

SNOWLANDS

Bulletin

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

Winter Grant Applications for 2003-04 Your Letters Urgently Needed

The Forest Service is in the process of writing grant proposals for snowmobile trail grooming and enforcement for the 2003-2004 winter season, which must be submitted to the California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division by May 15 for funding. The Division reviews the grant applications and makes recommendations to the OHMVR Commission. The Commission makes the final decision on which shall be funded. Your letters are needed to ensure that the worst proposals are not funded. **Letters need to reach the Forest Service by mid-April to be most effective.**

In recent years the State has subsidized the Forest Service to the tune of \$1 million to \$2 million per year to groom hundreds of miles of snowmobile trails on 13 national forests in California and additional amounts for enforcement. But the competition for the funding has been getting more difficult as the pot of money grows smaller. The shrinking pot of money has resulted from new regulations restricting how funds attributed to unregistered vehicles can be spent.

Believe it or not, you can have a major effect on what snowmobile trails are funded by the State. Last year three forests were turned down because the OHMVR Commission did not believe that these forests had winter programs with sufficient opportunities for non-motorized recreation. That can happen again this year if you and others voice disfavor with grants to specific forests.

Why write?

Snowlands Network works hard to persuade the OHMVR Commission to make changes that benefit backcountry skiers and snowshoers. But the Commission needs more broad based support for changes in order to justify the changes. That's where your letters help.

What to write

At the end of this article is a list of the 13 forests that we expect will apply for funds from the California OHV Grant Program. We urge you to write one or two (or more) of them

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Dodge Ridge In Spotlight Snowlands Takes On Three Issues

Recent and ongoing events have put a spotlight on things that are taking place at Dodge Ridge Ski Area (DRSA). DRSA has applied to build a snowplay area that would have significant negative impacts on the existing Gooseberry Nordic ski trail. The same application asks for permission to construct more additional parking than is required. And continuing is the out-of-bounds skiing that resulted from the construction of Chair 8 and is affecting traditional use of nearby Nordic trails.

Proposed Snowplay Area Impacts Gooseberry Trail

If DRSA has its way, their proposed pay-for-use snowplay area will be built at the trailhead for the Gooseberry Nordic ski trail. The rerouted Nordic ski trail will be on a south-facing (sunny) slope as opposed to the northwest-facing (shady) slope of the existing trail.

At the existing trailhead the snow conditions are only marginally good due to the relatively low elevation. The proposed new location for the trailhead will significantly limit use of the trail by further shortening its usable season due to inadequate snow. Snowlands Network contends that this degradation is of such major significance that for this reason alone the proposed snowplay area and reroute should not be permitted.

The relationship between the orientation of a slope and snow-cover is of such dramatic significance that none of the downhill ski trails face south. Likewise it would be unreasonable to place the beginning section of the Gooseberry Nordic ski trail, located at only 6500-feet, facing south.

Furthermore, the proposal for rerouting the Gooseberry trail calls for no ground or vegetation disturbance. This will further shorten the usable season for the trail because the new location will require a greater snow depth in order to be usable in contrast to the existing smooth road surface.

The scoping notice states that the purpose of the snowplay area is to fulfill an existing public demand. The proposed solution is to construct a pay-for-use area and at

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Hearty Soups and Stews They Cook in a Mug

When Board Member Charley White is not out herding his cows (all eight of them), or researching some technical issue for Snowlands Network, or snowcamping, you can often find him experimenting. It might be on his idea for the ultimate twig burning stove or a new brew for a hearty soup or stew. From the latter he gives us the following wisdom.

Hearty soups and stews that cook in a thermos mug – add boiling water – have become very popular for winter camping. Lighter packs are always attractive, and the simplicity of getting such a meal prepared and into you can be more than merely attractive when you are exhausted and setting up camp in a bitterly cold wind or storm.

Many instant mixes are commercially available. But you can make your own. Suit your own taste and overcome the baro-intestinal consequences of poorly digestible contents, diabolically seasoned, that are notorious with instant food. The foundation of these meals is generally some carbohydrate that rehydrates quickly, along with a bouillon. Minute rice, potato flakes, ramen noodles, and couscous are well known standards.

But two staves of life, wheat and corn, should be added to this list. Take corn tortillas, dry them hard, and run them through the blender. Tortilla soup made with the resulting bits and chicken bouillon is ready in a minute and tastes fabulous. Amend to liking – hot sauce, Moroccan lemon, cheese, chicken bits, vegetable flakes.

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

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Editor

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Stale bread is a common and delicious component of many peasant soups. Crumbs made from your favorite hearty bread will travel as long and well as you do. Ribollita is a wonderful Italian soup made with leftover vegetables and bread-ends. You can make the soup up and then dehydrate it to a crust, or save time and dry the ingredients separately (food dehydrator or warm oven necessary). The ingredients are:

- Bread crumbs
- White beans – cook smash, and dry
- Cabbage or any other veggie you desire – cook and dry
- Onions and garlic – cook and dry
- Bacon – cut into bits and cook
- Chicken bouillon
- Parmesan cheese – add after soup has rehydrated
- Olive oil – add after soup has rehydrated (warm the oil by dipping its Nalgene bottle in boiling water)

One-quarter to one-third dry ingredients to water is about right. Wetter generally tastes better at altitude. Experiment at home for lunch. If it's good at home it will be good in camp!

Mammoth Nordic A New Voice In Town

Brian Knox, driving force behind the Eastern Sierra Cross Country Ski Association (ESCCSA) and its Advocacy Director for the last four years, has resigned from the association and started Mammoth Nordic. In the letter announcing his resignation he said, "Due to a personal belief that creating momentum for change requires broadening our constituency, I have formed a new club called Mammoth Nordic."

Brian points out that, "All of the goals embodied in the ESCCSA will continue to be supported and pursued by this new club. He believes that with some fresh ideas, more attention to membership benefits, a new website and updated newsletter, the scope of what we can accomplish will be expanded significantly."

It appears that the new organization will focus on a Municipal Nordic Trail System in the town of Mammoth. For years Brian has been vocal about the need for an inviting, safe, clean and fun way to get around in Mammoth during winter. As he puts it, "It is a mandatory amenity for a winter resort town of Mammoth's caliber." He often points to the Wood River Trails just north of Ketchum and Sun Valley, ID, where the trails see 300,000 user days each year. The local Chamber of Commerce mails out approximately 10,000 brochures on it each year. Several years ago, a survey asked residents to list the best recreational features of the valley. The Wood River Trails ranked second behind the ski hill.

Brian says, "It's time for the town government to put our Pedestrian Vision where our mouth is. Our locals deserve it. Our visitors demand it."

Brian cordially invites you to become a member, and looks forward to working with friends, both old and new, on

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Rally Generates Congressional Support for Yellowstone

Skiers, snowshoers and other snow sports enthusiasts crowded the west entrance of Yellowstone National Park February 15 to urge the National Park Service and the Bush Administration to protect the world's first national park by eliminating the private and commercial snowmobile use that is harming Yellowstone and ruining the natural wild experience it offers its visitors.

The "Stand Up for Yellowstone" rally inside the west gate of the world's first national park drew about 80 participants from around the country. Skiers, snowshoers and others filled Winter Wildlands Alliance's Park Service-approved rally area, greeting incoming snowmobilers with waves and signs reading "Nature Needs Clean Air," "Protect Our Wildlife," and "Yellowstone's A Treasure."

Winter Wildlands Alliance (WWA) began organizing the "Stand Up for Yellowstone" rally last fall after it became clear

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Yellowstone: This Story Isn't Over

National Park Service (NPS) officials agree with environmentalists that continuing to allow snowmobiling in Yellowstone National Park is not the best thing for the park's environment. Yet the plan unveiled February 27 by the NPS and to take affect March 27 calls for continued snowmobile use and an overall increase in use throughout the park.

The latest plan replaces that of the Clinton Administration, which called for a multi-year phase-out of snowmobiles in Yellowstone and their replacement by multi-passenger snowcoaches. "What can be more equalizing than everyone taking bus-like transportation to visit the park," says Marcus Libkind. "Yet I'm called an environmental elitist by the snowmobile community. But they are the elitists. They want to maintain their right to use their \$6,000-10,000 machines, towed behind \$30,000 pickup trucks, to visit Yellowstone and at the same time degrade the experience for others who seek solitude in the park."

The previous plan is the "environmentally preferred alternative," said John Sacklin, Yellowstone's chief planner. But the NPS now endorses what they call the "agency-preferred alternative," which requires the phase-in of cleaner, quieter snowmobiles. But what goes unsaid is that the newer snowmobiles are still relatively dirty (see EPA Issues Weak Snowmobile and ATV Emission Rule on this page) and quiet is relative. The new four-stroke snowmobiles might be acceptable in an urban setting from a noise standpoint, but the noise they produce is still unacceptable in terms of wilderness. Libkind points out that, "the standards for acceptable on our streets and highways is in no way acceptable on our wildlands."

According to Yellowstone Superintendent Suzanne Lewis, "The effects [of the new plan] are slightly greater." But

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EPA Issues Weak Snowmobile and ATV Emissions Rule

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved a final rule establishing air pollution standards for snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and dirt bikes on September 13, 2002. As details have emerged from EPA, it is increasingly clear that the final rule is even weaker than anticipated. It fails to take a forward-looking approach to technology, backslides on pollution from all-terrain vehicles, and misses an opportunity to harness market forces to encourage greater pollution reductions.

The final rule includes a number of serious flaws:

- It postpones even the modest air pollution reductions for snowmobiles by two years until 2012 rather than 2010 as proposed.
- It fails to require the greatest pollution reductions achievable with technology that will be available as required by the Clean Air Act.
- According to EPA, 30 percent of new snowmobiles produced after 2012 could be powered by more conventional two-stroke engines.
- It backslides on ATV standards by allowing new ATVs to produce more pollution than the EPA proposed only a year ago.
- It yields to the off-road vehicle industry on pollution labeling by opting for temporary rather than permanent labels.

The Clean Air Act requires the EPA to set emission standards that will achieve the greatest reductions possible with technology that "will be available." This is designed to utilize innovation to cut pollution more than what could be achieved by only applying technology that is available on the date a rule is issued. EPA has failed to take this forward-looking approach. Production line snowmobiles today equipped with four-stroke engines cut hydrocarbon pollution by as much as EPA would require a decade from now. The final rule allows this industry to coast along with static technology for years to come rather than establish standards that would promote greater innovation, and more significantly cut harmful air pollution.

As anticipated, the EPA bowed to industry pressure by rejecting a permanent pollution labeling system. EPA had an opportunity to utilize market forces to encourage even greater pollution reductions by adopting a simple, common sense label that would allow consumers to distinguish between the dirtiest and cleanest off-road vehicles. With this information, consumers could drive the market toward cleaner technology with their purchases.

Senator Reid Blasts Department of Interior for Altering Park Service Comments on EPA Rule

In an unexpected development, Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) released a statement with information that demonstrates how

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Rally Generates Support

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that the Bush Administration and the National Park Service planned to recommend snowmobiles enjoy continued access to Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks despite evidence they are taking a huge toll on the parks' resources, wildlife, and experiences of other visitors.

Joining Winter Wildlands in the rally were dozens of demonstrators from Great Old Broads for Wilderness, who along with the WWA demonstrators met at length with members of Congress, including Representatives Rush Holt (D-NJ), Joe Hoeffel (D-PA), and Nick Rahall (D-W.VA).

Holt is a prime sponsor of the Yellowstone Protection Act, which Hoeffel also supports and which Rahall said he would cosponsor after meeting with park officials, demonstrators, and seeing the snowmobile scene during the President's Day weekend.

"It was important for us to be here this President's Day, with the Park Service about to issue its recommendations on the future winter use of Yellowstone," Winter Wildlands Executive Director Sally Grimes said. "The skiers and snowshoers who took time out of their busy schedules to be here encouraged each other, but also sent a strong message to the Park Service and to the West Yellowstone community that Yellowstone and its gateway communities can both flourish after the snowmobiles are gone."

WWA President Sarah Michael, who is also a county commissioner from Blaine County, ID, said the presence of the human-powered snow sports enthusiasts made it clear that Yellowstone would be better off without snowmobiles, but also should help convince many in Congress that they need to sign onto the Yellowstone Protection Act.

"The fact that one of the most high-ranking members of Congress, Mr. Rahall, decided during this President's Day trip to sign onto the Yellowstone Protection Act shows that skiers contributed to protecting the park," Michael said. "You can't come here during snowmobile season and go home feeling this is the best future for Yellowstone National Park."

Yellowstone officials said the WWA rally inside the west gate – the busiest snowmobile entrance into the park – was the first winter demonstration in recent memory. Besides the Saturday morning demonstration, rally participants took guided trips to explore more quiet areas of Yellowstone country, as well as participating in the sound survey to help show even the quieter machines can be heard by non-snowmobilers from West Yellowstone to Old Faithful.

Press Release

Winter Wildlands Alliance

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www.winterwildlands.org

Editors note: Winter Wildlands Alliance complements the work done by Snowlands Network by being our voice on the national level. Snowlands is a member of WWA and encourages its members to become affiliated with WWA too.

Snowlands at Earth Day in Reno

Snowlands Network will be "making a difference" during the Earth Day celebration April 27th at Idlewild Park in Reno, Nevada. We will be there with newsletters and brochures, as well as photos of our work. Please stop by the booth to say hello and bring a friend to join Snowlands. Each membership puts us closer to our goal of preserving and protecting public lands for non-motorized snow sports.

The next five to ten years will present tremendous challenges to protect national forest lands in California, including Lake Tahoe, Hope Valley and Carson Pass areas to name a few. During this period, all the forests with winter recreation opportunities will be revising their management plans that will guide forest managers for 10-15 years. Snowlands Network is your guarantee that the voice of human-powered snow sports enthusiasts will be heard. Please bring a friend to the Snowlands' booth on Earth Day.

Yellowstone: This Story Isn't Over

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according to the final environmental impact statement those effects include haze at Old Faithful, noise, enough air pollution that some entrance station employees may have to wear respirators, and some visitors will become sick from the fumes.

While the plan is an improvement over past conditions in Yellowstone, the banning of snowmobiles from the park would create an even bigger improvement. At the heart of the controversy is whether the desire of a few to motor through the park on their personal vehicles should be allowed to significantly impact the majority of those who seek the solitude that one comes to expect in our national parks. Yellowstone and the average person who either doesn't want to or can't afford to snowmobile deserve the maximum protection.

For now it looks like the elitist snowmobilers will continue to have access to the Yellowstone National Park because Park Service Regional Director Karen Wade plans to sign the plan.

But whether it will withstand the test of time remains to be seen. Senator Harry Reid (D-NV), along with Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and others, has introduced in the Senate a companion bill to the House of Representative's Yellowstone Protection Act that bans all recreational snowmobiling from the park.

"The administration's own science, hundreds of thousands of Americans, and their own employees told them that snowmobiles should be phased out," Reid said. "Today the administration ignored it all ... and put forward a plan to pollute Yellowstone."

Roger Kennedy, who ran the Park Service under President Clinton and worked for several other presidents, has described the debate over snowmobiling in Yellowstone National Park as a "moral problem" and feels confident that the decision to allow continued use of the park by snowmobiles will not last long. He predicts that "this story isn't over."

Board Members Attend OHV Public Workshop

Three members of Snowlands Network's Board of Directors attended a public meeting organized by the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division of the California Department of Parks and Recreation on Saturday, January 25. The purpose of the meeting was to allow the public to provide advice to the OHMVR Commission. The Commission was created by the Legislature in 1982 to allow public input and provide policy guidance for the state OHV program.

One of the important functions of the Commission is to allocate funds for OHV grants. Program funding comes from fuel taxes that are attributable to the recreational use of vehicles off-highway (currently 1% of all fuel taxes), off-highway vehicle registration fees, and fees collected at state vehicular recreation areas. The money is allocated to various public and private agencies to manage off-road recreation. Some of these grants are for the grooming of snowmobile trails on public lands as well as for law enforcement, education, and restoration and conservation of natural resources on public lands where snowmobiles are used.

The seven commissioners are appointed to staggered, four-year terms. The Governor appoints three of the commissioners, and the Senate Rules Committee and the Speaker of the Assembly each appoint two. The Commission membership is required to represent a broad range of disciplines relevant to off-highway recreation – OHV recreation enthusiasts, biologists, rural landowners, soil scientists, and environmental interests. Currently about half of the commissioners represent environmental interests and half represent OHV interests. In an unprecedented action this fall the Commission failed to approve grants for grooming and management on three major snowmobile trails (Snowlands Bulletin, December 2002).

The purpose of this public meeting was for the Commission to interface with the public and with representatives of the OHV Stakeholders Roundtable. The stated objective of the Commission was to find a way to better manage OHV recreation while protecting the environment. The Stakeholders Roundtable is a group of representatives of interested parties who meet several times a year to advise the OHMVR Division about legislation affecting the OHV program. Included in the Roundtable are representatives of OHV recreation, industry, environmentalists, non-motorized recreation, land managers, and law enforcement.

About 150 members of the public attended the January meeting, which began with introductions of the commissioners and OHMVR Division staff members. Brian Klock, who was the OHMVR Division staff representative, gave an overview of AB2274, passed in 2002, which amends and clarifies laws affecting OHV recreation and the OHMVR Division program. Significant changes include the way that fuel tax monies are allocated, with fuel taxes attributed to non-registered OHVs being used only for restoration, natural resource conservation, and law enforcement. The new law

Problems Persist at Tahoe Meadows

Problems persist even after the Forest Service made permanent the closure of a portion of Tahoe Meadows on the Mt. Rose Highway to snowmobile use. The public asked the forest service to close the entire four-square mile area, known as Tahoe Meadows, to snowmobiles due to safety, noise, and air and water pollution. Prior to the closures 93 percent of the visitors to the Meadows, there for skiing, snowshoeing, sledding and snowplay, were negatively impacted by the 7 percent snowmobile use. The snowmobilers also trespassed into areas such as the Mt. Rose Wilderness and the Galena drainage that were closed to motorized use.

All of the same problems continue to plague the area where snowmobiles are still allowed access. The Forest Service has gone so far as to post 15 mile/hour speed limits in some areas for snowmobiles. But the rules continue to be broken – speeding, excessive snowmobile noise, and trespass into the closed areas occur on a continual basis. Safety issues continue to exist where motorized vehicles and pedestrians mix.

On a sunny weekend day as many as 500 cars park on the highway next to Tahoe Meadows. On the same day there will be fewer than 15 snowmobile riders using the area. Usually the number is fewer than 10. However, the noise, the safety issues, and the smell of exhaust effect the hundreds of other users of the area.

The forest service allocated substantial funding to monitor and enforce snowmobile regulations at Tahoe Meadows this winter. Despite this increased funding no citations have been given this winter and compliance with the snowmobile boundaries has not been achieved.

In this economy, with shrinking funds available for so many agencies, why not use available dollars on projects that have the opportunity for success. Close Tahoe Meadows to snowmobile use and use those enforcement funds in a project that can be successful.

Please contact Gary Schiff, District Ranger, Carson Ranger District, and ask him to close the entire Tahoe Meadows to snowmobile use. He can be contacted at 1536 S. Carson Street, Carson City, NV 89701, or gschiff@fs.fed.us.

Gail Ferrell

also allows the OHMVR Commission to include representatives of law enforcement and non-motorized recreation interests. The legislation also made changes in the OHV Grants Program that allow specific grants for law enforcement as well as requiring more documentation of environmental affects in the grant applications.

The remainder of the morning was spent in introductions of Stakeholders representatives, who were given an opportunity to discuss their interests as they relate to the OHV program. There were representatives from several environmental organizations including Bluewater Network, the

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Winter Grant Applications

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and explain your feelings about their snowmobile program.

Here are some general points that you may want to make:

- You are commenting on the forest's 2003-2004 winter OHV grant application and you want your comments to be part of their application.
- Funding should be limited to minimizing conflict between motorized and non-motorized winter uses, enforcing regulations and protecting the environment, not snowmobile trail grooming.
- Snowmobile trail grooming is only acceptable where an adequate quantity of high quality opportunities for non-motorized winter recreation on nearby lands has been provided. Until a balance in motorized and non-motorized opportunities is reached, no snowmobile trail grooming should be funded.
- Snowmobile trail grooming not only attracts high concentrations of snowmobiles to the trails, but also to the surrounding lands thus leaving nowhere for skiers and snowshoers to go.
- The Forest Service does not provide groomed ski and snowshoe trails for the public. Why are they doing so for snowmobiling? The grooming should be left to commercial enterprises.
- The use of a categorical exclusion is not sufficient to allow snowmobile trail grooming. It does not allow for the necessary analysis of the effects of the grooming on non-motorized recreationists and the environment. Only through a full analysis can the effects of the trail grooming be weighed.

There are several forests for which specific points need to be made.

Eldorado National Forest

The Silver Bear Snowmobile Trail includes 60 miles of trails, yet there is not any area in the vicinity set aside as non-motorized for skiers and snowshoers. A non-motorized area north of Highway 88 that includes Anderson and Plummer ridges and the Consumnes drainage should be created to balance use opportunities in the area.

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest

Until such time as the Forest Service can enforce the non-motorized closures in the Forestdale Creek area and follows through with their past proposal for a mid-winter closure of the entire Forestdale Creek area, the Forest Service should not allow the nearby Blue Lake Road Trail to be groomed.

Inyo National Forest

Winter use opportunities on Inyo National Forest are highly skewed toward snowmobile use. No grants for snowmobile trail grooming should be given until more

emphasis is placed on balancing motorized and non-motorized opportunities.

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit

The Mount Watson Road at Brockway Summit should not be allowed to be groomed until such time as an area nearby is set aside for skiers and snowshoers to recreate without the ill effects of snowmobiles.

Stanislaus National Forest

Subsidized snowmobile trail grooming should be halted until such time as Stanislaus National Forest provides subsidized snowplay opportunities to fulfill demand, not their proposed pay-for-use snowplay.

Tahoe National Forest

All snowmobile trail grooming on Tahoe National Forest should be stopped until the Forest Service acts on the 1995 decision requiring the forest to amend the Forest Plan to correct the inconsistency in the Plan's handling of motor vehicle use in the Castle Management Area.

Deadline

The Forest Service must submit their grant applications by May 15. They need to receive your comments by mid-April to be included in the application, but Snowlands can use them even if they are late.

Send copies to Snowlands

Please send a copy of your comments to Snowlands Network (P.O. Box 230, Livermore, CA 94551 or issues@snowlands.org). We need them so that we can insure that they have been entered into the record.

Forest Service Addresses

Eldorado National Forest
100 Forni Road
Placerville, CA 95667

Inyo National Forest
873 North Main Street
Bishop, CA 93514

Klamath National Forest
1312 Fairlane Road
Yreka, CA 96097

Lake Tahoe Basin
Management Unit
870 Emerald Bay Road, Suite 1
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

Lassen National Forest
2102 Main Street
Susanville, CA 96130

Modoc National Forest
800 West 12th Street
Alturas, CA 96101

Plumas National Forest
P. O. Box 11500
159 Lawrence St
Quincy, CA 95971

Sequoia National Forest
900 W. Grand Avenue
Porterville, CA 93257

Shasta-Trinity National Forest
2400 Washington Ave
Redding, CA 96001

Sierra National Forest
Federal Building, Room 3017
1130 O Street
Fresno, CA 93721

Stanislaus National Forest
175 South Fairview Lane
Sonora, CA 95370

Tahoe National Forest
Highway 49 and Coyote St.
Nevada City, CA 95959

Toiyabe National Forest
1200 Franklin Way
Sparks, NV 89431

Ski Trips Prove A Success

In the December issue of the Snowlands Bulletin it was announced that board members would be leading four ski and snowshoe trips – three to Tahoe Meadows on the Mount Rose Highway and one to Anderson Ridge on Highway 88. The response to these trips has been good.

The December trip to Tahoe Meadows, led by board member Gail Ferrell, drew three other participants who skied along a road to the divide between Tahoe Meadows and the Galena drainage. The morning portion of the trip was a sunny and pleasant experience. However, snowmobiles sped by in the afternoon creating a foul smell from fumes and breaking the silence of the forest.

A month later, five skiers joined five board members for a more ambitious ski tour. The strong skiing ability of the group combined with 4 inches of fresh powder and 25 F temperatures made for an excellent opportunity to circumnavigate Tamarack Peak.

After a short climb to a low point on the south ridge of Tamarack Peak the group traversed around the south and east sides of the peak until the divide between the Galena drainage and Tahoe Meadows was reached. Although this route is generally a traverse, there are moderate ups and downs with a couple of unavoidable modestly steep but short sections. Everyone took full advantage of the excellent snow conditions on the descents with turns in and out of the trees.

From the divide we returned to the cars via the road that is shared by skiers, snowshoers and snowmobilers. Although no snowmobiles were encountered on this trip, to our amazement a strong gasoline smell lingered from when they had passed earlier in the day. It is also impossible to get entirely away from the snowmobile noise while in the Meadows.

These first two trips to Tahoe Meadows were intended to show the participants the improved conditions in the area since the banning of snowmobiles in much of the meadows, and why Snowlands Network advocates eliminating snowmobile use from the small remaining area north of the highway (see Problems Persist at Tahoe Meadows on page 5).

The third ski trip was in late February to the Anderson Ridge area near the Iron Mountain Sno-Park on Highway 88, where efforts are ongoing to create a non-motorized area in the midst of the Silver Bear Snowmobile Trail. Ten participants joined board member Marcus Libkind on a loop ski trip that included parts of the marked Anderson Ridge and Consumnes Loop trails.

Instead of beginning the tour at the Sno-Park where the marked trails begin, the group was introduced to an alternate starting point that avoids the most heavily used snowmobile areas. But as the group skied along the ridges there was the unmistakable roar of snowmobiles nearby. To their chagrin, on the return to the trailhead they found their ski tracks destroyed by snowmobiles that chose to ride over them although there was plenty of room to avoid them.

Participants on the Anderson Ridge tour installed two new arrows at critical locations on the Consumnes Loop.

The Snowlands Network website contains information on marked trails in the Anderson Ridge area and the alternate

E-Mail Reminders of Ski and Snowshoe Trips

This winter the Alert List was used to remind people about ski and snowshoe trips sponsored by Snowlands Network (see Ski Trips Prove A Success on page this page). These trips are fun adventures and at the same time introduce participants to areas where Snowlands is working to provide better opportunities for its community.

Snowlands maintains an e-mail Alert List in order to inform its recipients about issues that require immediate comments from the public. It has been expanded to include reminding recipients about ski and snowshoe trips. To be added to the Alert List you must send your e-mail address to issues@snowlands.org and state that you want to be added to the list.

Finally, if you think that you are on the e-mail Alert List, but you did not receive a reminder about the Anderson Ridge ski tour in February, it means that you are not on it. Maybe you changed your e-mail address and did not tell us. Or maybe after a recent computer crash we did not get your e-mail address reinstalled in the program. In either case, please send us your e-mail address and we will add it to the list.

Calling All Snowshoers

Snowshoeing is the fastest growing winter sport on our national forests. Snowlands Network desires to work with snowshoers who share our mission of promoting quality opportunities for human-powered winter recreation.

You can help Snowlands and benefit the snowshoe community by educating the Board of Directors as to the unique needs of snowshoers that are currently not being met. Please help Snowlands attract snowshoers to our organization.

One thing that strikes Snowlands as interesting is that there are few, if any, organizations that provide organized backcountry snowshoe trips. In contrast, scattered across California and Nevada are organizations that provide organized backcountry ski trips. We would like to know why this is so and whether the snowshoe community would like to see this change. Please send your comments to Snowlands Network, P.O. Box 230, Livermore, CA 94551 or issues@snowlands.org.

trailhead described above. Go to www.snowlands.org, click on “resources” and then “tours.” Contact Marcus at 925-455-5816 if you don’t have access to the internet.

The fourth planned trip, a snowshoe trip in the Tahoe Meadows area, had not taken place at the time of this writing.

We will continue to lead similar trips next winter. Again they will be aimed at being fun and informative. Already there is talk of expanding to other areas where Snowlands Network is working on issues.

Although you will read about next season’s trips in the December issue of the Bulletin, you can receive e-mail reminders by signing up for the e-mail Alert List as described on this page.

Dodge Ridge In Spotlight

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the same time displace public, no-fee use by Nordic skiers and snowshoers. There is a viable alternative to the pay-for-use area proposed by DRSA that avoids displacement of existing Nordic use, and simultaneously meets the needs of a greater segment of the public.

Consider the I-80 corridor. The Sno-Park at Yuba Gap has 300 parking spaces and fills up on fair-weather weekend days with snowplowers. This translates to 900 users based on the same occupancy ratio used by DRSA. In contrast the Soda Springs commercial snowplay area receives significantly less use. The conclusion to be drawn is that the demand for no-fee use far exceeds that for pay-for-use.

The above conclusion is not surprising when you consider the cost differential. The cost for a family of three to recreate for an entire day at a Sno-Park is \$5. In contrast the same family of three would have to pay \$48 to recreate for a day at a pay-for-use snowplay area.¹ Clearly there are many families that cannot afford \$48 for one day of snowplay or simply believe that such cost is excessive. Therefore in order to meet the needs of the largest cross-section of the public the Forest Service should reject DRSA's proposed snowplay area and move forward with a low cost snowplay area.

Ironically, the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division, is actively seeking locations to build Sno-Parks specifically to provide snowplay opportunities. Funding is available for the construction of such facilities, including parking and vault toilets, if the Forest Service dedicates land for the snowplay hill and parking, and enters into a long-term agreement for the Sno-Park (not unlike the arrangement with DRSA). Therefore, there is a viable alternative to the pay-for-use snowplay area proposed by DRSA that will better serve the general public without requiring the reroute of the Gooseberry Nordic ski trail.

This potentially devastating development by DRSA is now a high priority on Snowlands Network's radar screen. The review of the proposed action will be carefully monitored and appropriate action taken.

Proposed Expanded Parking Excessive

DRSA has proposed, based on their 1990 Final Development Plan and as mitigation for the Chair 8 expansion, to increase the current parking by 86 percent. Their intention is to construct sufficient parking to meet a theoretical comfortable carrying capacity plus 20 percent to cover peak days. This would require parking lots to be constructed to the north and outside of their existing parking loop at significant impact on the environment.

What is not said in that current peak use can be met with significantly less parking and without any parking outside the existing parking loop. In all likelihood there will not be a need for the maximum parking proposed because ski industry data

¹ The cost for pay-for-use snowplay is based on Soda Springs Ski Area, which currently charges \$16 per person.

shows that demand for downhill skiing has been flat for 20 years.

The proposed expansion of parking is part of the same package as the snowplay area and will be monitored.

Environmental Assessment Not Sufficient

The Forest Service plans to use an environmental assessment (EA) as review for the proposed snowplay and parking additions. Snowlands Network will be challenging that because an EA can only be used where there is a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The snowplay area will require rerouting the Gooseberry Nordic ski trail, a reduction in the usable season for the trail, and a significant impact on other forest users. The additional parking was originally analyzed in 1990 in a more in depth environmental impact statement and must be done again for the same reasons — the proposed construction will have a significant impact on the environment.

Out-Of-Bounds Skiing

To the chagrin of backcountry skiers and snowshoers using the Gooseberry and Crabtree Nordic ski trails at Pinecrest, DRSA is encouraging out-of-bounds downhill skiing and snowboarding, and according to the Forest Service it is legal. The out-of-bounds skiing puts downhill skiers² on the Gooseberry and Crabtree Nordic trails where traditional users include Nordic skiers and snowshoers.³

Out-of-bounds skiing and snowboarding on Nordic ski trails is a safety issue that must not be ignored. Downhill skiers travel at much higher speeds than Nordic skiers and therefore create a clear and present danger. The developed downhill ski area offers sufficient terrain for downhill skiers. The Forest Service should be taking appropriate steps to provide a safe environment for other users outside the ski area boundaries.

According to Julie Martin of the Forest Service, the out-of-bounds skiing is legal based on the Special Use Permit for DRSA. The Forest Service will review the situation if Snowlands Network officially requests them to do so. Snowlands has done so. In their letter Snowlands pointed out that, although legal, both DRSA and the Forest Service should be held accountable for injuries to a Nordic skier because they knowingly allow and promote an unsafe condition due to the out-of-bounds skiing.

One of the issues raised during the 1997 analysis of the Chair 8 expansion at DRSA was the potential use of the Gooseberry Nordic ski trails by downhill skiers as a result of the groomed downhill ski trails crossing the Nordic ski trail. In response to that concern the Forest Service stated that it would not happen. But it did happen and has been a problem for years. There has been no attempt by the Forest Service to stop this use of the Nordic ski trails. Why has the Forest Service reneged on their promise?

Continued on next page

² All references to "downhill skiers" should be taken to mean "downhill skiers and snowboarders."

³ All references to "Nordic skiers" should be taken to mean "Nordic skiers and snowshoers," and it should be recognized that skiers and snowshoers share Nordic ski trails.

Dodge Ridge In Spotlight

Continued from previous page

The out-of-bounds skiing is equally as bad on the Crabtree side of DRSA. Downhill skiers regularly ski out-of-bounds from the top of Chair 8 (the Knob) and descend along the Aspen Meadow road and other Crabtree Nordic ski trails. DRSA is encouraging this out-of-bounds use by allowing skiers simply to register with the ski patrol at the top of Chair 8 as condition to leaving the ski area.

Out-of-bounds skiing and snowboarding at DRSA has taken a high priority at Snowlands Network. Snowlands will press the Forest Service to take action on this issue.

Write Tracy Stelman to voice your opinion on the snowplay area and the parking issues and Julie Martin to voice your opinion on out-of-bound skiing at DRSA. They both can be contacted at: Summit Ranger District, #1 Pinecrest Lake Road, Pinecrest, CA 95364.

EPA Issues Weak Rule

Continued from page 3

political appointees in the Department of Interior continue to disregard and overrule the recommendations of Park Service professionals. As reported in the New York Times and Associated Press, Senator Reid received a copy of Park Service comments on the EPA rule raising strong concerns that the proposed emission standards would not address the serious air pollution problem caused by snowmobiles in Yellowstone. Those comments were then heavily edited by the Department to remove the Yellowstone specific examples before submission to EPA.

Senator Reid explained: "I have a copy of those comments that shows how they were redacted by the Interior Department. The Bush Administration pulled teeth out of the comments and cut the legs out from under its own scientists. The Administration decided to listen to the industry instead of its own experts."

Once again, Park Service professionals have been overruled by an Administration focused on a single goal of maintaining large-scale snowmobile use in America's first National Park. This also demonstrates the very direct connection between the EPA's rule to regulate snowmobile and other off-road vehicle emissions and the Administration's tortured efforts to prove that new snowmobiles will not adversely affect air quality in the Park. Based on Senator Reid's comments and press reports, it is clear that the Service did not believe the EPA's standards would address the problem.

*Natural Trails and Water Coalition
c/o The Wilderness Society
1615 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
www.naturaltrails.org*

Editors note: Snowlands Network is a member of Natural Trails and Water Coalition whose mission is to protect and restore all public lands and waters from the severe damage caused by dirt bikes, jet skis and all other off-road vehicles.

OHV Public Workshop

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Planning and Conservation League, the Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation, and the Audubon Society.

The afternoon was mainly devoted to a forum to allow the members of the public who attended to air their views on the OHV program. Members of the OHV community in general spoke about the need to provide more OHV recreation access to public lands in California. Most members of the non-motorized community spoke to the need for greater management and enforcement of existing OHV use, the need for winter non-motorized areas, and better protection of natural resources in areas where OHV use is allowed.

Near the end of the afternoon an intriguing suggestion was put forth to create more motor vehicle recreation areas rather than specific routes within mixed use areas. However it was pointed out that such areas require adequate space in order to provide a non-motorized buffer zone around the perimeter to avoid conflicts with other recreationists and surrounding landowners. This would be an expansion of the sacrificial State Vehicular Recreation Areas developed for dirt-bikes and ATVs, but it is not clear whether such a plan would work for snowmobiles because snowmobilers tend to drive longer distances as opposed to play in a small area.

To express your thoughts on how the OHMVR Division and Commission can better balance the needs of all users contact the Commission at:

OHMVR Commission
P.O. Box 942896, Sacramento, CA 94296-0001
Tel: (916) 324-5801
Fax: (916) 324-0271
E-Mail: info@ohv.parks.ca.gov

Or send them to Snowlands Network at:

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

Your comments can influence the outcome on OHV issues.

Janet Hoffmann

Mammoth Nordic

Continued from page 2

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760.934.4667
info@mammothnordic.com
www.mammothnordic.com

Volunteer Corner

It has been a good winter in terms of volunteer support for Snowlands Network. There have been more volunteers in the past several months than in any other similar period in Snowlands' two-year history. Each task completed improves our effectiveness in promoting opportunities for backcountry skiers, snowshoers and snowboarders and in protecting winter wildlands.

The Board of Directors would like to invite every one of our readers to become a part of our community. There are things to do whether you have special skills or not. Projects can be as small as a few hours.

Charlie Ferris keeps coming back to us asking for more work. His most recent project (his fourth) involved researching whether it was economically feasible for Snowlands Network to purchase a tabbing machine to seal the Bulletin. Although we hire a printer to print and fold the newsletter, we have kept the task of inserting items, sealing and labeling the Bulletin an "in-house" task. Our hope was to purchase a machine to "tab" the folded pieces, but Charlie's research showed that even a used machine is expensive. The good news is that, although the Bulletin will continue to be sealed by hand, it will be sealed with extra-sticky tabs that will make the process easier and seal better.

Speaking of the Bulletin, the last issue was stuffed, sealed and labeled by board members Bill and Marcus and by Sophie Libkind. Please contact Marcus (marcus@snowlands.org or 925-455-5816) if you can help assemble future bulletins. We can plan mailing parties in Livermore or elsewhere in the San Francisco Bay Area depending on who volunteers.

Gay Havens has been a supporter of Snowlands Network from its beginning and has been a supporter of winter-related environmental activism in general for a much longer time. In December of 2002, Gay worked as Snowlands Network's liaison with the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit and was successful in obtaining valuable information for us. She did this work only days before she had back surgery. Everyone at Snowlands wishes her a speedy recovery and hopes to see her on the trail soon.

Lee Griffith came through in a pinch and converted handwritten data to computer format in short order. The new format for the data is much more useful and the hours he spent are much appreciated.

In the past we reported that Jeff Ball designed a beautiful color brochure for Snowlands Network. These were sent out to more than 90 retail stores and other businesses in California and Nevada. In addition, Brenda Giese, Mike Dooley and Frank Rauchschalbe volunteered to hand brochures out to ski trip participants, Sno-Park visitors and people they meet on the trail. These one-on-one contacts by people who support our work are very effective in generating new support.

And while it is not our policy to specifically mention the hours volunteered by Snowlands Network's Board of Directors, three board members took on special tasks that need

mention. Gail Ferrell planned and hosted a very successful fundraising event in Reno this past January (see article below) while treasurer Charley White attended a one-day seminar on fundraising and Bill Flower attended a two-day course on how to effectively use ebase 2, a database program designed specially for nonprofit organizations.

Thank you all for your commitment to Snowlands Network and its mission.

Celebration of Tahoe Meadows A Huge Success

Seventy-five guests attended the "Celebrate Tahoe Meadows" event in Reno, Nevada on January 9th at the Patagonia headquarters. The event was charged with excitement as participants talked about skiing and the permanent ban of snowmobiles from a portion of the Meadows. A slide show brought the beauty of the Meadows into focus, as well as demonstrating the problems of "mixed use" in the area.

Guests helped themselves to dessert, fruit, wine, cheese and beer donated by Silver Peak Restaurant and Brewery in Reno. Homemade desserts were donated by individuals as well as by Raley's supermarket. Over \$2300 was raised from admission and a silent auction. Snowlands Network gained more than 50 new members! Proceeds were divided between Snowlands Network, which focuses on California and Nevada issues, and Winter Wildlands Alliance (www.winterwildlands.org), which specializes on national issues. The two organizations cosponsored the event along with Coalition For Safe and Appropriate Winter Sports.

A very special thank you goes to Ron Hunter who is responsible for environmental programs for Patagonia. Not only did Ron's efforts make the event a success, his participation on behalf of Patagonia is significant because it shows a deep concern on behalf of Patagonia for the work done by Snowlands Network and Winter Wildlands Alliance.

Snowlands would like to acknowledge the generosity of all the businesses and individuals who donated items for the silent auction.

Patagonia
Sorensen's Resort
Silver Peak Restaurant and Brewery
Winter Wildlands Alliance
Bicycle Warehouse
Mt. Rose Ski Area
Spooner Lake Cross Country
REI
Laughing Cat Coffee Rosters
Raley's Supermarket
Gail Ferrell
Marcus Libkind
Victoria Wallington
Mike Wilkin

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

Affiliate Members

Snowlands Network is very proud to have the following organizations as our affiliates. Through communication and collaboration we all become more informed and more effective.

Backcountry Skiers Alliance, CO
Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation
Friends of Hope Valley
Planning and Conservation League
Sierra Nevada Alliance
Winter Wildlands Alliance

Ski Train?

Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA), in cooperation with adjacent areas, the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority and ski areas, is now conducting a feasibility study on running trains to Reno and Sparks via some of California's ski areas and Truckee. "Don't expect to see trains real soon to those points, but there are people working on it," says Eugene K. Skoropowski, Managing Director, Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority.

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

Why does the Forest Service continue to put so much emphasis on maintaining access for snowmobile use to the vast majority of easily accessible public lands? It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that, where allowed to mix, snowmobile use will drive non-motorized users away and create de facto exclusive motorized areas. This problem has reached epidemic proportions in areas where large populations have turned to our national forests for recreation.

I obtained a recent report that supports my contention that things are out of kilter when it comes to management of winter recreation. The Forest Service's own document, *Survey Results of the American Public's Values, Objectives, Beliefs, and Attitudes Regarding Forests and Grasslands*, states that 77 percent of the public believe that preserving the ability to have a "wilderness experience" on forests is important, while only 9 percent said it was not important. In the Forest Service's own words, "Motorized recreation is not a high priority objective, while preserving the ability to have a 'wilderness experience' is important."

The report also states that 61 percent believe that expanding access for motorized, off-highway vehicles on forests and grasslands is not important while only 19 percent said it is important. The public sees the "designation of trails for specific uses as a somewhat important objective" in relation to motorized and non-motorized activities. I would expand on

this by saying that in winter, where trails are moot due to snow-cover and open snowmobile riding is the general rule, the designation of areas for specific, high-impact uses such as snowmobiling is important.

This report is not the only one to come to these conclusions. *Public Opinions and Attitudes On Outdoor Recreation in California 1997* by California State Parks came to very similar conclusions.

I think I know the answer to my opening question. The Forest Service system does not foster an environment conducive to change, Forest Service personnel often feel their jobs are threatened by voicing non-status-quo ideas, and the Forest Service knows that there are financial consequences to going against the interests of the motorized community.

But in their own words, "*In planning for the management of these lands, the Forest Service needs to choose management objectives that reflect the preferences of the American public.*" I see the role of Snowlands Network as inch-by-inch pushing, shoving, and cajoling them in the direction of their own management objectives.

If we can't do this now, it is unlikely that we will be successful later. Now is the time to take a stand for management of our public lands that reflects the desires of the American public. Together we will make a difference!

Marcus Libkind, President