



Fall 2025

www.snowlands.org

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



Federal Government Upheaval

For better or worse, the Trump Administration is changing the way the federal government manages our country's public land. Whether or not these changes will outlast the current administration is a political question that will be decided by future elections. However, it is apparent that the next three years will see upheavals in the way our government does business that are unprecedented in our lifetimes. How these changes will affect our backcountry winter recreation is unknown and unpredictable. What is known is that how we interact with the federal government will change, and that we will all need to adapt to a new federal government framework.

Some of these changes have been put into place, some are in process, and some have been proposed. This article presents a summary of the most significant changes of which we are aware and that might affect backcountry winter recreation. Others may occur in the future. We can expect these changes to impact our lives in one way or another.

Weaken NEPA

For more than five decades, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) has required that federal government agencies perform an environmental analysis (EA) before approving projects that could potentially impact the environment. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) created a set of uniform regulations that all government agencies must follow to perform the required EA, including consideration of the "direct, indirect, and cumulative" impact of current and previous decisions on the environment. Now, after legislation intended to make the NEPA process "more efficient" and judicial decisions that the regulations written by the CEQ are not binding, each agency must develop its own regulations using CEQ "guidelines". This situation has led to chaos, inconsistency, and uncertainty in federal agencies, particularly where two agencies must cooperate on a decision.

Rescind The Travel Management Rule

The Travel Management Rule, adopted in 2005 for wheeled motor vehicles and modified in 2015 to include over snow vehicles, is the framework by which the Forest Service manages motor vehicle recreation on National Forest land. The Forest Service has

announced that it intends to rescind the Travel Rule. The agency expects to issue a Notice Of Intent in early 2026.

The 2025 Travel Rule forms the foundation of all Over Snow Vehicle Use Designation plans. Five such plans were started in 2014 as the result of a lawsuit requiring the Forest Service to manage over-snow vehicles in the same manner as wheeled vehicles. As of late 2025, only three California forests -- Stanislaus, Lassen, and Tahoe -- have completed their OSV management plans. Others (Eldorado, Plumas, Inyo, and Lake Tahoe Basin) have started plans but put them on hold due to a lack of resources (see the article *Snowmobile Management Update* on page 5). If the Travel Rule is rescinded -- and nobody knows what, if anything, will take its place -- then those plans may never be completed, leaving most of those forests open to motor vehicle travel. Early unofficial statements from the Forest Service indicate that existing vehicle plans created under the Travel Rule will remain in effect.

Rescind The Roadless Rule

The Roadless Rule, adopted in 2001, has protected inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) in 36 states and Puerto Rico from road-building, logging, mining and development. The Rule was put in place because the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management could not maintain the roads under their management and wanted to reduce the rate of road building. The Forest Service instituted an 18-month moratorium on road building and performed an inventory of roadless areas. After 14 months *Continued on page 6*

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President's Corner

The environment is facing attack from the current Washington administration that is clearly anti-environment as well as anti many other things. The latest is that the Forest Service is planning to rescind the 2005 Travel Management Rule. Two things are not clear: if the Rule will be abandoned or modified.

The 2011 lawsuit by Winter Wildlands challenging Subpart C of the Rule was won in 2013, thereby requiring the Forest Service to manage snowmobiles as they do wheeled vehicles. It is important to those who love the quiet of the backcountry in winter that the Rule requiring OSV management remain. Currently, the Forest Service is not working on OSV travel management due to funding and pressure from Washington. But Washington administrations come and go. There will come a time when things change in our favor.

There are over 100 member grassroots organizations like Snowlands Network in Winter Wildlands Alliance.

By Marcus Libkind



Snowlands was a founding organization. I was one of the founders and on the board of directors from the founding in 2000 until 2008. WWA is our voice at the national level, and they provide support to grassroots organizations. They are celebrating their 25th anniversary.

I believe so much in the mission and value of Winter Wildlands Alliance that I donated \$5000 to the Next 25 Campaign. I urge all Snowlands Network's members to also support Winter Wildlands Alliance. Snowlands is key to protecting our winter landscapes in California and Nevada, but WWA does things that none of the grassroots organizations can do. For more information on Next 25 Campaign visit:

<https://www.winterwildlands.org/next25>

Banff Is Coming to Redwood City in March

The 2025-26 season marks the 50th Anniversary of the Banff Centre Mountain Film Festival and the 21st year that Snowlands has brought World Tour screenings to you. Whether this is your first or 21st time enjoying the Tour you are sure to find films that entertain, excite, and inspire. The Banff World Tour celebrates amazing achievements in outdoor storytelling and filmmaking worldwide.

The Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival is one of the largest and most prestigious mountain festivals in the world! From the over 400 entries submitted into the Festival each year, award-winners and audience favorites are among the films that are

carefully selected in the two different programs that we will show.

A popular part of our programs is the prize drawing during intermission. We will have prizes from local sponsors as well as those provided by the World Tour sponsors.

All proceeds from the Redwood City screenings will help support Snowlands' advocacy work.

Ticket sales will start in late January. Our website will have film lists and ticket information available at that time. Subscribe to our email alert list to be notified of changes and when tickets are available:

https://www.snowlands.org/join/join_events.html



Dates:	Friday, March 6 and Saturday, March 7, 2025
Where:	Fox Theatre 221 Broadway St Redwood City
Time:	7PM (Doors open at 6:00 PM)
Tickets:	\$32 (all fees included) Available in early 2026 at foxrwc.com/event-schedule

Backcountry Film Festival Returns to Reno

Winter Wildlands Alliance's Backcountry Film Festival, now in its 21st year, includes a host of outstanding films, culled from over 300 submissions, that will inspire you to head out into the winter landscape and enjoy its beauty.

Snowlands Network sponsored showings of the Backcountry Film Festival in Reno for many years. When COVID struck we switched to virtual screenings. We are hoping to return to an

in-person format in Reno in late January but details are still in progress. We will also offer the films in virtual format for those that do not live in the Reno area.

Join our events email list and watch our website for updates on our 2026 showing. To sign-up, go to

https://www.snowlands.org/join/join_events.html.

Snowlands Network Environmental Storytelling Award

This is the 21st annual season of Winter Wildlands Alliance's Backcountry Film Festival. It celebrates the spirit of human-powered adventure through stories that connect us to wild places, to each other, and to the movement to keep winter wild.

As an incentive for film makers to strive for excellence in environmental focused human-powered winter films, Snowlands Network, a founding grassroots group, is sponsoring the Snowlands Network Environmental Storytelling Award. It is a \$2000 prize that recognizes a work that shines a light on the vital

connection between winter landscapes, ecological stewardship, and recreational experiences.

This year, at the November 6, 2025 Backcountry Film Festival Premiere, it was announced that the winner of the award is *Let My People Go Skiing*. This documentary focuses on Tlingit skier and scientist Ellen Bradley as she reconnects with her traditional homelands in Southeast Alaska. The film covers her efforts to inspire members of her tribe, especially young people, to connect with and protect the winter environment on their ancestral lands.



Featured Tours

Parker Bench and Peak 9275

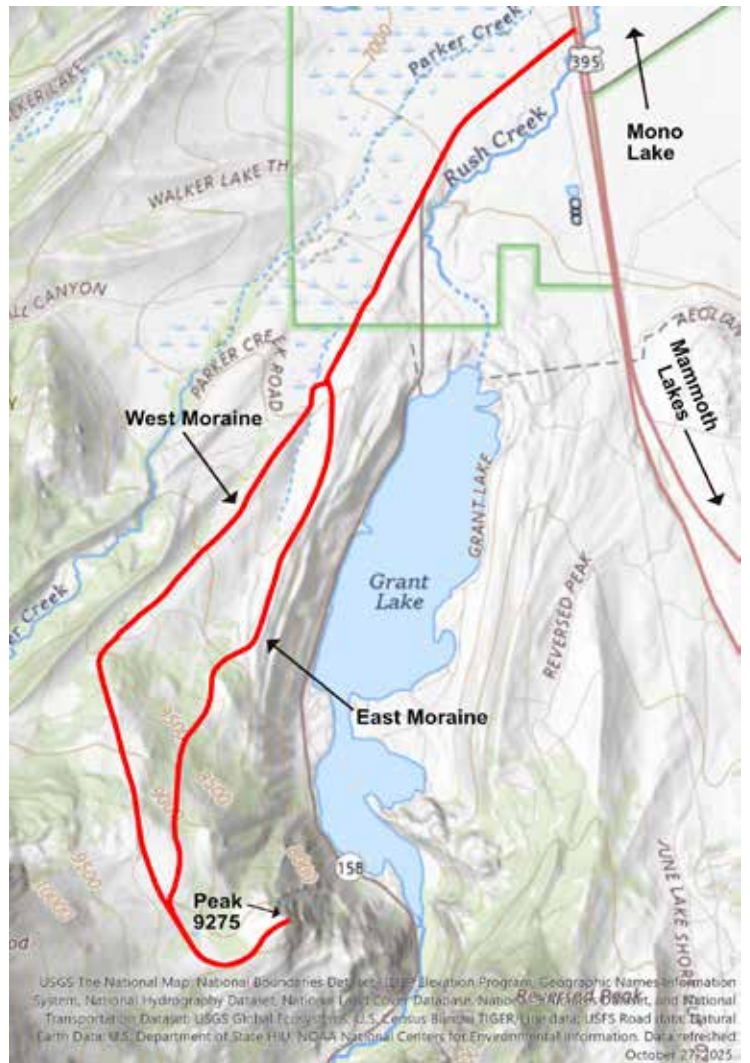
This tour is long, but in the right conditions the descent from Peak 9275 is fast and exhilarating assuming you have the skills to enjoy the downhill.

There are two routes to Parker Bench and Peak 9275. The route via the east moraine is 14.8 miles and gains 2600 feet. Via the west moraine it is 15.2 miles and gains 2900 feet. The tour is still excellent regardless if you are going the entire distance or stopping part way. The full tours are rated intermediate-advanced.

The views of the Mono Lake Basin, Mono Craters, and south along the Sierra escarpment are excellent as you climb to Parker Bench and Peak 9275. Once you are on the summit, the view becomes a 360-degree delight to the eye. Parker Bench is the relatively flat area to the east of Mount Wood (not shown on the tour map), but you will know when you get there because the steep climbing (except for the summit) ends at the bench.

Many people living on the eastside of the Sierra, think only of skiing on powder days. Yes, the eastside is noted for its powder, but consider this tour when forgiving corn snow makes carving turns on the descent easy and the days are longer.

I was living in Lee Vining for a winter and could not get locals to go skiing with me when the powder was gone. They didn't understand the goodness of corn snow, sometimes called "ego-snow" because for most it improves their turning. I finally convinced a local friend to join me on this tour. It took her a little getting used to carving turns off the summit without powder, but soon she was exhilarating in the descent. She told her friends about the tour, and within a day or two I was getting calls asking me to



call them when I was going skiing. I had converts.

Both routes have the initial descent off the summit. But it is short and sweet. It descends 250 feet in a quarter of a mile. Beyond, of the two routes, the west moraine is clearly the better route for the descent. It follows a clear ridge (moraine) with few trees. Along the moraine it descends 1800 feet in 3.2 miles. Good snow conditions and the descent is a dream-like experience. But the east moraine is better if there is minimal snow.

For more information visit:

Route via west moraine: https://tours.snowlands.org/tours/18/1813_tour.htm

Route via the east moraine: https://tours.snowlands.org/tours/18/1824_tour.htm

Snowmobile Management Update

Not a year goes by that the Forest Service doesn't make some marginal progress in implementing over-snow vehicle (OSV) use designation plans for all national forests with sufficient snow. The year 2025 was no exception. However, there were few tangible benefits for non-motorized winter recreation.

As this newsletter goes to press, we have word that **Stanislaus** is installing signs at the Gooseberry and Cranberry trailheads in the Summit Ranger District. The signs were produced over a year ago, but the proper installation materials were unavailable at the beginning of last season. This year, Winter Wildlands Alliance (WWA) provided funds to purchase the proper supplies, and installation is proceeding and, hopefully, will be ready for the upcoming winter season. See below for the trail map that Snowlands and WWA developed for public use.

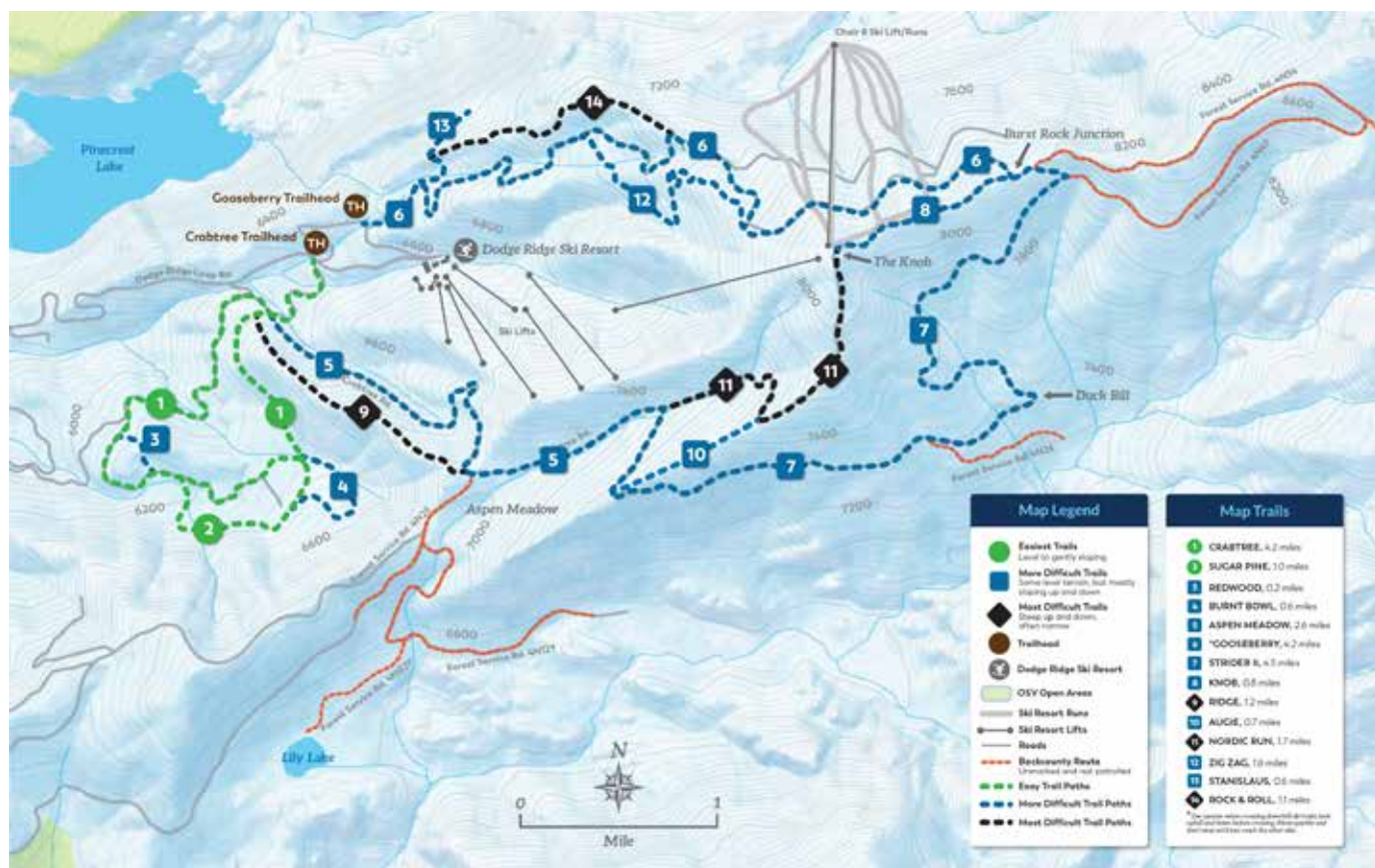
Lassen has been working on producing maps and signs for their new OSV management plan adopted in 2023. Winter Wildlands Alliance and Tread Lightly have been working with the Forest in the development of suitable materials.

Tahoe has instituted a series of meetings with stakeholders,

both motorized and non-motorized, to advise the Forest on the implementation of their plan issued in May 2024. Tahoe has also been negatively impacted by federal government seismic shifts, and no consensus between stakeholders has been, or is likely to be, achieved. Tahoe is weighing options on how to proceed, with nothing likely for the upcoming winter season. The Over Snow Vehicle Use Map (OSVUM) has been published and remains in effect. Additional maps, brochures, and signs will not be available for the upcoming season.

The OSV Use Designation plans for **Eldorado**, **Plumas**, **Inyo**, and **Lake Tahoe Basin** have been put on hold. The proposed rescission of the 2015 Travel Management Rule that mandated the current slate of OSVUMs means that these other forests may never complete their winter recreation plans. It is expected that any existing OSVUMs (Stanislaus, Lassen, and Tahoe) will remain in effect even if the Travel Plan is rescinded.

WWA is attempting to meet with personnel of the Eldorado and Plumas forests to pressure them into proceeding with the final approval of plans that were finished in 2018 and 2019 respectively.



New Pinecrest Ski and Snowhoe Trail map developed by Snowlands Network and Winter Wildlands Alliance for Stanislaus National Forest.

Federal Government Upheaval *(continued)*

(Continued from page 1) of study and broad public participation with 1.7 million comments submitted by the public, the Roadless Area Conservation Rule was adopted protecting 58 million acres of public land. In California, 4.4 million acres are within IRAs, or 21% of the 20.7 million acres of national forest land. For Nevada, 3.1 M acres or 55% of 5.8M total are in IRAs.

Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins has announced that the Administration intends to rescind the Roadless Rule, and the Forest Service has issued a Notice Of Intent. A 21-day comment period began on August 29, 2025 and resulted in 625,000 comments, which were estimated to be 99% in favor of retaining the Roadless Rule. A broad coalition of environmental and recreational organizations was formed to preserve the Roadless Rule.

Sell Off Public Land

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chair Mike Lee (R-Utah) has been attempting to force the sell-off of public land. A proposal to divest 500,000 acres of National Forest and Bureau of Land Management land was included in the federal budget reconciliation bill passed by the House. The Senate passed a version that increased the acreage to 3 million. Following public outrage about this proposal, and a parliamentarian's decision that such language violated strict budget rules, the provisions were removed and the bill was passed without them in July.

In October, Senator Lee was back with a proposed "Border Lands Conservation Act" that would roll back protections for public land, hand over the authority over millions of acres of federal land to the Department of Homeland Security, allow the building of roads and infrastructure in wilderness areas, and bypass environmental reviews in the name of "national security". The bill covers any land

"within 100 miles of a border", including our northern border with Canada.

Public Land Disabled Access

Utah Senators Mike Lee and John Curtis have introduced a bill called "Outdoor Americans with Disabilities Act" that would "ensure that Americans with disabilities have the same chance to experience the beauty of our country as everyone else." The bill would require federal agencies to "account for accessibility" when managing travel plans and would restrict road closures that would reduce accessibility. The bill defines "disability-accessible" land as one square mile with at least 2.5 miles of authorized motorized routes.

Reorganize The Forest Service

The Department of Agriculture has announced that it intends to reorganize the Forest Service, reducing the number of regional offices and consolidating research stations. The current nine regional forest offices would be reduced to five. The California-based Region 5 office, currently located in Vallejo would be consolidated into one of the five new regional hubs located in Salt Lake City. In the meantime, Region 5, which does not currently have a permanent Supervisor, will be run out of the Region 6 office in Portland, Oregon. All stand-alone research stations would be consolidated into a single station at Fort Collins, Colorado. Many of the Forest Service personnel currently working in Washington, DC would be spread among the five regional hubs.

Senator Lee has introduced legislation that would move the Forest Service from the Department of Agriculture to the Department of the Interior and create a separate agency for combating wildfires.

Stanislaus Snowmobile Lawsuit Tossed

On August 28, 2025 a US District Judge issued a decision in a lawsuit that had been filed by several snowmobile organizations and individuals challenging the final snowmobile use designation plan for Stanislaus National Forest. The judge upheld the Forest Service's plan decision and rejected all of the claims by the plaintiffs. The judge also rejected counter-claims by environmental organizations that had filed as intervenors in the case seeking more protection for wildlife. Thus, the snowmobile management plan remains as it was originally issued in July, 2021.

The lawsuit was filed in October, 2021. Plaintiffs included the Sierra Snowmobile Foundation, the Blue Ribbon Coalition, the American Council of Snowmobile Associations, and several individuals. The lawsuit claimed that the decision 1) failed to adequately consider the environmental impacts, 2) failed to meet the purpose and need of the project, 3) was inconsistent with the Forest Plan, 4) used inadequate scientific information in the evaluation of effects, and 5) used arbitrary application to the

minimization criteria.

The lawsuit complained that the decision did not provide data to justify a 12-inch minimum snow depth for cross-country travel, failed to cite "high-quality scientific evidence" to justify closing known occupied Sierra Nevada red fox territory, and failed to support the assumption that snow accumulation below 5000 feet is inadequate to support OSV use.

Intervenors in the lawsuit included WildEarth Guardians and California Wilderness Coalition. They argued in their filing that the Forest Service did not adequately analyze the impact of OSV use on the Sierra Nevada red fox, Yosemite toad, Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, which are all listed as threatened or endangered, and the Pacific marten.

In a 31-page decision, the Judge denied all claims by both the snowmobile plaintiffs and the environmental intervenors and allowed the Stanislaus Over Snow Vehicle Use Designation final decision to stand.

Snowlands Network
PO Box 321171
Los Gatos CA 95032

Snowlands Network

PO Box 321171
Los Gatos, CA 95032
www.snowlands.org
info@snowlands.org
530.265.6424

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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.*