

SNOWLANDS

Bulletin

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

Snowmobiles Threaten Proposed Wilderness

Letters Needed

The fabulous, wild skiing terrain around Sonora Pass, Leavitt Bowl, the Emigrant Wilderness, and the proposed Hoover Wilderness Additions is facing a huge threat from large numbers of snowmobilers from all over California and the west.

In 1986 the Toiyabe National Forest recommended wilderness designation for the Leavitt Bowl-Tower Peak-Piute Meadows area, which lies just east of Sonora Pass abutting the Emigrant Wilderness. A large portion of the proposed Hoover Wilderness Additions is included in Senator Boxer's California Wild Heritage Wilderness Act, S. 1555.

The Forest Service is supposed to manage the area to retain its wilderness values, which include not allowing snowmobiles and other motorized vehicles in the proposed wilderness area. Unfortunately, the Forest Service has not been doing its job! As a result, illegal snowmobile use has been escalating over the past 18 years, and the use has dramatically increased in the past five years. The illegal use has been occurring not only in the proposed Hoover Wilderness Additions, but also in the adjacent Emigrant Wilderness and parts of Yosemite National Park.

The Forest Service, due to its inaction over many years, has unwittingly created a huge constituency against the wilderness additions – larger than any of us could imagine. The Blue Ribbon Coalition, a national off-roaders' group, says, "Anyone who has ever snowmobiled in this area knows that this is the most spectacular snowmobiling in California...This area is incomparable and irreplaceable and will be a huge loss to the snowmobile community if the closure is enacted."

Feedback from several sources has finally spurred the Forest Service to propose taking action. There have been increasing complaints from citizens about this situation. Witnesses have documented snowmobiles crushing exposed vegetation and high-marking recklessly in avalanche-prone bowls.

The U. S. Marine Corps, which trains troops in winter time in the Leavitt Bowl area, has expressed concerns about safety. *Aerial See Sonora Pass on page 3*

Snowlands Says No! to Groomed Trails in Castle Valley

Quick action by Snowlands Network, with the support of other organizations and individuals, halted the proposed grooming of Castle Valley just two days after it was announced and the day before it was supposed to begin.

If the Tahoe National Forest had its way, Castle Valley, north of I-80 at Donner Pass, would be groomed, because they feel that it would improve safety and meet the needs of some skiers. This is one of the most heavily used backcountry ski destinations in California and one of the few in the Donner Pass area where snowmobiles are prohibited. It is located within 10 miles of two major Nordic resorts and other opportunities for groomed and packed trails.

It all started with an avalanche fatality near Castle Peak in January. A wide, packed trail was created by Sno-Cats and snowmobiles using Castle Valley to access the avalanche site. The weather stayed clear, and the packed trail persisted. Then on February 10, out of the blue, Rick Maddalena of the Truckee Ranger District wrote that, "...following the very favorable response from skiers and shoe's who like the safe feel of the grooming that was left behind ... we have been approached by Auburn Ski Club's President, Bill Clark, who is willing to provide some volunteer grooming between I-80 and Castle Pass as a pilot to further test public reaction to the improved safety."

Snowlands Network's position is that regardless of the Forest Service's measure of the public's desire, which we contend is far from a fair measurement of the situation, the pilot project is in violation of regulations that (1) require an analysis before undertaking such a project and (2) is in contradiction to the land management prescription that designates the land "semi-primitive, non-motorized".

It was Maddalena's intention to use the pilot project to assess the effect grooming would have. Snowlands took the position that the assessment must by law start with an analysis where the public has the opportunity to comment, and the Forest Service is required to assess the impacts.

See Castle Valley on page 3

Banff Film Festival Draws Crowd

Snowlands Network got great exposure when approximately 550 people attended a showing of the Banff Film Festival World Tour at the College of Marin on February 23. The festival is an international competition featuring the world's best films and videos on mountain subjects.

Attendees that evening were treated to more than two hours of exciting films and videos. Snowlands Network provided refreshments, had a display in the lobby where Directors Janet Hoffmann, Charley White and Bill Flower spoke to people about the organization's work, and Snowlands' President, Marcus Libkind, gave a short presentation about their work during the intermission.

A show of hands indicated that more than 100 of the attendees either cross-country ski or snowshoe. It was a great opportunity to tell them about the important work Snowlands is doing. Snowlands will also receive the net profit from the event that was co-sponsored with REI. Snowlands appreciates the trust Hillary Harding of REI had in our ability to contribute to the event. We are looking forward to expanding our participation next year.

Special thanks go to Mike Dooley for taking the lead on behalf of Snowlands on this event. Other volunteers who contributed to the success were Michael Abootorab, Heather Dooley, Bob Madison and Curtis Oldenburg.

A Special Thank You to KPSI3

Snowlands Network is indebted to Stephanie Kruse and KPSI3, a public relations firm in Reno, Nevada, for the press releases generated to publicize our November 2003 fund-raising events. Their efforts resulted in, among other things, an article and photo in the Reno Gazette-Journal that helped swell the attendance at the Reno event at the Patagonia Outlet. We apologize for not recognizing their contribution in the December *Snowlands Bulletin*.

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

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Snowlands Network

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Editor: Jim Gibson

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Lost Trail Lodge Revisited

The only word that I uttered as I left the darkness behind as I stepped through the door into the main room of Lost Trail Lodge was "wow!" By the time I had explored it entirely that had changed to "wooooooow!!!" This is a follow-up to the Lost Trail Lodge article in the December *Bulletin* and is based on a three-day visit to the lodge in January.

The photos on the Lost Trail Lodge website only tell half the story. What you can't see is the detail and uniqueness of this upscale, yet rustic, backcountry lodge. The kitchen will meet the needs of any gourmet cook preparing meals for a group of 12. Just start with the six-burner Wolfe range with double ovens and two-foot square grill. Each of the four bedrooms, or cabins as owners David and Kathy Robertson call them, are unique. Two include Jacuzzi tubs; all have their own bath.

Your trip to Lost Trail Lodge begins at the gravel pit near Donner Memorial State Park where David will load your gear onto his Sno-Cat. You will probably ski or snowshoe the 4.5 miles to the lodge, although he can carry a few passengers. The basic route, which follows roads all the way to the lodge, will be packed by his Sno-Cat and snowmobiles.

Our trip was over the three-day Martin Luther King weekend in January yet we only encountered a few snowmobiles. For the less experienced, the road is a wonderful route to and from the lodge. Advanced skiers, carrying only their day gear, can reach the lodge by following, in part, the Schallenberger Ridge tour described in *Ski Tours in the Sierra Nevada*, Volume 1. This is a demanding route.

The rugged terrain where Lost Trail Lodge is located is heavily wooded. On a layover day you can explore either of the two forks of Cold Creek by following roads. We skied up the main fork of Cold Creek where the road ends in a mile or so. We continued by picking our own intermediate route through the woods, which thinned as we approached the almost vertical face that ascends to Mt. Lincoln. Here we found an excellent open, south facing slope with well-consolidated snow to practice our turns.

The South Fork of Cold Creek will take you toward Anderson Peak. A very interesting trip would be to combine a night at Benson Hut on the flank of Anderson Peak, which you reach from Sugar Bowl Ski Resort, with a night or two at Lost Trail Lodge. From Benson Hut you can descend the "emergency escape route" to the South Fork and follow it to the lodge. This very difficult tour would require working out logistics with David and Kathy.

Whatever trip you plan, remember that in the narrow, wooded canyons the snow can ice-up early.

Interested in visiting Lost Trail Lodge? Plan early and make a reservation for January or February when the snow conditions are the most predictable. Their contact information is:

Tahoe West Company, Inc.
8600 Coldstream Trail
Truckee, CA 96161
(530) 320-9268
E-mail: info@losttrailodge.com
Website: www.losttrailodge.com

Marcus Libkind

Sonora Pass, *continued from page 1*

patrols by the Inyo National Forest have documented many violations in recent years. There is also concern about the pollution of the Leavitt Creek watershed from contamination of snow by snowmobile fuel and emissions.

As a result of these concerns the Forest Service has decided to begin enforcing snowmobile violations in this area. However, they say that they can't start this enforcement until the year 2005.

What You Can Do

Your letters are urgently needed! The Blue Ribbon Coalition is fighting the Forest Service's proposal to enforce the law. Please send a letter today to the Forest Service and tell them to protect wilderness values, backcountry skiing and snowshoeing opportunities, and enforce the law.

What to Say

- Tell the Forest Service you strongly support its decision to enforce the existing snowmobile closure in the Leavitt Bowl/Sonora Pass area. Illegal users should be cited.
- Ask the Forest Service to sign the area immediately and start enforcing the closure now, not beginning next year. Illegal snowmobile trespass in existing and proposed wilderness has got to stop!
- Tell the Forest Service you support Wilderness designation for the proposed Hoover Wilderness Additions. Remind them they must manage the area as Wilderness until Congress acts or until the Forest Plan is revised accordingly.

Send your letters and e-mails to:

Kathy Lucich, District Ranger
Bridgeport Ranger District
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
HCR 1, Box 100
Bridgeport, CA 93517
E-mail: Klucich@fs.fed.us

Please send a copy of your letter to:

Bob Vaught, Forest Supervisor
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
1200 Franklin Way
Sparks, NV 89431
E-mail: Rvaught@fs.fed.us

Castle Valley, *continued from page 1*

The Forest Service did not even take the time to contact the Nordic Skiers of Nevada County, the local backcountry ski group with 120 members that frequently uses the Castle Valley area. This group took the same position as Snowlands by opposing the pilot project, as did the Sierra Foothills Audubon Society.

Aside from the legal issues, Snowlands Network believes that the grooming is inappropriate for several reasons that include:

- The grooming is neither needed nor desired in a backcountry ski area. There are adequate groomed trail ski opportunities, both for pay and for free, already available in the area for cross-country skiing.

- It is a slippery slope. You groom this trail because some people desire it. Then they will want another trail in the area groomed. Where does it end? This is clearly a slippery slope that is not safe to descend.

- Grooming the trail may increase safety problems, not reduce them. Currently beginning skiers and snowshoers stick to the Valley because that is as far as they can travel in a few hours. Grooming will allow less-experienced people to reach Castle Pass and descend north of it. The area north is notorious for difficult navigation when the weather turns poor. Beginners stopping at the Pass will be faced with a steep descent and icy conditions in the late afternoon on their return to the trailhead. Without the grooming they would not reach this point.

- Even the groomed trail could become treacherous, and there should be concern that the groomed trail might have "walls" that would block a skier from getting off the trail into fresh snow as a means of slowing down. If someone was seriously injured on the groomed trail would the Auburn Ski Club and the Forest Service be liable?

Obviously, there are some people who would like a groomed trail in Castle Valley. But the contention that this desire justifies grooming is equivalent to saying that all lands should be reduced to the most developed use if there are people that want such use. Should we pave trails and roads into our wilderness areas because it would make access safer and make the wilderness accessible to more people? Snowlands says no!

You make your own decision and let us know. Send your comments to Snowlands Network, P.O. Box 230, Livermore, CA 94551 or issues@snowlands.org.

Sierra Nevada Alliance Offers Timely Info on Issues

The Sierra Nevada Alliance, one of Snowlands Network's affiliate organizations, offers a free electronic "Alliance Sierra Weekly" that gives updates with news articles, information, and events regarding a broad spectrum of Sierra Nevada related issues.

The Sierra Nevada Alliance, a nonprofit organization, has been protecting and restoring Sierra land, water, wildlife, and communities since 1993. The electronic weekly is a service for those who love the Sierra and desire to keep abreast of conservation issues happening throughout the range.

Send an e-mail to kathy@sierranevadaalliance.org to sign up. Put "Sign up for Weekly" in the subject line. In the body of the

email include your name, address, city, zip, phone and email address. Your contact information will not be sold or given to another group or business.

For more information email Kathy, phone (530) 542-4546 or visit www.sierranevadaalliance.org.

Of course we urge you also to subscribe to the Snowlands Network email alert system of which we are proud. We get feedback that shows that it is effective and thank all of you who subscribe to it. Send an email to marcus@snowlands.org to request to be added to the alert list or to update your email address if you are already on the list.

Flip-Flop on Yellowstone

It takes a score card to know what is happening when it comes to snowmobile use in Yellowstone National Park. One day they are being phased-out; the next day even more are going to be allowed in the park.

During the Clinton administration the National Park Service undertook a monumental scientific review of the effects of snowmobile use on Yellowstone, the wildlife that inhabit it, and the non-motorized visitors that visit it. The review culminated in a plan to phase out privately-operated snowmobile use and replace them with multi-passenger snowcoaches, which would allow all visitors equal enjoyment of the park.

The plan to phase out snowmobiles was challenged in court, and the Bush administration did not defend the Park Service's plan. The result was a new look at the situation followed by a new decision that allows an increase in the total number of snowmobiles to enter the park, although with some additional controls.

But on December 16, 2003, just hours before the Yellowstone snowmobile season was to begin, District Judge Emmet G. Sullivan said the Clinton administration's decision to phase out snowmobile use in that sweeping landscape of canyons, geysers and jagged horizons had been arbitrarily reversed. His ruling reinstated the Clinton plan that would completely phase out snowmobile use in the park in 2004-2005.

With respect to the Bush plan that would continue to allow snowmobiles in the park, Judge Sullivan stated that, "there is evidence in the record that there isn't an explanation for this change," and that the revised environmental impact statement "was completely politically driven and result oriented."

High spirits lasted only two months until February 10, 2004, when District Judge Clarence Brimmer blocked the phase-out of snowmobiles from Yellowstone. The NPS immediately increased the number of snowmobiles allowed to enter the park.

"This decision is deeply disappointing for Americans who want to protect Yellowstone National Park so their grandchildren can enjoy it unimpaired," said Steven Bosak of the National Parks Conservation Association. "We need to move forward with increased snowcoach access; it is the clean, quiet means by which all Americans can experience Yellowstone's beauty in a way that doesn't harm visitors, staff, or wildlife."

Colorado University law professor Charles Wilkinson, when asked by the Denver Post about the issue of having two competing federal court rulings, noted the strong custom for the second judge to defer to the initial court ruling. "That kind of defiance is extremely inappropriate and almost unparalleled," he said.

As of today the Bush administration's plan permitting snowmobiling is in place, but environmental organizations, represented in the legal arena by Earthjustice, are confident that the latest ruling is only a temporary setback. "We believe that a higher court will ensure that Yellowstone is given the fullest possible protection, which, after all, is what Congress envisioned when it established Yellowstone as America's first national park," said Ken Miller of Winter Wildands Alliance.

Ski For Light Does Great Work

The Sierra Regional Ski For Light offers the blind and visually-impaired an opportunity to hit the trails on cross-country skis. Their wonderful volunteer work can benefit from your help as a guide or part of the support crew.

The concept was begun in Beitostoelen, Norway in 1963 by the late Erling Stordahl, a blind man who wanted to start a program to teach cross-country skiing to blind and visually-impaired persons. With the help of his friend Olav Pederson and a few others, he began a program which has developed into an annual week-long event attended by about 500 persons.

When he came to the United States, Olav brought the concept with him and started a program which is called Ski for Light. Under the national organization, an annual week-long event has been held since 1975. Based on the concept of the national program, the Sierra Regional Ski For Light began in 1993, attracting blind and visually-impaired skiers both from the Sierra region and elsewhere. Today, an annual three-day event is held which attracts 20 to 25 impaired skiers, plus an equal number of guides, and other volunteers. The program also offers two or three single day ski trips for children and adults each year.

Sierra Regional Ski For Light seeks experienced cross-country skiers to guide blind and visually impaired skiers. This is an opportunity to share your love of the sport with others who need your assistance. Ski For Light offers free training in which you learn how to guide by describing the trail and terrain and offering pointers on technique.

Guide training is two parts, an evening and a practice day on the snow at Tahoe Donner Cross Country in Truckee, California. They can also use non-skiing volunteers as well as cash donations. Sierra Regional Ski For Light is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

To receive more information contact:

Sierra Regional Ski For Light
P.O. Box 276371
Sacramento, CA 95827-6271
(916) 362-5557

Snowmobile Pollution Study

Mark McDaniels of the University of Nevada, Reno, in conjunction with the Desert Research Institute, Reno, NV, will receive \$70,000 funding from the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division to study the effect of snowmobile use on Lake Tahoe. The research will take place over this summer and next winter (sampling and benchmark chemistry) with data analysis and writing over the winter and following summer (2005).

The grant was requested by the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. Marcus Libkind, President of Snowlands thinks this is great. "At one time Snowlands Network considered searching for funds to support this research. But the union of the OHMVR Division, the Forest Service, and independent DRI and Mr. McDaniels will eliminate the question of bias. Hopefully this will put to rest the question of whether or not snowmobiles are negatively affecting the Lake Tahoe environment including the lake itself."

Problems Persist at Tahoe Meadows

Tahoe Meadows has been a favorite cross-country ski, snowshoe, and snowplay area for Reno and Tahoe residents and visitors to the area for many decades. On a good weekend, there can be 1500 skiers, snowshoers and families playing at the "Meadows". In recent years, the area has begun to attract snowmobiles, which has led to increasing levels of conflict between motorized and non-motorized users.

Due to intense public pressure by Snowlands Network and Coalition for Safe and Appropriate Winter Sports (CSAWS), the Forest Service permanently closed the south side of the Tahoe Meadows to snowmobile use this winter. They allowed the north side of the Meadows to remain open to vehicles.

The result of the closure was very successful, with many people now enjoying the snowmobile-free Meadow area south of the highway. Snowlands congratulates the Forest Service for trying to minimize the conflict between the two groups using physical separation of this type.

Unfortunately, the restriction of the snowmobiles to the north side of the highway has inadvertently resulted in a potentially very unsafe situation. The north side of the road is the location of a popular snowplay area and sledding hill. All of the snowmobiles using the north side are funneled through this area, creating an extreme safety hazard. Although speed limit signs are posted, the Forest Service is unable or unwilling to enforce them or to prevent other misconduct by snowmobilers, such as towing others behind them. The Forest Service has not ticketed a single snowmobiler for speeding, towing others, or excessive noise. The Forest Service claims it does not have jurisdiction enforce speed limits.

The Forest Service is spending tens of thousands of dollars this year to enforce the Mt. Rose Wilderness and Galena Drainage snowmobile closure areas that are adjacent to the two-square miles of Tahoe Meadows. They seem to be willing to address the issue of snowmobile trespass, but not the issue of safety. The Forest Service has so far issued two citations for wilderness trespass in winter 2004.

Although snowmobilers constitute only 5 percent of the use at Tahoe Meadows, they present a significant safety hazard due to the large congestion of pedestrians. They also have a profound impact on the tranquility of the area. No longer can a skier or snowshoer enjoy the quiet and peace of this popular area because of noise, fumes and danger. The constant whine of snowmobiles is inescapable anywhere in Tahoe Meadows as snowmobilers "high mark" the hills.

One Reno resident wrote the Forest Service: "I visit the Mt. Rose Wilderness area every weekend during the winter months to take my children on recreational jaunts, either cross country skiing, sledding, or snowshoeing. Although I have been impressed with the improvement of the quality of recreation and safety over the past decade, thanks to some new rulings from the U.S. Forest Service, I feel that the Forest Service still needs to do more to protect those not using motorized vehicles. The noise and smell of snowmobiles are consistently bothersome, to say the least. For us, going out to the wilderness is a chance to get away from city fumes and noises, but due to the joint use of motorized and non-motorized users, we

do not have the feeling of 'wilderness' any more."

The Forest Service reply included, this statement: "This is the one small area left on the Mt. Rose Highway for snowmobiling and I might suggest contacting our office to *find areas in close proximity to Reno where you and your family might recreate and we might better meet your needs*" (emphasis added.) In other words, if you don't like the unsafe situation, go elsewhere. Sadly, as the writer confided "I was considering a reply...basically the forest service told me to go elsewhere if I wanted quiet, but the # 2 place I go is even worse, many more snowmobiles that push us off the trail!" (Brockway summit rim trail)

Snowlands urges the Forest Service to address the unsafe situation before someone gets hurt. Safe speed limits must be established and enforced. Dangerous behaviors such as towing or jumping should result in citations. If these measures do not work, then it may be time to consider making the Tahoe Meadow area totally motor-free for the safety of the thousands of snowplayers who visit the Meadow every year.

If you have concerns about this situation, please email or write to:

Bob Vaught,
District Supervisor
Humboldt-Toiyabe NF
1200 Franklin Way
Sparks, NV 89431
rvaught@fs.fed.us
775-355-5304

Please send a copy to:

Snowlands Network
P.O. Box 18554
Reno, NV 89511
gail@snowlands.org

Volunteers Make it Happen

Snowlands Network successfully pulled off their share of the work at the Banff Film Festival as noted in a separate article with the help of **Michael Abootorab, Mike and Heather Dooley, Bob Madison,** and **Curtis Oldenburg.** Next year we hope to expand the festival to more than one evening, and there will be opportunities for more volunteers.

Jeff Erdoes has taken on two new responsibilities over the past month, including being the point person on issues related to the Sonora Pass area, and he is attempting to work with three different agencies that all have partial jurisdiction over a segment of the Tahoe Rim Trail that we would like to mark with blue diamonds.

Charlie Ferris continues to give us his time and expertise in several areas. His latest and most important responsibility is to act as our business and corporate membership coordinator.

Lynn Stutz came forward recently to provide legal research.

We would also like to thank **Dick Bornhorst** and **Barbara Sommer**, who responded to our inquiry for volunteers with graphics expertise. The pressures of other things have kept us from taking advantage of their offers, but we plan to make use of their skills in the future.

The Board of Directors is indebted to the volunteers that continue to come forward and make Snowlands Network more effective in meeting the needs of our community.

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Affiliate Members

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

Backcountry Skiers Alliance, CO
Bluewater Network
Carson Valley Trails Association
Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation
Friends of Hope Valley
High Sierra Hikers Association
Natural Trails and Waters Coalition
Planning and Conservation League

Life Members

In the December 2003 issue of the *Snowlands Bulletin*, we failed to acknowledge all the life members. So here is the complete list.

John and Patty Brissenden	Marcus Libkind
Gail Ferrell	Richard Simpson
Jim Gibson	Charles White
Janet Hoffmann	

We urge you to become a life member of Snowlands Network by making a \$750 or more contribution toward promoting opportunities for quality, human-powered winter recreation and protecting winter wildlands.

Important Message About Mailing List

Are you receiving your issue of the *Snowlands Bulletin* the way you would like? If this copy of the *Snowlands Bulletin* was not addressed as you would like it, please let us know. Just send an e-mail to mailings@snowlands.org (or a note to Snowlands Network, PO Box 230, Livermore, CA 94551) with corrections.

Please let us know also if you would like to receive the *Snowlands Bulletin* by email instead of by regular mail, or if you would like to receive both email and print copies.

Finally, if more than one member of your household is currently receiving the *Bulletin*, we can combine the mailings if you prefer – just let us know which mailings should be combined and how you want your issue addressed.

Happy Birthday George !!!

George Small became a member of Snowlands Network in January 2002 at the first Snowlands Network Reno fund-raising event. George had never skied a day in his life, but he believed in our work.

I personally met George this past January and was impressed by his bone-crushing handshake. Not surprising for a 95-year-young man who reads Barons for pleasure and exercises to keep up with his 92-year-young brother. George turned 96 in February 2004!

I only wish that I will have the same opportunity to support Snowlands when I'm 96. Thanks for the stories you shared with me and the inspiration you give everyone.

Marcus Libkind, President

Environmentalists Reappointed to OHV Commission

Environmentalists Paul Spitler and Judy Anderson were both recently reappointed to the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission. Their reappointments maintain an environmental majority on the Commission. Spitler was reappointed by Senator John Burton and Anderson was reappointed by Speaker of the Assembly Herb Wesson.

As one of his last acts, Governor Gray Davis appointed Ed Waldheim, President of the California Off Road Vehicle Association to the Commission to fill out the term of Daphne Green, who resigned from the Commission last year.

Snowlands Network is pleased with the makeup of the Commission. The funds available to support OHV projects in general and snowmobile trail grooming and enforcement specifically is significantly less than the amount of grant applications. This Commission has consistently worked to fund OHV-related projects that best meet the needs of the OHV community while protecting the non-motorized community and the environment.

The Commission has cut funds for snowmobile trail grooming where it primarily benefits commercial interests such as in Hope Valley and Brockway Summit and where the Forest Service has ignored the need for winter non-motorized opportunities such as at Iron Mountain on Highway 88.

Snowlands Network continues to represent you in the OHV grant process. High on our list for the 2004-2005 cycle is getting more input to the Commissioners and in increasing the amount of funds for enforcement.

Forest Service Selects Plan for Giant Sequoia National Monument

The Forest Service has selected Modified Alternative 6 for managing the Sequoia National Monument. Copies of the Record of Decision and the Final Environmental Impact Statement are available at: http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/giant_sequoia/.

The alternative allows for increased levels of recreation and some logging ("mechanical treatment") to remove trees, but only "... if clearly needed for ecological restoration and maintenance or public safety." Trees of up to 30 inches in diameter may be removed. These last two provisions are opposed by environmental groups (see, for example, <http://california.sierraclub.org/sequoia/Monument/>).

The plan has little to say about winter recreation. It allows OHV and OSV use on the 640 miles of designated roads in the Monument, summer and winter. No off-road recreational vehicle use will be allowed anywhere within the Monument.

There are 135 miles of roads groomed for OSVs in the winter. There is a nordic resort offering 31 miles of groomed trails for skiers, and 4 miles of marked but ungroomed trails exist in the Quaking Aspen-Ponderosa and Parker Pass areas.

Snowlands has decided not to appeal this decision on the basis of its winter recreation policies. These policies, if established and enforced, will be an improvement over the current conditions. There seems little basis for an appeal, and the decision is the best that can reasonably be achieved at this time.

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 or pay by credit card.

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President's Corner

My soap box in this *Bulletin* is dedicated to my vision of the future for Snowlands Network. Actually, it is the vision of the Board of Directors whose responsibility it is to chart the future and make preparations for implementing the plan.

Your view of Snowlands Network is probably what you read in the *Bulletin* and maybe what you read in our e-mail alerts if you subscribe to them. What you don't see is the individual work performed by the Directors and volunteers and all the discussion that goes on between them.

Those efforts are split between today's issues and projects, reacting to unplanned issues, and preparing for the future. Over the last year, as at the February 2004 meeting of the Board of Directors, we have discussed the giant step forward necessary to reach our full potential and ensure the health of Snowlands Network in the future – the hiring of an Executive Director.

An Executive Director is absolutely necessary if we are to continue to grow in our ability to respond to all the issues that come our way. For instance, 13 national forests that offer opportunities for snow sports in California and Nevada will be revising their management plans in the next seven years. We need to participate in these because they will determine the overall management guidelines for the next 15 to 20 years. This is where we need to

begin if we want to affect changes.

The Board of Directors has determined that a full-time staff person, an Executive Director, is necessary to meet the increased demands of the future. This is in addition to the continued efforts of volunteers and the Directors.

There is a negative side to taking this step. It will take a considerable amount of time and energy to get from where we are today to hiring an Executive Director. There is little doubt in my mind that this will take away from other work and will no doubt add to the pressure of all involved. It already has. But the alternative is unacceptable – failing to meet the challenges of the future.

We are lucky in one sense: Snowlands Network has followed a well-structured development plan based on nonprofit corporate fundamentals. We have the structure in place; all we need is the funding to make the Executive Director a reality. We are currently pursuing many avenues for funding including increased individual membership, attracting business and corporate memberships, fund-raising events, and grants.

We can make this important step happen. Please contact me if you can help.

Marcus Libkind, President