

SNOWLANDS

Bulletin

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

Snowlands Gives Kick To Improve Your Glide

With the season's first snow newly deposited in the mountains, ski metaphors are calling out for use. Hence the headline and this introduction to recent developments: base preparation, both organizational and membership, by Snowlands Network has contributed a little kick and glide to human-powered winter recreation.

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest has established a 12-inch minimum snow depth for snowmobile operation. In the past they set no minimum. This will be a huge protection from the destructive practice of using snowmobiles as dirt bikes where the snow is thin or non-existent. This policy is something Snowlands proposed and pushed to fruition.

The Forest Service released the North Shore Snowmobile Environmental Assessment, an analysis required in order to continue commercial snowmobile operations between Tahoe City and Brockway Summit. Our mailings in response contributed to almost 500 comments in favor of protecting ski and snowshoe use of the area.

The Forest Service has been claiming that an absence of complaints meant there is no conflict. Snowlands Network submitted results of a survey we made indicating significant adverse impact on pedestrian snow use, and the results are now part of the administrative record. The survey results support our contention that a mere tally of user complaints completely ignores those who have abandoned, or rejected ever visiting, an area deemed no longer tolerable. See "Temporary Permit For Commercial Snowmobiling Is Good" on this page for more complete details.

Something quite significant happened at the October Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission meeting. That's the OHMVR Commission of California's Department of Parks and Recreation. At a hearing to approve giving money to the Forest Service for grooming snowmobile trails on Forest Service lands, a split Commission could not muster sufficient votes to approve some grants. Grants to Eldorado, Humboldt-Toiyabe and Sequoia national forests and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit were not funded. Snowlands'

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Commission Nixes Snowmobile Trail Grooming

For the first time in its 31-year history, California's Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission failed to garner enough votes to approve grants for snowmobile trail grooming on four national forests. With only six of the seven Commissioners present at the October 16-17, 2002 meeting, the 3-3 split in votes left grants for grooming snowmobile trails on Eldorado, Humboldt-Toiyabe and Sequoia national forests and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) unapproved.

Grants to these forests may be reconsidered at the December 5-6, 2002 Commission meeting in Ontario, CA, where Board Members Marcus Libkind and Jim Gibson will speak on behalf of backcountry skiers, snowshoers and snowboarders. At this meeting the seventh and deciding Commissioner will be present.

Should the grants still not be approved, it does not mean

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Temporary Permit For Commercial Snowmobiling Is Good

It is not too often that a permit for commercial snowmobiling is a good thing. But the three temporary one-year permits for commercial snowmobile operations in the Brockway Summit to Tahoe City area bring a sigh of relief to those who have worked long and hard to stop the issuance of five-year special use permits. The large and credible response from organizations and individuals like you have temporarily stopped the Forest Service from what was once thought as inevitable – the issuance of long-term permits without mitigation for their effects on skiers and snowshoers.

The North Shore Snowmobile Environmental Assessment (EA) was a required part of the process to issue the long-term permits. The Forest Service developed four alternatives in the EA. Three of the alternatives would authorize commercial snowmobile use of 1.4 to 2.8 times the current actual use level. This is in contrast to survey and other data that definitively show that currently there are significant adverse impacts on non-motorized forest visitors from snowmobile

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For Love of the Wild

Access To Peaceful Places

Like most Americans you may be dangerously near the point where you've been so long away from a place of peace that your internal frame of reference for such may be fading. Life evolved surrounded by a symphony of gentle natural sounds. Yes, yes, there were occasional episodes of clatter and chaos, but mostly the beauty of peaceful soundscapes.

In contrast, in the last century we techno-humans have subjected ourselves to a growing cacophony. These machine-made noises increasingly drown out subtle and lovely natural sounds with growing negative consequence to the quality of our human lives and our mental and physical health. Perhaps we should all accept the advice of the technocratic profiteers and "get used to it." Maybe we all are...gradually getting used to it.

Does getting used to living with something ugly make it less so? No, we just become increasingly like that with which we have surrounded ourselves. Did we vote to allow noisy technology to penetrate our lives as ruthlessly as it now does? No, and I don't think the vast majority would do so.

I got a letter from my daughter yesterday. She spoke movingly of her home in a distant and underdeveloped tropical land. And what she waxed most lovingly about was the peaceful solitude, which she was so privileged to possess. She wrote, "I am moved by the peace and beauty that surrounds me here. To experience life surrounded by sweet solitude is what really matters in life and I think of how many have lost sight of this need ... well it breaks my heart."

I too am heartbroken. I don't know whether to weep or

scream when the raw ugly noise of a poorly muffled motorcycle or snowmobile vandalizes what had previously been a peaceful scene. When someone or some corporation pollutes the soundscape, which is our common experience, we must declare it to be an obscene act. Such an act is not protected by the constitution; in fact it seriously undermines the rights of others to solitude. That noise is not the sound of freedom, that's the sound of selfishness!

There are many good folks who love their motorized recreation experiences. They have been encouraged to define their experience as their right and to marginalize the impacts they have on the experience of others. A few snowmobiles in a prime winter recreation area will soon dominate as more peaceful uses are displaced.

Changing the minds of the snowmobile community will not be easy. It may never happen. But society as a whole must evaluate every action based on a universal measure ... "a thing is ethical if its benefits tend to exceed the sum of it's costs in terms of impact to others, the land and the future. It's not ethical when its impacts exceed benefits." Not a difficult or disputable definition. When all costs, not just monetary costs, are weighed, we will have a basis for eliminating this unethical manifestation of technology.

Never lose sight of the value of peaceful places! Work hard to reclaim and create them.

Bob Wetzel

Bob Wetzel is an employee of the Forest Service, but the opinions expressed here are his own and do not necessarily reflect that of the Forest Service.

Celebrate With Us!

Snowmobile Ban Made Permanent

It is time to give ourselves a PARTY for what we have accomplished on the Carson Ranger District of the Toiyabe-Humboldt National Forest. Quoting continued delays on adoption of the Northern Sierra Amendment, the Forest Service has published a separate decision for winter use of Tahoe Meadows that formalizes the ban on snowmobiles from 80% of the greater Tahoe Meadows area near the summit of the Mount Rose Highway between Lake Tahoe and Reno, NV. This decision makes permanent last winter's temporary closure.

Just two winters ago the area known as the Tahoe Meadows was a noisy and dangerous place to cross-country ski. On sunny weekends, 500 cars would be parked along the highway. 93% of those cars brought skiers, snowshoers and families that came to sled in the snow. The remaining 7% of cars brought snowmobilers. Unfortunately, snowmobilers were allowed everywhere in Tahoe Meadows, creating a dangerous, noisy environment for non-motorized users. Last winter, the Forest Service closed over half of the Meadows to snowmobiles. This winter, the new non-motorized areas will become permanently closed to snowmobiles!! That is cause to celebrate!

Snowlands Network, Winter Wildlands Alliance and

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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.

Board of Directors

Marcus Libkind	President
Jim Gibson	Secretary
Charles White	Treasurer
Gail Ferrell	
Bill Flower	
Janet Hoffman	

Regional Coordinator

Gail Ferrell	Lake Tahoe
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Editor

Marcus Libkind

Snowlands Network

P.O. Box 230, Livermore, CA 94551

E-mail: info@snowlands.org

Website: www.snowlands.org

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Bush Administration Proposes Increased Snowmobile Use In Yellowstone

The debate over whether snowmobiles should be allowed to remain in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks has again become national news. Newspapers and broadcast stations across the country have been printing and airing stories and editorials on the Bush Administration's stunning decision to not only allow snowmobiles to continue roaming America's first national park, but to actually increase the numbers of machines it wants to allow in Yellowstone.

Many of you took the time to express your concerns to the National Park Service in the last round of public comments. Those comments ran four-to-one in favor of the Clinton Administration snowmobile phase-out, which was approved two years ago but which the Park Service has inexplicably thrown out. In addition, a national poll released in November by the National Parks Conservation Association and done by the respected Zogby International polling firm showed 58 percent of all Americans favor banning snowmobiles from Yellowstone.

While the current administration and the National Park Service is insensitive to public opinion and the concerns many of you have expressed, it's not too late to pressure the administration and just as important other decision-makers on this critical environmental and recreation issue.

Please keep that momentum going!

Write your Senators and Representatives again. Express your shock and outrage that the welfare of a place as important and symbolic as Yellowstone National Park is being threatened by an administration more concerned about pleasing a tiny group of motorized users and the off-road vehicle industry.

Some key points to include are:

Ignoring science

After 10 years and the most exhaustive study ever undertaken in a national park, the National Park Service's best scientists, along with those at the Environmental Protection Agency, determined in 2000 that the best way to protect Yellowstone National Park was to remove snowmobiles from Yellowstone and adjoining Grand Teton National Park.

Ignoring the public

The Park Service received about 360,000 comments in its last round of public comments on the issue. Of those, 80 percent urged a snowmobile ban. In fact, in five public comment periods, Americans spoke loudly and unequivocally against snowmobiles in their park. A Zogby International poll released November 11 by the National Parks Conservation Association showed 58 percent of Americans support the ban.

Ignoring the law

The Park Service's own "record of decision" supporting

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Plaintiffs and Defendants Meet With Judge Forestdale Lawsuit Moves Forward

After five months of delay, the plaintiffs, defendants and their attorneys met with Magistrate Drozd in a last ditch attempt to settle the Forestdale Creek lawsuit. The lawsuit challenges the Forest Service's decision to grant Alpine County jurisdiction over Forestdale Creek Road and the Forest Service's lack of enforcement of federal regulations that protect public lands and forest users from adverse effects of snowmobiles. Following a meeting with all parties present, Drozd employed shuttle diplomacy between two offices where the two sides sat patiently, but a positive result did not result.

Drozd concluded more than three hours of work by saying that clearly there is nothing he can further do to bring the two parties together. Although the plaintiffs are willing to give on many issues, the defendants put very little on the table as enticement to settle. The only concession put forth by the Forest Service was an offer to begin a greater Hope Valley winter recreation analysis with a firm commitment date. The plaintiffs saw this as too little, and have chosen to move forward and have their case heard by Judge Levi. The court date is expected to be sometime in the next few months after final briefs are filed.

Snowlands Network commends the Forest Service for its creativity and earlier attempts to create a seasonal closure in the Forestdale Creek area whereby snowmobiles would have access early and late in the winter season, but would be closed mid-winter. Unfortunately Alpine County, to which the Forest Service has relinquished authority over Forestdale Creek Road, did not support the plan due to pressure from the snowmobile community.

But earlier this year the plaintiff's lawsuit was amended to include a challenge to Alpine County's jurisdiction based on a legal precedent in Utah. If the challenge is successful, the Forest Service will have all it needs to implement the seasonal plan.

But as Magistrate Drozd said, it is unlikely that Judge Levi will grant the plaintiffs the relief they requested. Instead, if the plaintiffs prevail, the Forest Service will likely be required to redo the Forestdale Environmental Assessment based on correct information and redo the RS2477 designation that gave Alpine County jurisdiction over the road.

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit include among others Janet Hoffmann, Jim Gibson and Marcus Libkind, who are directors of Snowlands Network, and John Bowers who has been working on this issue since its beginning 11 years ago. "Eleven years is a long time," says Marcus, "but I and others know that important things often take time. Success requires dedication to ideals and goals. We have worked hard and long, and we will take it through another round if necessary."

Other plaintiffs include Friends of Hope Valley, Patty Brissenden, John Brissenden, Janis Turner, Paul Minault, Robin Leong and Terri Michel.

Snowlands Gives Kick

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board members Marcus Libkind and Jim Gibson traveled to Sacramento and spoke against the grants. The grants may be reconsidered at the Commission's December 5-6 meeting at the Hilton Hotel at the Ontario airport in Southern California, where Marcus and Jim will speak again. See "Commission Nixes Snowmobile Trail Grooming" on page 1 for more complete details.

This is the first time in the 31-year history of the OHMVR Division that a grant for snowmobile trail grooming was not approved. It is often forgotten that the Division was established to bring some measure of control to burgeoning off-road motor-vehicle use, not to develop it. Press comment by the snowmobile lobby was quick and often ad hominem. Those with a different viewpoint were called "extremists" and "tree-huggers." Language such as "balance of power" and "anti-recreation groups" was employed to create an atmosphere of combat around the issue of recreation choice. Apparently, the strategy of gaining support through social polarization has not changed.

One final item worth mention is the need to address demand on public lands by commercial enterprises. We see it from commercial snowmobile operators, but that is not the only source. A Sno-Cat now operates in the Cabin Creek area along Highway 89 between Truckee and Tahoe City, taking backcountry skiers up to the "freshies" in the bowl above. This is just another sign of a demand that has created problems on public land in Utah, Colorado, Canada and Alaska, as well as California. As commercial pressure for special use permits combines technology (e.g. helicopters and Sno-Cats) with growing interest in a backcountry experience, the ironic result is developed backcountry areas.

We believe that "backcountry" winter recreation takes place in a natural, wilderness-like, setting. The mere presence of snowmobiles or other motor vehicles returns you to civilization. Do you agree with this and see a problem posed by "mechanized backcountry" winter recreation? We welcome your input on this, or any other topic. Even if you contact us just to say, "hi," your feedback lets us know you are listening!

Charles White

Winter Recreation Committee

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purchase of lands for a mega-SnoPark at Eagle Mountain adjacent to the Yuba Gap SnoPark. This SnoPark would include the 40 acres owned by the operator of Eagle Mountain Nordic Ski Resort (now defunct) and 1540 acres of Pacific Gas and Electric lands. There is no question that a SnoPark at this location, which provides snowmobile staging, will result in significant use conflict as snowmobiles venture into the backcountry including the Loch Leven area that has been a haven for backcountry skiers and contains marked ski trails.

Commission Nixes Grooming

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that the snowmobile trail grooming will cease in these areas. The operators of the commercial snowmobile concessions on Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (Blue Lakes Road Snowmobile Trail) and on the LTBMU (Tahoe City to Brockway Summit) plan to groom the trails regardless of State funding, but they might not groom as regularly.

Snowlands Network opposes the grants to Eldorado and Humboldt-Toiyabe national forests and the LTBMU for snowmobile trail grooming because these agencies have failed to adequately deal with the conflict between motorized and non-motorized winter uses. The LTBMU has also failed to address the likely pollution of Lake Tahoe by 2-stroke snowmobiles. The grant to Sequoia National Forest failed to receive approval due to an inadequate wildlife habitat protection plan, but Snowlands has not taken a position on this issue.

With respect to conflict between uses, the overriding issue is whether the availability of funds for providing snowmobile opportunities is in itself justification for providing that form of recreation opportunity. Snowlands says "no." A balance between motorized and non-motorized uses should not be pushed by the wayside simply due to the availability of funding for motorized use. But given the performance of the Forest Service, it appears they believe the answer is yes.

Snowlands also sees the State's snowmobile program getting far and above the amount of funding that is reasonable. There are 18,986 registered snowmobiles in the State of California contributing \$105,000 to the State's fuel tax fund in 2001, and the Commission has already approved \$1,444,000 this year for snowmobile trails. This amount is already too high. There can be no justification for increasing it further by approving grants to the forests that are continuing to foster an imbalance between motorized and non-motorized winter recreation opportunities, and not addressing pollution.

The negative side to the Commission not granting the funds to groom trails is that it could also not muster sufficient votes to pass funding for conservation and enforcement. This means that there will likely be less enforcement of snowmobile closures on these forests. This is unfortunate, but a calculated loss that Snowlands was willing to risk in pursuit of a long-term solution to the problems facing backcountry skiers, snowshoers and snowboarders on these forests.

But it is ironic that reduced conservation and enforcement funding may be to the disadvantage of the snowmobile community. If the result is more environmental damage and trespass, that will put pressure on the Forest Service to place more restrictions on snowmobiles.

It is going to be an interesting winter. In the Iron Mountain area on Eldorado National Forest we hope to see reduced snowmobile use and an opportunity for skiers to visit Leek Spring Hill under more pleasant conditions than in past years. On Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and on the LTBMU the grooming and heavy snowmobile use may continue, but if the grooming continues it will only show that the State does not need to fund it.

Highlights From the Winter Recreation Committee

Meetings of the Winter Recreation Committee (WRC), appointed by the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation to advise on issues related to SnoPark and winter recreation in general, are an ideal forum to keep abreast of the what is going on at the State level with respect to winter recreation. Many topics have been discussed over the past year.

Compliance with SnoPark permit regulations varies greatly from site to site. Where enforcement is good, compliance is good. At other SnoParks, such as those outside of Fresno, the non-compliance rate is as high as 30 percent.

Another recurring problem is counterfeit SnoPark permits. With the aid of a computer scanner and printer, and relying on the fact that the permits are most often inspected through a dirty windshield, counterfeit permits are not difficult to pass off. Although solutions to minimize this abuse are available, they are costly. A similar problem is the use of pencil to fill in the date on day-use permits, then changing the date for future use. People who do not fill in the date on day-use permits will find themselves being cited if caught.

Caltrans plows many SnoPark sites. The good news is that their rates will be staying the same for the next three years. This will help keep the program in the black and allow for continued improvements at sites.

High on the list of improvements at SnoPark sites is resurfacing of the parking areas. This is an ongoing task. More noticeable to visitors to the sites is the conversion from portable toilets to permanent facilities. Grant Jensen of the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division says that permanent toilets at Echo Lakes and Echo Summit SnoParks should be operational this winter. Permanent toilets for Meiss, Iron Mountain, Donner Summit, Rock Creek and a second unit at Echo Summit sites are scheduled for next year.

There is continued discussion about combining the Green Sticker snowmobile staging sites with the SnoPark program. The claim is that combining the two will create a more efficient management and maintenance system. Some question whether this may place a new financial burden on the SnoPark system. The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division says that they calculate that the increase in revenues will offset the cost. Another issue is whether or not the result will be a system that is less friendly to non-motorized users and favors motorized use.

The sale of SnoPark permits generated approximately \$350,000 during the 2001-2002-winter season. This is up from \$300,000 the pervious season. Sales include 45,000 day-use permits and 5,000 season permits. Without a doubt the largest use of SnoParks is snowplay. Both skiing and snowmobiling run far behind.

The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division has submitted an "Interim Property Acquisition Proposal" to the Department of Parks and Recreation for \$2 million for the

Board Members Attend Grassroots Conference

Snowlands Network's board members Gail Ferrell and Marcus Libkind attended a grassroots advocacy skills conference that focused on giving human-powered winter recreation advocates the tools to be more effective. The October 4-6, 2002 conference in Boise, Idaho brought together 46 activists from across the country. Although the bulk of the participants came from Western and Rocky Mountain states, attendees included activists from as far away as Virginia, New York, Vermont and Washington DC. The conference was sponsored by Winter Wildlands Alliance (www.winterwildlands.org), the only national organization dedicated to the winter recreation issues.

Gail said of the conference, "It was billed as a skills conference, but it was much more. It was a gathering of advocates with like-minded concerns. There was ample time to swap stories and gain strength from the knowledge that we in California are not alone in our quest for better opportunities for non-motorized winter recreationists. Attending was like getting a shot of adrenalin. I went away jazzed and ready for action."

Participants new to winter recreation activism learned about organizing to create change and were introduced to policies, laws and regulations that can be used to promote their interests.

Commenting on the breadth of the presentations, Marcus said, "I learned a great deal from the presentations on how to market your issue, and forming relationships with the media. While I walked away from the conference with new energy and knowledge, it was a little frustrating to see all that could be done to improve the effectiveness of Snowlands and at the same time realize that it will take many more volunteers or a staff to get to where I think we should be."

The keynote speaker was Liz Close, Acting Deputy Regional Forester, Intermountain Region. Although the title of her presentation was "Getting the Forest Service To Do What You Want!," the most memorable part of her talk touched on the Forest Service's inability to deal with the growing winter recreation issues. She said that winter recreation issues have grown to a level that demands attention, but the bottom-up mode of action within the Forest Service is not conducive to change.

The ideal situation would be for there to be direction from high levels directing the regions, forests and districts to tackle winter recreation issues that have escalated to explosive levels in some areas. Bottom-up change, more often than not, does not occur due to the lack of interest of district rangers to take on volatile and polarized issues.

Both Gail and Marcus look forward to future grassroots advocacy conferences. They both think that they are an important component of creating an effective national campaign. Winter Wildlands Alliance fills the national niche, which regional organizations like Snowlands cannot do.

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Snowmobile Use In Yellowstone

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the ban two years ago determined snowmobiles were impairing the park's resources and the enjoyment of non-motorized winter visitors. Several laws, presidential orders, and Park Service policies require the Park Service to eliminate conflicts such as those posed by snowmobiles in Yellowstone.

Where's the beef?

When the Park Service said it was re-evaluating the snowmobile ban, it said it would consider new scientific and other data that might warrant changing the decision. So far, there is no new data warranting a change.

Breathe Yellowstone air at your own risk

Yellowstone rangers will not only be equipped once again with respirators due to unhealthy air quality at the park's West Yellowstone entrance, many are also requesting hearing protection to prevent further hearing loss due to the snowmobile noise. That is an admission that snowmobiles are impacting air quality and creating a disturbance for visitors and wildlife alike. Given those negative impacts, how can the Park Service seriously consider allowing snowmobile use to continue, let alone actually increasing the total number of machines allowed to enter the parks? The Park Service could have taken measures to eliminate the threat to its own workers; instead it's outfitting them in respirators and ear-protection devices.

In California and Nevada your Senators are:

California

Barbara Boxer

112 Hart Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

Web e-mail: boxer.senate.gov/contact/webform.html

Dianne Feinstein

331 Hart Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

Web e-mail: feinstein.senate.gov/email.html

Nevada

Harry Reid

528 Hart Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

Web e-mail: reid.senate.gov/feedback_form.cfm

John Ensign

364 Russell Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

Web e-mail: ensign.senate.gov/contact_john/contactjohn_email.html

*Sally Ferguson, Grassroots Coordinator
Winter Wildlands Alliance (www.winterwildlands.org)*

Temporary Permit

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use. The only alternative that does not allow for the increased use would require elimination of the commercial use altogether.

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This narrow range of alternatives, which is in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act, sets the stage for a no-win situation for the Forest Service. The environmental community will likely challenge adoption of any alternative that permits increased commercial use. The concessionaires will likely challenge shutting down their operations.

Snowlands Network recommended that the Forest Service abandon the current EA and begin again with a broader scope that will permit a wider range of alternatives and mitigation without restriction of the commercial snowmobile concessions. Barring that, Snowlands urged the Forest Service to adopt Alternative 4 that eliminates the concessions.

Apparently we did our homework. The Forest Service did not adopt an alternative that would allow the long-term special use permits to be issued. They received approximately 500 comments on the EA. The response was strong from the non-motorized recreation community. The Board of Directors of Snowlands appreciates the time you took to comment.

It is also gratifying to see our efforts to affiliate with other organizations bear fruit. Several reputable organizations, including the Sierra Nevada Alliance, the Planning and Conservation League and Winter Wildlands Alliance, submitted comments that supported Snowlands' position.

There are alternatives that could provide mitigation of the commercial use without eliminating it. Snowlands Network proposed, during the scoping period for the EA, a non-motorized area nearby and on the opposite side of Highway 267. This is the Martis Peak area. But the Forest Service nixed this possible solution saying that the Martis Peak area was outside the scope of the EA. Snowlands' rebuttal is that the area surrounding the commercially used trails considered in the EA is arbitrary and the EA's limited scope is the reason why mitigation was essentially impossible.

Snowlands did offer other ideas, which included limiting the commercial use to either odd or even days of the week. The Forest Service did not explain why this alternative was not considered in the EA.

What will happen in the end is still up in the air and subject to the decision by Supervisor Maribeth Gustafson of the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.

Celebrate With Us!

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Coalition for Safe and Appropriate Winter Sports will sponsor a celebration and fundraiser for the groups that worked so diligently to make the new closure possible.

Please help us celebrate our SUCCESS at the Meadows. Great door prizes and food and a chance to meet other skiers and snowshoers like you. You will also be able to sign up for ski or snowshoe trips with Snowlands in the Tahoe Meadows.

The party will be in January 2003 at the Patagonia store at 8550 White Fir Street, Reno, NV. The exact time and day are still to be determined. **Write or call Gail Ferrell at gail@snowlands.org or 775-853-2931 to be put on a list to receive final details.**

Amazon.Com Offers Cash To Snowlands

Snowlands Network is participating in a program whereby Amazon.Com gives Snowlands a 5% donation on any purchase you make from them if it originates at the Snowlands website. Go to www.snowlands.org, and click on the Amazon.Com logo or click on any book in the book list. You will be transferred to the Amazon.Com website. Any purchase you make from them on that visit will benefit Snowlands to the tune of 5%.

It's simple, it's easy and benefits Snowlands and the work we do.

Conflict Tracking Project

Forest Service policy is that they assume there are no conflicts between recreation uses unless they receive complaints to that affect. Efforts by Snowlands Network to represent the human-powered winter recreation community on issues of conflict are thwarted when the Forest Service claims that they have received no complaints. It is for this reason that Snowlands sponsors the California/Nevada User Conflict Tracking Project.

Through this project the public is provided with an easy method for contacting the Forest Service concerning what they believe to be conflicts between motor and non-motor vehicle uses. Snowlands supplies the forms and transmits the completed forms to the appropriate agency.

Snowlands Network urges you to participate in this project. This is an opportunity to take a step beyond being frustrated by a lack of quality winter recreation opportunities and voice your concerns to the Forest Service.

An Incident Reporting Form is provided on page 8. Complete it and return it to us if you have had a negative experience in the backcountry. Make copies of it for future use. The form is also available on the internet at www.snowlands.org.

Backcountry Winter Classes Bargain Basement Rates

We sincerely appreciate David Kaplan telling us about the backcountry winter related classes offered by Lake Tahoe Community College. Here's a list of what is available.

- Beginning and Intermediate Cross-Country Skiing
- Telemark and Advanced Telemark Skiing
- Backcountry Skiing
- Beginning Snowshoeing
- Winter Survival and Wilderness First Aid
- Avalanche Avoidance and Rescue and Level II Avalanche

Like all community college courses, the cost for the courses is a bargain. The hitch is that they are mid-week and some are multi-week courses. But these courses look like a great deal for those with the flexibility in their schedule.

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Ski With Snowlands' Board of Directors

Please join Snowlands Network's board of directors for a day of skiing at Tahoe Meadows along the Mount Rose Highway between Lake Tahoe and Reno. You will have an opportunity to meet the board members and tour in an area that was only recently set aside for non-motorized winter recreation. Board Member Gail Ferrell was the driving force behind the closure of 80 percent of Tahoe Meadows to snowmobiles.

The event, scheduled for Sunday, February 2, 2003, will include tours for beginners (with basic cross-country ski skills) through intermediate skiers. Details are not finalized, but you can assume we will be meeting about 9:30 a.m. and ending the day in the late afternoon.

Throughout the winter, individual board members will be leading other ski tours, ranging in difficulty from beginner to intermediate, in areas that are related to current issues. So far we have definite plans for:

Tahoe Meadows Ski Tour

December 22, 2002 (meeting at 10:30 a.m.)

An intermediate ski tour on south side of the highway. Contact Gail Ferrell to sign up and for more details

Anderson Ridge Ski Tour

February 22, 2003 (meeting at 9:30 a.m.)

An intermediate ski tour near the Iron Mountain SnoPark, where efforts are ongoing to create a non-motorized area in the midst of the Silver Bear Snowmobile Trail. Come learn about a trailhead away from the sounds and smells of snowmobiles.

Contact Marcus Libkind to sign up and for more details

Tahoe Meadows Snowshoe

March 8, 2003 (meeting at 11:00 a.m.)

An intermediate snowshoe tour.

Contact Gail Ferrell to sign up and for more details

Other areas to which trips are being considered include Brockway Summit on Highway 267 between Truckee and Lake Tahoe and the Forestdale Creek area on Highway 88 near Carson Pass.

To sign up for the Tahoe Meadows event on February 2, one of the other scheduled trips, or receive details about the other trips not yet scheduled, please contact:

Gail Ferrell in Reno, NV
775-853-2931 or gail@snowlands.org

Marcus Libkind in Livermore, CA
925-455-5816 or marcus@snowlands.org

Backcountry Winter Classes

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The website for Lake Tahoe Community College is <http://www.ltcc.ca.us/index.htm>, and the website for the Physical Education Department's winter schedule of classes is http://www.ltcc.ca.us/schedule/win02/win02_ped-wkx.htm#ped.

Incident Reporting Form

Winter Motor Vehicle Tracking Project

**Help Promote Opportunities
For Quality Human-Powered
Winter Recreation**

Please report conflicts and other observations you encounter while skiing, snowshoeing or snowboarding. Report incidents of excessive noise, impacts to wildlife, damage to public property, safety concerns or occurrences of motorized trespass into areas designated as Wilderness or otherwise closed to vehicles.

Make Observations

Gather as much information as you can, fill out the incident report and mail it to Snowlands Network. We will see that your report is forwarded to the appropriate law enforcement authority.

Avoid Confrontation

Under no circumstances should you confront violators or take the law into your own hands.

Take Photos or Videos

Please provide us with photo or video evidence if available.

Ask Friends to Help

Pass copies of this form to your friends and ask them to help in this important effort to provide documentation of motorized impacts on human-powered winter recreation and wildlands.

INCIDENT REPORT

Date and Time:

Location:

Type of Incident:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> User Conflict (incompatible uses) | <input type="checkbox"/> Safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> User Displacement (resulted in leaving area) | <input type="checkbox"/> Trail Damage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Motorized Trespass | <input type="checkbox"/> Resource Damage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wilderness Violation | <input type="checkbox"/> Other ... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive Noise | |

Detailed Description:

(Continue on another sheet
if necessary)

Vehicle Descriptions:

(Type, license plates, other
distinguishing features)

Person Reporting:

Name:

_____ Phone: (____) _____

Address:

_____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Mail completed report to: Snowlands Network, User Conflict Tracking Project, P.O. Box 230, Livermore, CA 94551

Did Your E-mail Address Change?

Snowlands Network suffers from an all too common problem – changing e-mail addresses resulting in an out of date Alert List. For example, we still do not have new addresses for many of you who were previously using “@Home.”

No matter if you were previously on the Alert List or not, if you have not been receiving e-mail alerts we urge you to send us your address and indicate that you want to be added to the Alert List.

Our Alert List is paramount to our work because it allows us to inform recipients about issues that require immediate comments from the public. What you receive from us will be limited to one or maybe two e-mails a month. We value your privacy and will not give your address to anyone or any other organization.

Taking a few minutes to do this and occasionally writing a letter will significantly help promote opportunities for quality human-powered winter recreation and protect winter wildlands.

You can contact us by e-mail at: marcus@snowlands.org.

New Ski Hut Open Reservations At Van Vleck Available

Van Vleck Bunkhouse, accessible from the Loon Lake area off Highway 50, will open for overnight use this winter. Opening of the bunkhouse was predicated on the construction of the Van Vleck Emergency Shelter at the halfway point. That prefabricated shelter is, as this article is being written, on a trailer winding its way up Ice House Canyon toward Loon Lake.

The bunkhouse, a facility operated by the Forest Service, is small, sleeping only six, so don't think that there will be room for you to crash without reservations. Reservations will be available through “Reserve USA” (877-444-6777 or www.reserveusa.com) beginning mid-January. The slight delay is due to interfacing with the reservation company.

The bunkhouse has been in operation for several years, but only available for summer use. The Forest Service required the halfway emergency shelter before opening it to winter use. Kudos go to Glenda Marsh and the Sacramento Backcountry Skiers for their efforts to get the necessary emergency shelter financed and built. The shelter would also not have become a reality without the work of Dave Boyer of the Forest Service. Funds for the shelter came from many individuals, garage sales and a generous donation by Stanley Van Vleck. But the bulk of the money came from California's Winter Recreation Fund.

The trip to Van Vleck Bunkhouse is an intermediate, 12-mile, 2-day round trip ski or snowshoe tour. Advance beginners or beginning intermediate will find the 5-mile round trip to the emergency shelter an excellent day tour. Typically there is adequate snow from late December through early April. This area is closed to snowmobile use.

You will find additional information about the tours to the shelter and bunkhouse on the Snowlands Network website (www.snowlands.org). Click on “Resources” and then “Backcountry Ski Huts and Lodges.”

Volunteer Corner

Snowlands Network becomes incrementally more effective in their mission to promote opportunities for backcountry skiers, snowshoers and snowboarders and to protect winter wildlands with each new volunteer. The Board of Directors is happy to see an increase in volunteers over the summer months and hope that others will continue to come forward.

Charlie Ferris has taken on his third research project. This time he is creating a media list of newspapers and reporters. It has become clear that doing a good job in the trenches is not sufficient; we need to have good public relations.

Jeff Erdoes is also a continuing volunteer. He has worked doggedly to document illegal snowmobile use in the greater Tahoe Meadows area including the Mt. Rose Wilderness and the Galena drainage.

Murray Einarson, a contaminant hydrologist with expertise in the pollution due to two-stroke engines, has filled a gap in Snowlands' knowledge base. He wrote Snowlands' comments for the North Shore Snowmobile Environmental Assessment, which included a description of the snowmobile, snow, snowmelt, surface water, ground water and once again surface water cycle. He also took time to educate the Board of Directors as to what is involved in sampling methods to detect pollution due to two-stroke engines.

Tim Sage stepped up to the plate at a critical time when Snowlands was rushing to educate the public about the North Shore Snowmobile EA. With only a 30-day window to write, print, assemble and mail Snowlands' mailer, and still give time for people to submit comments, Tim's immediate response to our need for help was heart-felt.

Charlie, Jeff, Murray and Tim, the Board of Directors of Snowlands Network is truly indebted to you. Thank you for your commitment.

SnoPark Permits Hard To Purchase

In past years, many people have relied on REI to purchase their SnoPark permit. But last year REI stopped selling the permits that are required to park at many favorite winter recreation trailheads. Several vendors along the access routes to California's mountain areas have also stopped selling permits.

The underlying reason for the decline in vendors can be traced to the paperwork and payment system required by the State, along with the requirement that vendors guarantee a drug free environment at their place of business. Managers of the SnoPark system are addressing these problems and hope to add new vendors in the future.

The good news on this front is that the California State Automobile Association (AAA) has agreed to sell SnoPark permits to anyone, regardless of whether or not they are a member. This will add numerous locations for everyone to purchase a permit. A list of SnoPark vendors is available by logging onto the Snowlands Network website (www.snowlands.org). Click on “Resources” and then on “SnoPark Program.”

Members

The Board of Directors would like to express its sincere thanks to all of you who have become members of Snowlands Network over the past year. Your membership contributions are a vital link in making our work possible.

As we make strategic plans for the next three years we will

be depending more on generous membership contributions from all of you, both past members and prospective members. Please read the President's Corner to learn more about what we are doing and where we are headed. Then, please be as generous as you can. With your support we will make a difference!

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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

Presidents Corner

Continued from back cover

Do you believe in what Snowlands is doing? Are you glad to see us on the front line working for you? If you answered yes to these questions, then take a moment to become a member of Snowlands Network. I cannot over state how important your financial support is if we are to reach our full potential. To quote American patriot Thomas Paine, "*What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; it is dearness only that gives everything its value.*"

Marcus Libkind, President

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.

- \$25 Supporter \$50 Contributor \$100 Patron
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President's Corner

NIH Declares Desire To Snowmobile Eradicated

I wrote the headline above as part of a game to kick off the Grassroots Advocacy Skills Conference in Boise, ID (see article on page 5). In the game we were asked to write the headlines we would like to see in the newspaper when we woke up. Alas, my headline has not appeared and I have been attending more meetings than ever.

I think that it is very important that you as one of our supporters know what the Board of Directors of Snowlands Network does on behalf of backcountry skiers, snowshoers and snowboarders. Legally the Board is the governing body of Snowlands, and state and federal laws govern many of the actions of the Board. When not tied up with the mechanics of running the organization, management entails plotting a course that combines attainable goals and viable strategies.

Beyond the management responsibilities, Snowlands' Board of Directors is a working board and most of its time is spent monitoring, researching and educating. These three activities bring together the many facets of our work. On a day-to-day basis we:

- Read countless e-mails and newsletters from individuals and other organizations
- Review documents produced by federal land management agencies and state agencies that provide recreation

- Attend meetings
- Draft comments on agency proposals
- Contact and meet with agencies to gain better understanding of projects and form working relationships
- Publish this bulletin and maintain an e-mail Alert List
- Maintain a website and membership database

We have been doing a good job in keeping Snowlands moving forward on many fronts. I sincerely hope that you agree. It's a daunting task given there are 13 national forests in California and Nevada that manage lands suitable for winter backcountry ski, snowshoe and snowboard recreation.

However, I believe that the current way in which Snowlands operates will not be functional in the coming years. From 2003 to 2008 each of the 13 forests are going to begin a three or more year process leading to the revision of their forest management plan. These plans are paramount to our community seeking changes that will benefit the sports we love and the winter environment. Then the process continues with a motor vehicle use plan for each forest.

In order to take on this massive new work and improve our effectiveness in existing areas we need to start thinking in terms of a staff. Furthermore, a staff is the next step in insuring the long-term health of Snowlands.

Continued on page 11