further management attention to snowmobiles and possible actions addressing snowmobile impacts. Briefly, these developments are (1) Snowlands Network advocacy in the revision of individual forest land management plans, (2) litigation brought by Snowlands Network with regard to California's state-financed snowmobile trail grooming program, and (3) the court victory this year by Winter Wildlands Alliance in challenging the "snowmobile exemption" in the Forest Service's travel management rule.

Although the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit of the Forest Service still seems unprepared to address snowmobile impacts in their ongoing plan revision, they have convened collaborative working groups as a first step in addressing snowmobile conflicts. We have similarly advocated that the Giant Sequoia National Monument address snowmobile impacts in its plan revision. We are considering our next steps in each of these plans, which may include further litigation. We are also participating in the plan revisions being started by the Inyo and Sierra National Forests. Our basic position in this advocacy is that under the National Environmental Policy Act the impact of snowmobiles must be considered when a national forest with extensive snowmobile activity undertakes to revise its land management plan.

We have also challenged the program by which the State of California finances snowmobile recreation. In a recent settlement of a lawsuit brought by Snowlands Network together with Winter Wildlands Alliance and the Center for Biological Diversity, we obtained the agreement of the Forest Service to look at the impacts of this snowmobile grooming program on recreation opportunity in the five national forests in the central Sierra Nevada/southern Cascades. (The LTBMU does not participate in the snowmobile grooming program and thus is not affected by the settlement.)

For years, the Forest Service has been required to proactively manage motorized recreation under its travel management rule. (This rule is separate from the general obligations under NEPA to analyze and consider environmental impacts of management actions.) However, snowmobiles have been specifically (and

uniquely) exempted from the travel management rule. With our support, this year Winter Wildlands Alliance successfully challenged this exemption in a federal District Court in Idaho. The eventual outcome of this decision will be that all national forests will need to actively review where snowmobiles should be allowed. In most forests, this review has simply never been done.

Together, we expect these developments and continued advocacy to lead to further action by the Forest Service in protecting recreation opportunity for skiers and snowshoers who desire to recreate free from motorized exhaust, free from snowmobile noise, and without having to compete with motorized vehicles for powder snow.

We appreciate your support in each of these areas. Your participation in the public comment process with regard to each plan revision is highly important – please be sure you receive our emails regarding important comment opportunities and take a minute to make your individual voice heard. Also, your financial contributions allow us to consider additional options, such as litigation, when government ignores its legal duty. We appreciate all your support and look forward to the future with optimism.



# Lake Tahoe Star Draba

By Gail Ferrell, President

Lake Tahoe Star Draba (*Draba asterophora* var. *asterophora* Payson), is a rare plant species found in upper elevations of select alpine environments. It is endemic in a limited area of the mountain ranges surrounding Lake Tahoe in the Sierra Nevada. Their locations in rocky and steep terrain above 8000 feet elevation add to its vulnerability. Human impacts threaten the viability of this sensitive plant as defined by the U.S. Forest Service on the Sensitive Species List.

Forest Land Management Plans written by each Forest Service Unit guide the working policies and framework for implementing all Forest Service activities and evaluating possible effects on endangered, threatened, proposed, or sensitive species. Two forests, the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) in Region 5 and the Carson Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest in Region 4 of the U.S. Forest Service are required to manage the sensitive plant Lake Tahoe Star Draba. The worldwide distribution of Tahoe draba is limited to high elevation in the vicinity of Lake Tahoe. Snowlands Network will be aiding the Nevada Natural Heritage Program

in monitoring the health of the known Lake Tahoe Star Draba populations around the Mt. Rose area west of Reno, Nevada. Contact Snowlands Network if you would like to help in this monitoring effort.



Star Draba (*Draba asterophora* var. *asterophora* Payson)

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## Meet Snowlands' Newest Director: Colin Wood



In April of this year, Colin Wood joined the Snowlands' Board of Directors. Colin is currently a practicing real estate attorney in the East Bay and has experience with land use, recreation user conflicts, environmental, and development issues. He has informally helped with Snowlands' advocacy work for several years and is excited to be on the Board. He brings litigation and public comment experience that should be helpful in ensuring access for human-powered recreation to public lands. His preferred method of over-snow travel is on Dynafit bindings, having formerly been a telemarker, snowboarder, and high school nordic racer. In the off-season, he enjoys mountain biking, climbing, backpacking, and good company—preferably in combination with the previously-mentioned activities.

## Snowlands Network

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# *Support Snowlands Network today & help us protect winter wildlands*

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Call (530)265-6424 or visit us on the web at [www.snowlands.org](http://www.snowlands.org).

## Winter Appeal 2013

Please consider making a year-end tax-deductible donation to Snowlands Network. Snowlands Network, a 501(c)(3) founded in 2001, is the only organization working directly in California and Nevada to promote human-powered winter recreation and protect winter wildlands. We are a small organization working hard to create a big impact in preserving winter wildlands for future generations. Every dollar counts. We have earned the donations and trust of thousands of winter wildland lovers over the years, and we

hope you'll join them and make a year-end, tax-deductible donation today.

Your gift to Snowlands Network is important in our work to preserve and protect our treasured winter spaces. In order to take advantage of a tax deduction in 2013, your contribution must be postmarked by December 31, 2013. To donate online, visit [www.snowlands.org](http://www.snowlands.org) and click "DONATE NOW". For more information on giving your support, contact us at (530)265-6424, or [info@snowlands.org](mailto:info@snowlands.org).

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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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