Broken Promises
At Loon Lake

By Monte Hendricks

The historic Rubicon Trail is the world’s most famed 4x4 trail, where 4x4 driving reportedly started as a recreational pursuit. Jeep even named one of its models the Rubicon. Here is where, since the early 50’s, the famous Jeepsers Jamboree takes place in mid-summer heat. The Rubicon is also where a major conflict has developed between muscle-powered people and motorized users.

The Trail dates back to the 1800s when it stretched from Georgetown to Lake Tahoe. Today the popular 4x4 trail section runs from near Wentworth Springs to near Tahoma on Lake Tahoe’s northwest shore. In the early Jamboree years, El Dorado County noted the Trail’s growing recreational tourist value and declared the Rubicon Trail to be an “unmaintained” county road, giving the County jurisdiction over this backcountry route. Although sections of the Trail pass through private property, the majority of the surrounding lands are within the Eldorado National Forest.

Our Dream: A Regional Winter Wonderland

Imagine the most fantastic Nordic area anywhere in the Western U.S, in your own backyard.

Imagine every type of terrain for skiing imaginable: gentle open meadows, lake side skiing, in the trees, near aspen and pines, on the steeps, both north and south facing.

Imagine families of all ages and walks-of-life making snowmen and sledding happily on snow-covered hillsides.

Imagine being able to track ski for miles and end up at a ski resort where you meet the rest of your family.

Imagine snowshoeing with your friends and enjoying a cup of hot chocolate before returning to your car.

WHERE IS THE RUBICON?

Due west of Lake Tahoe and about 80 miles from Sacramento, the 18 mile Rubicon Trail starts in the Sierra Nevada foothills near Loon Lake and ends near the shore of Lake Tahoe. The Trail’s terrain is dramatic, bouldery, and often steep.

Snow tubing is fast growing fun for teenagers from Reno.
President’s Perspective

Big changes on the Eastern Slopes
by Ellen Lapham

Two trends are taking up my thinking space. I’d be delighted to get your take on the question, “Given these trends, what is the most valuable action Snowlands can take in the next two years?”

TREND ONE: Growth in attention to & resources for the Sierra Nevada’s eastern slopes.

Finally, we are thrilled to have a Wilderness Bill (Senate 2567) for the Hoover moving in Congress! 40,000 acres of magnificent high ground adjoining Yosemite will be conserved forever. 4000 acres, the Leavitt watershed, is not included. Tellingly, the bill is entitled “Eastern Sierra Rural Heritage and Economic Enhancement Act”.

Mike Doyle, (Sacramento Bee’s Washington Bureau) wrote informatively about the effort to get the bill sponsored. In response, I wrote him. It was important to me that he hear from a long time “muscle-powered recreationist”.

“We who ski the backcountry and snowshoe with our families on nearby snowslopes recognize that the Bridgeport/Leavitt/Sonora Pass area will become a magnet for motorized winter recreation and that the impacts of increasing use will be felt up and down Highway 395 corridor.

(Thus) we recreationists urge the Forest Service to use the $2 million per year allocated in the Bill for management and enforcement wisely and effectively to preserve our resource. That is, that these tax dollars ($16,666 per day, assuming a 120-day snowmobile season) be used to guarantee that motorized winter users stay within designated boundaries, operate safely and, when snow levels are low, that the lands revert to non-motorized recreation use.”

TREND TWO: Significant growth along Highway 395.

“What was once rural is now suburban, or even urban. Growth is the reality for the present and the future.” Reno Gazette Journal. The data: Washoe County had 339,000 people in 2000. It is forecast to double by 2030. With current growth rates, the Carson Valley will grow over 500% by 2050. Mammoth Lakes is poised to double its capacity by 2024.

Given the data, what do you think?

Ellen

Chairman’s Overlook

by Marcus Libkind

Snowlands Network views backcountry skiers and snowshoers as part of the same community. The values that skiers and snowshoers seek are the same - beautiful backcountry that lets us leave the trappings of the city behind and be closer to nature in winter. The specifics of what we do once in the backcountry may differ, but whether you climb a mountain on skis for the exercise and exhilaration of the descent or snowshoe through a forest with binoculars in hand for bird-watching, the aesthetic qualities we seek are the same.

The only thing that differentiates skiers and snowshoers are the tracks they leave in fresh fallen snow. Every year these tracks prompt a skier to write saying that something has to be done to stop snowshoers from obliterating our ski tracks. All too often skiers who hope to glide smoothly back down their hard-earned tracks find them trampled by snowshoers.

As Carrie might say on “Sex in the City” regarding a dating issue, “I ask, ‘Is there a conflict here?’” Based on letters I have received there may be. But with only one letter a year for the past two years, it must be a small one.

I have been represent... continued on page 11
Issues of liability insurance are impacting the Echo Summit Sno-Park and threaten the Echo Lakes Sno-Park, a gateway to Desolation Wilderness. These are two of the Sno-Park system’s most heavily used sites. Without these Sno-Parks you will be forced to seek on-street parking on busy Highway 50 or along Johnson Pass Road.

Snowlands urges you to tell the Forest Service that you want continued public parking at Echo Summit and Echo Lakes. Write the Forest Service today to insure that we don’t lose places for winter recreation.

Background

The California Sno-Park system, now 21 sites, was established to provide safe winter recreation access. The Echo Summit and Echo Lakes sites were two of the earliest designated. Through the program the State provides plowed, paved parking, toilets and trash removal. The cost for the use this past season was $5 for a day permit and $25 for a winter season permit.

Located just above South Lake Tahoe and convenient to Sacramento, the Echo Summit Sno-Park on Highway 50 has for many years been a major destination for family snow-play and to a lesser degree backcountry skiing and snowshoeing. In contrast, the nearby Echo Lakes Sno-Park on Johnson Pass Road has been a major destination for backcountry skiers and snowshoers. It is the main entrance point to Desolation Wilderness in winter and offers excellent recreation for skiers and snowshoers of all abilities.

With the growing population of California’s Central Valley and the Sacramento region plus the growing popularity of winter sports such as snowshoeing, these two Sno-Parks are a major Tahoe Region asset.

Echo Summit

On almost every fair-weather weekend or holiday the Echo Summit Sno-Park is full by 10 AM or 11 AM with families out to play in the snow. The big attraction is the adjacent excellent sledding hill that was once a small ski area. There have been many accidents at the sledding hill that required medical attention and, over the years, there have been several lawsuits involving injuries. Both the State and the Federal Forest Service have been named in these lawsuits.

Two years ago, U.S. Government attorneys told the Eldorado National Forest that liability insurance was required for the sledding hill that is accessed from the Echo Summit Sno-Park. This insurance needs to cover both the State and the Forest Service. The Forest Service has repeatedly forwarded these demands to the State and asked that the State obtain coverage. California has replied that they will only cover the actual parking area itself, which constitutes the “Sno-Park”. The Forest Service receives no funds from the sale of Sno-Park permits or for operation of the Sno-Parks. Echo Summit is the only Sno-Park where the Forest Service is requiring this level of liability insurance.

The operation of California’s Sno-Parks on Forest Service land is covered by a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The Forest Service also required a separate Special Use Permit for the Echo Summit Sno-Park. This Permit will become the norm for all Sno-Parks in the future.

The Forest Service has pulled out of the MOU. The current Special Use Permit expired June 30, 2006 and it will not be renewed if the State does not cover liability for the sledding hill.

The Forest Service is torn between (1) worrying about the liability associated with a parking area that clearly promotes use of the nearby sled ding hill and (2) knowing that if the parking area is closed the number of families parking along Highway 50 will drastically increase and create a major safety problem.

The Forest Service is also putting out a prospectus for uses of the old Echo Summit ski area lodge, which is located at the Sno-Park. They hope that the use of the lodge will include maintaining public parking and the sledding hill.

All of this does not preclude the State from making an offer about the operation of the Echo Summit Sno-Park. We believe that this is what the Forest Service would like.

Echo Lakes

The Forest Service does not desire to change the situation at the Echo Lakes Sno-Park; they would like it to remain a Sno-Park. This is the access point for Echo Lakes and Desolation Valley. It is one of the finest backcountry ski and snowshoe destinations in the area and is rightly very popular.

The Off-Highway Motor... continued on page 6
Imagine Washoe Winter Wonderland!

This will all be yours with the purchase of the Incline Lake Property, combined with existing contiguous Tahoe Meadows, Galena Creek area, Relay Ridge, and Mt. Rose Wilderness. We at Snowlands expect the land purchase and transfer to the Forest Service (LTBMU) to be completed this winter. Check our website under Washoe Winter Wonderland for updates on track skiing and the hot chocolate stand!

For decades, Tahoe Meadows has been a favorite cross-country ski, snowshoe, and snowplay area for Reno and Tahoe residents. Today, over 40,000 winter visitors play at the Tahoe Meadows and surrounding areas, including the Mt. Rose Wilderness. 38,000 of these visitors are skiers, snowshoers and families playing at the “Meadows”. The upcoming addition of Incline Lake’s 777 acres to the public domain will attract even more winter (and summer) visitors. Snowlands Network looks forward to even greater winter recreation opportunities with the addition of track skiing.

Washoe Winter Wonderland on the Mt. Rose Highway (NV 431) is within an hour drive from Reno, Carson City, Lake Tahoe, and Truckee.

Winter Recreation Coalition Finds Common Ground
by Eric Jung

CA

The Bear Valley Winter Recreation Coalition held its last meeting (for now, at least) on April 21 at the Bear Valley Lodge. Attendees voted unanimously to agree on 5 points: (1.) to seek a new Sno-Park recreation area at Big Meadow; (2.) to improve communications among winter recreationalists with more maps and signs, including a changeable sign noting avalanche danger; (3.) to seek a second trail from the Lake Alpine Sno-Park, to separate motorized from non-motorized users; (4.) to support better enforcement of travel map rules; (5.) to seek additional Sno-Park space at Lake Alpine, perhaps on Hwy. 207.

The group took no vote on possible changes to the travel map, knowing that there would be no unanimous vote on those issues.

Rob Griffith, Calaveras Ranger District Supervisor, said the Forest Service will take the group’s input into consideration when weighing changes to the travel map. He said that everything is still “on the table”. He responded to allegations that the closure of Pacific Valley was done illegally, saying that the Stanislaus Forest Supervisor looked into it and considers that the closure was legal. It appears that any decision on the map will take as much as a year.

Editor’s note: a longer version of this article originally appeared in the Cub Reporter, May, 2006, #121.
On December 21, 2005 a lawsuit was filed challenging the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest’s decision to open 7,000 acres of the Proposed Hoover Wilderness Addition to snowmobiles.

The plaintiffs claim that the Forest Service violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) and the Wilderness Act of 1964. They are seeking remand of the Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). They also are asking the court to instruct the Forest Service to complete an Environmental Impact Statement (more detailed than an EA), prohibit the use of snowmobiles until such time as they can demonstrate convincingly that doing so will not lead to trespass into the surrounding wilderness areas and along the Pacific Crest Trail, and that they comply with all applicable laws.

Background: In September, Snowlands Network and Winter Wildlands Alliance filed a strong appeal of the Forest Service’s decision. The officer reviewing our appeal (and other appeals) concluded that we, the appellants, had made an excellent case and that the decision by the Forest Service to allow snowmobiles on the 7,000 acres should be reversed. Despite this internal recommendation, the FS officer in charge of deciding on the appeals surprised everyone by denying all appeals, allowing the decision to stand.

Snowlands Network and Winter Wildlands Alliance immediately began seeking counsel. In December, exactly two month after the denial of all appeals, the NRDC, the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Council and the Sierra Club filed their lawsuit challenging the Forest Service’s decision. Having in-house attorneys facilitated the speed with which they acted! Snowlands and Winter Wildlands were faced with four options. (1) File a separate lawsuit. (2) Intervene in the NRDC lawsuit. (3) File an Amicus Brief in support of the NRDC lawsuit. (4) Do nothing.

Working with Larry Silver, attorney for the California Environmental Law Project, and after consulting with the NRDC, we decided that the first two options were not optimal because they were redundant, would cost a lot of money, and could possibly delay the NRDC lawsuit. The fourth option, do nothing, was also ruled out. It is imperative that those of us who advocate for recreation interests do everything we can to make the NRDC lawsuit successful. Thus, we have decided to file an Amicus Brief in support of the NRDC lawsuit.

Johanna Wald, attorney for the NRDC, is an excellent environmental attorney, and the complaint she filed for declaratory and injunctive relief was very thorough. It covered all the points that Snowlands and Winter Wildlands would have covered in our separate lawsuit. We will decide how to proceed after we have reviewed the NRDC brief(s).
**Join Us In The Fun – Mark Your Winter Trail**

**September 16-17**

**September 23-24**

REI Funds Fall 2006 Trail Marking and Mapping Project

Snowlands Network is very proud to have received an REI grant that funds the marking of new ski and snowshoe trails along the Highway 88 corridor. The funds also cover the design and printing a color map of non-motorized winter trails on Highway 88 west of Carson Pass. This free map will be available at REI stores, from the Forest Service, and from Snowlands.

We will be hosting several trail marking events in September. They will focus on the Anderson Ridge area near Iron Mountain and the north side of the highway at Tragedy Spring. At Anderson Ridge the routes we add to the existing marked system will give you more opportunities to make loop trips. At Tragedy Spring we will be marking the Shealor and Silver Fork Ridge that was featured in the Fall 2005 Snowlands Bulletin.

No experience is required to help mark the trails. Just come prepared to enjoy a day or two with a bunch of great people who, like you, enjoy the winter backcountry. Marking ski and snowshoe trails is a fun way to give to the community. Snowlands will supply all the equipment. REI has also been generous to the point that they have funded the food for the events.

The trail marking events will be on Sep 16-17 and Sep 23-24. You are welcome to join us for one or more days.

Please email Marcus Libkind at mlibkind@snowlands.org or call him at 925-455-5816 to express your interest. You will be contacted as the dates approach. There is no obligation.

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**Echo Pass Sno-Parks (from page 6)**

Vehicle Recreation Division (OHMVRD) operates this and other Sno-Parks and would like to keep it operational. However, this might not be possible depending on what happens at Echo Summit.

In the past the OHMVRD combined the contracts to service the vault toilets at Echo Summit and Echo Lakes in one contract. A contract for only the Echo Lakes toilets will not be of sufficient size to attract a bidder. Therefore, it is critical that servicing of the two sites be combined. The Echo Lakes Sno-Park will be closed if the toilets are not serviced. Trash removal is also a problem, but less so as the toilets require specialized equipment.

**What you can do**

We need you to tell the Forest Service that you want continued public parking at Echo Summit and Echo Lakes. Please write:

Ramiro Villalvazo, Supervisor
Eldorado National Forest
100 Forni Road
Placerville, CA 95667

Consider including some or all of the following points in your letter.

- You want to see continued public parking at Echo Summit and Echo Lakes in winter.
- The Echo Summit Sno-Park serves hundreds of people each day on weekends and holidays. Off-highway parking here must continue because without it people will resort to parking on the highway, which is very dangerous. It will create more problems for the CHP.
- Any proposal for a concessionaire for the old Echo Summit ski area lodge must require them to maintain public parking. Access for skiers and snowshoers must be a priority in any plans for Echo Summit.
- The outcome at Echo Summit may have a detrimental affect on the Echo Lakes Sno-Park. The State of California may not be able to find a company to service the toilets at Echo Lakes if they are the only toilets being serviced. Such a contract would be too small to interest a company. The Forest Service must work with the State of California to make sure the Echo Lakes Sno-Park remains open.
- The Forest Service, CHP and Caltrans are going to have greater troubles if the Echo Lakes Sno-Park is closed. Skiers and snowshoers will revert to parking on Johnson Pass Road. This will put us back to the old days when cars got stuck along the narrow road and Caltrans had trouble plowing the road.
Our Volunteers Make Snowlands a Reality!

The engine behind Snowlands Network is people who volunteer their time. For some it may be a few hours once a year, for others a half-time volunteer job. Their expertise, strength, and inspiration make Snowlands what it is – the leading advocate for muscle-powered winter recreation and winter environmental activism in California and Nevada.

All too often the work of the Board of Directors goes unnoticed. It shouldn’t be. Gail Ferrell, Bill Flower, Jim Gibson, Janet Hoffmann (recently retired from the Board), Marcus Libkind and Charley White (recently retired from the Board) all contribute many hours of volunteer time.

During the past year Jim has not only continued to represent us in the California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Stakeholders Roundtable, but also he has attended many meetings dealing with winter recreation along the Highway 4 corridor (Bear Valley). Gail is the powerhouse behind our presence in the Reno area and Tahoe Meadows. Bill continues the dauntless task of maintaining our database, printing labels and merging letters. Bill is now our Treasurer. Charley used his accounting background since our inception to maintain our books. Janet consistently did the prep-work for our important Bay Area outreach events. Marcus is a member of the OHMVR Winter Recreation Committee and lists working to gain a non-motorized area near Iron Mountain, winning non-motorized designation for Forestdale Creek, and planning trail marking and mapping as his main areas of interest.

The preceding is just a glimpse of what our Board has done this past year.

Attorney Rich Steele honed the Snowlands Network/Winter Wildlands Alliance’s appeal of the Forest Service decision to open 7,000 acres of the Proposed Hoover Wilderness Addition to snowmobiles. We believe his generous pro-bono efforts on your behalf helped lead the FS’s reviewing officer to recommend reversing the decision last Fall. (See the separate article on the Hoover Addition for what happened next.)

Jeff Erdoes continues to be our “number one” monitor. Throughout the winter he spends countless days (and nights) monitoring backcountry areas where snowmobile trespass persists. He has spent more time monitoring the Proposed Hoover Wilderness Addition than any other person. This has landed him the distinction of being a declarant in the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) lawsuit challenging the decision to allow snowmobiles in 7,000 acres of the Addition.

Debbie Sivas, Director of the Stanford Environmental Law Clinic, and Paul Spitler, volunteer at the Clinic, have continued pro bono legal efforts to make Forestdale Creek non-motorized. Volunteers John Bowers, Debbi Waldear of the Friends of Hope Valley (FOHV), Patty Brissenden (Sorensen’s Resort) and Marcus Libkind have all been a part of the legal wrangling that has gone on for about 15 years.

Debbi, Patty and Marcus were joined by Gail Ferrell, Jeff Erdoes, Jim Donald (FOHV), Evon Chen (FOHV) and Dotty Dennis (Husky Express Dog Sled Express) in developing an “Equal Opportunity Winter Recreation Plan” for the greater Hope Valley area that was submitted to the Forest Service.

The Lassen National Forest trail marking project was the brain child of Larry Crisman of Chico who planned and led the successful days last Fall.

Another volunteer this year was Brenda Giese of Lake Tahoe who transcribed several hundred names and contact information from the 2005 Banff Film Festival so that we could send each person a heads-up about the 2006 festival.

Sophie Libkind, daughter of Marcus, regularly helps get Snowlands mailings ready to mail.

Finally, we thank all of the volunteers who made our events a success this year. Thank you Michael Abootorab, Barbara Dornan, Jeff Erdoes, Karyn Erickson, Jack Flower, Jay Grauer, Peter Libkind, Sophie Libkind, Peter Mayfield, Robbin Palmer, Jan Short, Nancy Simkin, Ron Hunter and the staff at Patagonia/Reno. You made our annual November Bay Area and Reno events, the South Lake Tahoe and Truckee Andy Selters presentations, and the Banff Film Festival showing a tremendous success.

Please drop us a note (elapham@snowlands.org or P.O. Box 2570, Nevada City, CA 95959) if you are interested in joining the growing number of volunteers who support Snowlands. Please indicate the type of work you are interested in doing.
Snowlands – Coming To A City Near You

Growing an organization is an ongoing process that never ends. Snowlands Network has been focusing on outreach through events. This winter has been a very busy one for Ellen Lapham, Marcus Libkind and Gail Ferrell as they represented Snowlands at an assortment of events.

Marcus gave presentations at Wilderness Exchange in Berkeley, REI in Fremont and Concord, Sunrise Mountain Sports in Livermore and the Ski Touring Section (Loma Prieta Chapter of the Sierra Club) in Palo Alto. Most of these shows drew from his extensive experience backcountry skiing (he is the author of seven backcountry ski guidebooks) and combined images of the “Best Ski Tours in the Sierra and Beyond” with the impacts of snowmobile use.

Ellen and Gail spent a delightful Saturday at the Hope Valley Ski and Snowshoe Demo Day, organized by Hope Valley Outdoors. Ellen made presentations to the Nordic Skiers of Nevada County, the American Alpine Club, and the Nevada City-based Sierra Club Mother Lode Chapter.

Snowlands Network also expanded its presence with our new booth and bumper stickers at April 2006 Earth Day events in the greater Lake Tahoe area- South Lake Tahoe, Squaw Valley, and Reno.

The biggest outreach events were our annual November productions, this year with historian and guide Andy Selters, in Palo Alto, Berkeley and Reno; the Banff Film Festival co-sponsored with REI in Sunnyvale; and Andy Selters’ shows in South Lake Tahoe and Truckee. We brought the spring ski season to a close on a beautiful May day at the REI two day sales event in Reno.

What’s in store for the future? Snowlands will continue its outreach in the San Francisco Bay, Lake Tahoe, and Reno areas. We are very interested in expanding our reach to other locations such as the Chico and Mt. Shasta areas. Can you help us organize events in these areas?

Our Banff Film Festival – The Best Yet!

Snowlands Network co-sponsored the Banff Film Festival with REI in Sunnyvale for the second year. The February 23 showing of this acclaimed festival attracted 325 people.

The outdoor adventure films shown this year were consistently excellent. Here’s a glimpse of what you missed if you were not there.

Peter Mortimer’s Return2Sender: Paralleljams took the audience up, and into, the crack-climbing routes of Indian Creek, Utah. Through humor and memorable characters our guide gave us a first-hand look at the sport of extreme climbing. The audience was mesmerized by what the best in the sport have been able to accomplish.

A second climbing film, Cavewoman, chronicled Scottish climber Fiona Murray’s obsession to complete the mixed (rock and ice) climb route called Caveman. This humorous tale of a woman training with the sole goal to compete in the often testosterone dominated mountain sports arena was truly inspirational.

The first of two river films was The Hatch. Once a year, an epic insect hatch invades colorado’s Gunnison River Gorge, sending tingles down the spine of every trout and angler in Black Canyon National Park. This film is a tribute to this extraordinary place, and to people who fight for its future as a unique ecosystem.

The second river film, Middle Kaweah is a pure shot of adrenaline. Here the world’s best kayakers tackle a six-day first descent of the 5000-foot, 35-mile Middle Kaweah in the Sierra Nevada.

For those that did attend, thank you for making the event a huge success. If you missed it (were you one of those people who stayed home to watch the finals of the Olympic Women’s Ice Skating?) look for our next showing of the BFF early in 2007.

Snowlands Network volunteers who helped make the festival a success included Michael Abootorab, Heather Dooley, Mike Dooley, Bill Flower, Jim Gibson, Janet Hoffmann and Marcus Libkind.

From left to right: Jenine Beecher (REI Saratoga Outreach Specialist), Marcus Libkind (Snowlands Network Chairman) and Megan Wier (REI District Special Event Administrator) at the Banff Film Festival.

Snowlands truly appreciates REI’s choice to make us the beneficiary of the profits from this showing of the Banff Film Festival. We are very proud of the strong relationship that has been nurtured between REI and Snowlands. Please read in a separate article about the other financial support we have received from REI to mark and map ski trails.

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Extend the easier trip along the “south ridge” of Tahoe Meadows to Diamond Peak and be treated to simultaneous views of Lake Tahoe to the west and the arid Washoe Valley to the east.

**DESCRIPTION**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Difficulty:</th>
<th>South ridge portion is advanced beginner and beginning intermediate while the tour to Diamond Peak Ski Resort is advanced intermediate and beginning advanced.</th>
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<td>Starting Elevation:</td>
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<td>Cumulative Elevation Change:</td>
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<td>Season:</td>
<td>Mid-December through mid-April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snowmobiles:</td>
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<tr>
<td>USGS Topo:</td>
<td>7.5’ series, Mt. Rose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start:</td>
<td>Highway 431 (Mt. Rose Highway) at the south end of Tahoe Meadows just north of where the “south ridge” nears the highway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End:</td>
<td>The south ridge portion of the tour returns to the starting point while the longer tour ends at the Diamond Peak Ski Resort.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lunch on a ridge top with a panoramic view of shimmering Lake Tahoe with glistening snowcapped peaks in the background awaits you on the 2-mile tour along the south ridge of Tahoe Meadows. Ski here after a new snowfall and still cold, and the slopes descending into Incline Creek from the turn-around point afford you a super opportunity to practice your telemark turns.

The tour along the south ridge would be rated a notch more difficult if it were not for its short length; it is necessary to navigate through wooded terrain and climb one modestly steep section. Therefore this tour offers advancing beginners the opportunity to get a flavor of a more difficult tour.

In the Lake Tahoe area the tour from Tahoe Meadows to Diamond Peak Ski Resort is only rivaled by its big brother, the tour from Tahoe Meadows to Brockway Summit, for outstanding ridge skiing and superlative views of Lake Tahoe. But unlike its big brother, the ridge you follow on this tour forms a clean dividing line between the lake and the arid lands of Washoe Valley and the desert mountains to the east.

This 5-mile tour...continued on next page
This Tour can be broken down into four distinct parts that combine to form a wonderfully interesting tour for strong, skilled skiers. Part 1: The tour along the south ridge of Tahoe Meadows. Part 2: Short, steep climb to high point of the tour at 9225 feet. Part 3: 2.3 miles of ridge skiing to Diamond Peak. Your route along the ridge will be much more serpentine than you would expect from looking at the map due to abundant trees, rock outcrops and wind-generated ridges of snow. Part 4: Descent of intermediate ski run at Diamond Peak Ski Resort. As you might imagine, this tour should be saved for fair weather when you can enjoy the skiing along the ridge top.

Begin the tour by skiing east across a small clearing until you reach the trees on the opposite side. Then enter the trees and continue skiing east and parallel to the ridge that is to the south while climbing gradually until you reach a less wooded area that ascends to the south.

Turn south, climb to the ridge top, and then traverse east around the south side of Peak 8996 until you reach a broad saddle. This is the turnaround point for the 2-mile tour on the "south ridge."

Ski east along the saddle to continue to Diamond Peak Ski Resort and then climb southeast to the summit of Peak 9225. Be sure you ascend the northwest ridge of the peak and avoid its steep faces that may be unstable.

Ski south along the ridge passing Peak 9085 and Peak 9065 to the west, Peak 8777 to the east, and Peak 8676 to the west. Then head to Diamond Peak (Peak 8538). This last section of ridge is heavily wooded and the best you can do is take the path of least resistance. Depending how high you stay, you may find yourself crossing a steep gully before rounding a finger and encountering The Great Flume ski run that is groomed and rated intermediate.

End the tour by descending the groomed ski run 1600 feet to the base of the ski area.

Got Bumper Sticker?
Help support Snowlands and share our WILD ABOUT SNOWLANDS message with friends! Our bold sticker is popular with the snowboard set and is a standout on a school notebook cover. It measures 7½” x 3¾” and has a bright blue mountain slope with black lettering. One for $5, five for $15. I have enclosed a check for ______ stickers made out to Snowlands. Mail orders to Snowlands Network, P. O. Box 2570, Nevada City, CA 95959.

Name ____________________________________________

Address __________________________________________

City ______ State ______ Zip ______

Phone orders at 530-265-6424 or online at www.snowlands.org/bumpersticker

Number of stickers

Amount enclosed
Chairman’s Overlook (from page 2)

ing backcountry skiers for 20 years on many issues from ski areas closing-off backcountry access to getting parking at key locations. But 90 percent of the issues I have faced are directly related to snowmobiles. In ten minutes a snowmobile can track 100 percent of the bowl in Forestdale Creek (and nearly all of it Wilderness). The engine sounds can pervade miles and the smells linger long after they are gone.

The fact of the matter is that the occasional impact of snowshoeing on backcountry skiing is minimal and entirely outweighed by the benefit of snowshoers being a part of the same community as skiers.

Snowshoeing is the fastest growing winter sport. I don’t remember the exact figure, but I heard a huge number for the volume of snowshoes sold in the last several years. I suspect that it is many times more than backcountry skis. The growth is so phenomenal that K2, the ski manufacturer, purchased Tubbs and Atlas snowshoe companies.

The reason for the high growth rate in snowshoeing is that first-time snowshoers can have a great backcountry adventure without dealing with the learning curve associated with skiing. They can go out once a year and not worry about losing their skills. And snowshoes are drawing more and more senior folk out into the wilds of winter.

Regardless of a few obliterated ski tracks, the growth of snowshoeing is good for skiers. The Forest Service, who manages the lands we recreate on, looks at numbers of users as part in the process that leads to decision making on winter issues. Skiers gain needed support when snowshoers are added to the number of muscle-powered winter recreationists.

While there may be some perceived conflict between backcountry ski and snowshoe use, I and Snowlands Network urge skiers to embrace snowshoers as part of their community. We are going to need them if we want to attain our goals and protect the sport we love. Take a moment and think of a place where you would like to see changes in winter management. Now answer the question, “will having snowshoers as your ally help make it a reality?”

I attended a conference where the keynote speaker was Mike Finley, past Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park and now President of the Turner Foundation. He spoke about partnering to gain success. Without alliances, especially among our obvious allies, we dilute our strength.

There are things we as a community can do to defuse conflicts between ski and snowshoe uses. At the top of the list is education aimed at snowshoers creating separate tracks. That said, I think that in heavily used areas we are never going to see a set of ski tracks and a separate set of snowshoe tracks. It is not going to happen. The Castle Valley trail to Peter Grubb Hut route is a good example. It only takes one set of snowshoe tracks to obliterate a great ski track. In defense of snowshoers, skiers tend to use every bit of road such as when they come down from Castle Pass and seek soft snow to control speed.

I think that many snowshoers instinctively know that making a separate set of tracks is the right thing to do. Ski through the meadow off Glacier Point Road on the route to Dewey Point in Yosemite and you will likely see separate tracks. However, for good reason, when the trail narrows and enters the trees, the tracks becomes one.

For those who don’t know better, education is the route that should be taken. When education fails, or the terrain does not permit separate tracks, skiers should be tolerant. Skiers need snowshoers’ support on issues more than snowshoers need skiers’ tracks in the backcountry.

Snowlands Network’s roots are with backcountry skiing. The vast majority of our members are backcountry skiers. Snowlands is actively seeking more participation from the snowshoe community. I would like to hear your ideas on how to better reach that community and gain their support. It will also allow us to educate all regarding separate tracks.

Together skiers and snowshoers can make a difference!

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

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Rubicon Trail (continued from Page 1)

What does all this have to do with us wanting to take a pleasant winter trip on skis or snowshoes? We’re used to hearing about conflicts with snowmobilers, not 4x4 rigs.

The Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) built dams and hydroelectric facilities north of Highway 50 in the Crystal Basin, where Loon Lake is located. SMUD began plowing the road to Loon Lake and soon backcountry skiers and snowshoers used it for access. The Forest Service and SMUD saw this growing recreational use and built the Loon Chalet, a warming hut and safe haven in inclement weather.

At the Chalet’s completion the area was set aside by a 1989 Forest Order to be the Loon Lake Non-Motorized Winter Recreation Area. It has grown to be one of the most heavily used winter recreation areas on the Forest, enjoyed by local residents and regional visitors, from families out for snow play, boy and girl scouts making their first snow camping trips, beginners putting on skis or snowshoes, to experienced winter travelers accessing the more challenging terrain.

SMUD plowing still stops at the Loon Chalet, but the paved County road itself continues for another mile, crossing the first dam and continuing to the second dam. This snow-covered road is the heavily used “Polaris Trail”. Most important, the road is the only access for skiers and snowshoers to Loon Lake’s north shore.

The County road between the dams does not fall under the Forest Order closure. Increasingly, for winter access to the Rubicon Trail, 4x4 wheelers have moved from the historic Wentworth Springs access to what’s called the “Ellis Creek Trail”, which begins at the second dam at Loon Lake and continues north to intersect the Rubicon Trail. In many 4x4 wheelers’ minds, the Ellis Creek Trail is the Rubicon Trail.

Beginning in the late 1990’s there was a dramatic increase in the number of 4x4 users attempting to access the Ellis Creek Trail by driving out the Polaris Trail. Since it does not have jurisdiction over this section of County road, the Forest Service cannot enforce its non-motorized Order here.

On the snow-covered Polaris Trail, 4x4 vehicles create ruts and ruin it for skiers and snowshoers. Most often after a short distance their wheels get stuck and huge craters are formed from their efforts at digging out. Not wishing to lose their momentum, drivers often refuse to stop or slow down for skiers and snowshoers, have screamed at people to get out of the way, and almost run people down.

The situation is much more than a conflict between different values – it is a safety issue affecting muscle-powered recreationists, many of whom are beginners struggling with unnatural ruts in the trail and being scared by encounters with moving vehicles.

The County is developing a Rubicon Trail Master Plan and the Rubicon Oversight Committee (ROC) was created to bring varied user groups and other interested parties together. The meetings fell short of the muscle-powered community’s goal: an enforceable County ordinance for the one-mile section of County road that matches the seasonal closure of the Loon Lake Non-Motorized Winter Recreation Area. Instead of closure, the 4x4 users agreed to the wording of two signs that direct 4x4 users away from the Loon Lake area and state there is no motorized use in this area. They also agreed to apply “peer pressure” on violators by posting photos of incursions on their website. In return the muscle-powered community agreed to support 4x4 winter access to the Rubicon Trail, but only through Wentworth Springs. These agreements were presented at a public meeting in December 2003.

In January 2004 the signs went up. That season and the next there was little 4x4 use of the Polaris Trail. This was due in great part to a large berm at the end of the plowed road.

Two years later, on February 11, 2006, everything changed. On that day there was an organized intrusion by 4x4 club members that had the appearance of a direct challenge to the agreement itself and the posted signs. Four tow vehicles with trailers were parked at the end of the road. The sign was torn down, the partially exposed locked gate driven over, and 4x4s tore up the road.

Photos taken of the trashing of the area were sent to the 4x4 clubs. Their (continued next page)
response was: “there was no agreement” and they “never agreed to the signs”. They claimed that the signs were illegally posted. They said that their members will never support a road closure even though they have access through Wentworth Springs. It is a matter of “principle.”

Fortunately the 4x4 community’s broken promises, lack of leadership, and poor behavior has been witnessed by many local organizations and agencies. The muscle-powered community continues to work toward the only solid, workable solution, a County ordinance prohibiting the 4x4 use on the road in winter.

Dan Bolster, Park Project Coordinator for Eldorado County has proposed that “the 2003 agreement” be in force for winter 2006/07, along with a provision that failure to comply will result in an ordinance. The big question is what happens if the 4x4 users do not comply? Will the Eldorado County Board of Supervisors step up to the plate?

Editors note: Monte Hendricks has spent countless hours over the years working to protect the Loon Lake area for muscle-powered winter recreationists. He has experienced ridicule and worse for speaking out against OHV abuse. Monte is a true leader. Snowlands Network hopes that you voiced your opinion when you received our email alert in April. If you didn’t, you can sign up for the alert list by sending a request to: mlibkind@snowlands.org.

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Snowlands Network is pleased to announce the premiere showings of the Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival on Tour in five cities this Fall. The 2006 Festival Tour is presented by Patagonia and sponsored by Snowlands Network and REI. The Festival will feature nearly 3 hours of exciting films that will inspire and motivate you.

Plus, we will have door prizes and raffle items!

- EXPERIENCE adventure at its best through adrenalin pumping films such as kayaking the wildest rivers, soaring this highest peaks, and trekking the globe.
- EXPLORE the issues with leading environmental activists.
- BE INSPIRED by new ideas and THRILLED as you get very close to nature.

Join us to LAUGH and CELEBRATE our natural and wild world!

**BERKELEY • LOS ALTOS • RENO**

**SACRAMENTO • TRUCKEE**

The Tour benefits Snowlands Networks advocacy for all muscle-powered winter recreationists and the preservation of our winter wildlands.

See our website for more Festival info:

www.snowlands.org/festival

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**ECHO SNO-PARKS ALERT**

Highway 50 above South Lake Tahoe has exceptional winter recreation acres and your access to them is threatened. Tell the Eldorado National Forest that these popular public parking areas for winter recreation for residents and visitors must be kept open. They could close as early as the 2006/7 winter!

Act now.

See page 3 for details.