

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



# Lake Tahoe Basin Winter Travel Management

*The Wheels of Change move slowly, and so it is with federal land management.*

Snowlands Network took action in the early 2000's to address concerns of natural resource degradation, safety along the highway, and growing user conflicts between pedestrian winter users, such as cross-country skiers and snowshoers, and motorized snowmobile users in the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU), an administrative unit of the United States Forest Service.

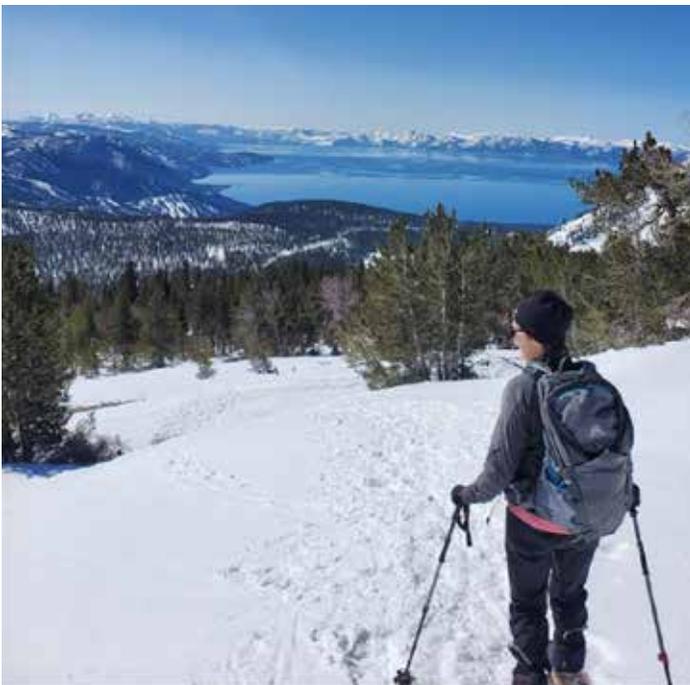
The area on either side of the Mt. Rose Highway between Reno and Lake Tahoe has seen increasing use, especially due to the rise in the popularity of snowshoeing, and the area continues to be wildly popular with family snowplayers, backcountry and cross-country skiers, and snowshoers. Always popular is the Chickadee Ridge area, where human powered winter recreationists can see

the black and white chickadees gathered in wintering pines.

Since its inception in 2001, Snowlands Network has advocated for the Mt. Rose Corridor to be designated as a nonmotorized winter area; the same designation as the area affords in summer months. The required process of working through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) has been arduous. Snowlands Network has represented the needs of human powered winter recreationists through correspondence, documentation, and attending every meeting the LTBMU has held, some in conjunction with other agencies.

Starting officially in 2016, the LTBMU began to work to modify its Winter Travel Management Plan. Snowlands Network has been the representative of the diverse users that use human power to enjoy the winter wonderlands, including winter birders, families that snowplay, skiers, and snowshoers. After multiple starts and stops, the LTBMU has indicated that it will publish a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in 2023 for winter travel management. When the DEIS is published, Snowlands Network will analyze the alternatives and ask each and every one of our supporters to contact the LTBMU and help them make the best decision on how to manage winter recreation within the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Until then, enjoy the snow and stay involved!



Looking out over Lake Tahoe Basin

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# President's Corner

By Marcus Libkind



It has been raining in the Bay Area, and hopefully this bodes well for precipitation this winter that we so badly need. We need both the snow for fun and storage of water, and rain to fill reservoirs. Please do your rain and snow dances.

This winter will be the 18<sup>th</sup> season that Snowlands has hosted the Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour. Pre-covid we drew 2000 attendees over two nights. Last year we saw a huge drop in attendance for two reasons: Covid-19 was still an issue and the scheduling was not optimum.

Due to Snowlands sticking by Banff during the difficult years, they have assigned us a much better schedule. Our showings in Redwood City will be Friday and Saturday nights, March 10 and 11, 2023. Look for more information in the article below. I hope to see you there.

Snowlands will also be hosting a mid-January virtual showing of Winter Wildlands' Backcountry Film Festival.

The timing is perfect for purchasing the show as a holiday present for a friend. Look for more information elsewhere in this Bulletin.

Snowlands Network will, with the continued support of its volunteers and members, continue its advocacy work on behalf of human-powered winter recreation in California and Nevada. Five national forests have begun to issue winter travel management plans. Snowlands will be reviewing them and determining what action, if any, needs to be taken. You may not hear from us, but we are there working for you.

From the entire Board of Directors at Snowlands Network, we wish you a wonderful holiday season.

Please be safe.

## Banff is Coming Back to Redwood City!

Join us for our 18<sup>th</sup> year of screenings of the The Banff Centre Mountain Film Festival World Tour at the Fox Theatre in Redwood City on March 10 and 11, 2023. Join fellow outdoor enthusiasts and enjoy films of adventure and exploration around the world on a big screen. Wisk down pristine mountain slopes, ride through awe-inspiring terrain, paddle the wildest waters, climb the highest peaks, and be uplifted by stories of the people who live in these areas and are working to preserve them. Friday and Saturday shows are different, so come to both nights.

The Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival is the premiere international film competition featuring the world's best

footage on mountain subjects. The festival began in 1976 and is held annually in Banff, Alberta, Canada. The Banff Centre Mountain Film Festival World Tour offers you the opportunity to see the best of the films entered in the festival.

Snowlands Network is sponsoring the event and all proceeds will help support Snowlands' advocacy work. We will be working with local sponsors to bring you some great prizes along with those provided by the World Tour sponsoring organizations.

Tickets will be available after December 15 at:

<https://www.foxrwc.com/tickets/schedule.php>

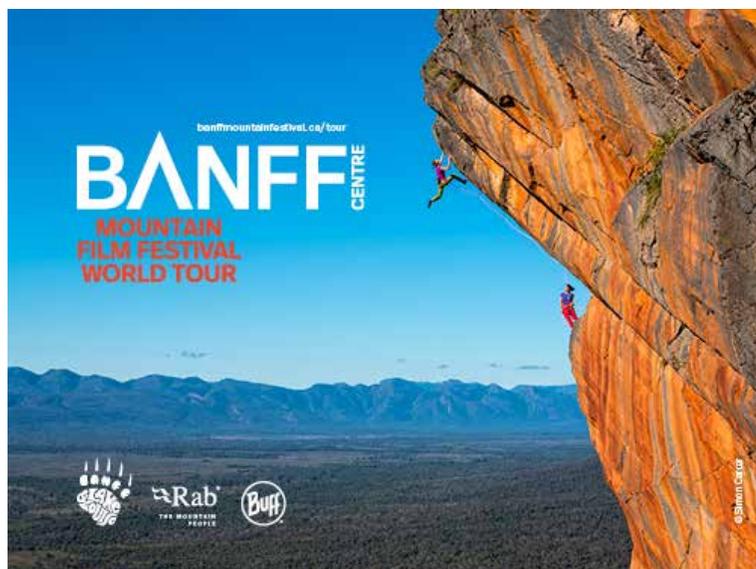
More information including film lists coming at:

<https://www.snowlands.org/banff>

Also follow us on Facebook for preview film clips.

**All current COVID regulations will be observed.**

Dates:	Friday, March 10 and Saturday, March 11, 2023
Where:	Fox Theatre, 221 Broadway St., Redwood City
Time:	7PM (Doors open at 6:30 PM)
Tickets:	\$25



# RIMS App for iPhone and Android

Snowlands has recently been exploring partnering with the Winter Wildlands Alliance and Colorado Mountain Club in their use of the Recreational Impact Monitoring System (RIMS) app that is now available for Apple iPhones and Android devices. The app allows a user to report a number of different observations related to their recreational experiences in summer and winter. Those reports are entered into a database that is provided to land managers to improve recreation management planning. The reports may be made anonymously.

The app is similar to Snowlands' long-running Backcountry Experience Reporting program, available on our website. The app allows the user to enter various details about their recreational experience into a reporting interface. There are basic fields like date, time, and location — using your phone's GPS and the built-in map. There are also more detailed fields like how many cars were in a given parking lot when you arrived to monitor parking usage or whether your experience was impacted by other users, including motorized users.

According to Hilary Eisen, Policy Director at the Winter Wildlands Alliance, "By using RIMS, your reports and observations become part of a nation-wide database that will help Winter Wildlands Alliance, partners such as Snowlands Network, and the Forest Service, better understand winter recreation use and trends. This supports our efforts to advocate for thoughtful

winter travel planning, for additional Forest Service enforcement capacity in places where persistent Wilderness and non-motorized area incursions occur, and investments in winter recreation infrastructure such as trailhead plowing, signage and educational resources, and facilities. This data collection is also essential for monitoring the effectiveness of new winter travel plans, such as the recently-completed Stanislaus and Lassen OSV plans."

We believe this app may be a useful tool to assist with our advocacy efforts with the Forest Service and other management agencies. It provides another avenue to generate data on usage of public lands — whether that data be related to resource protection, access and amenities (parking, restrooms, etc.), or user conflict and motorized vehicle violations.

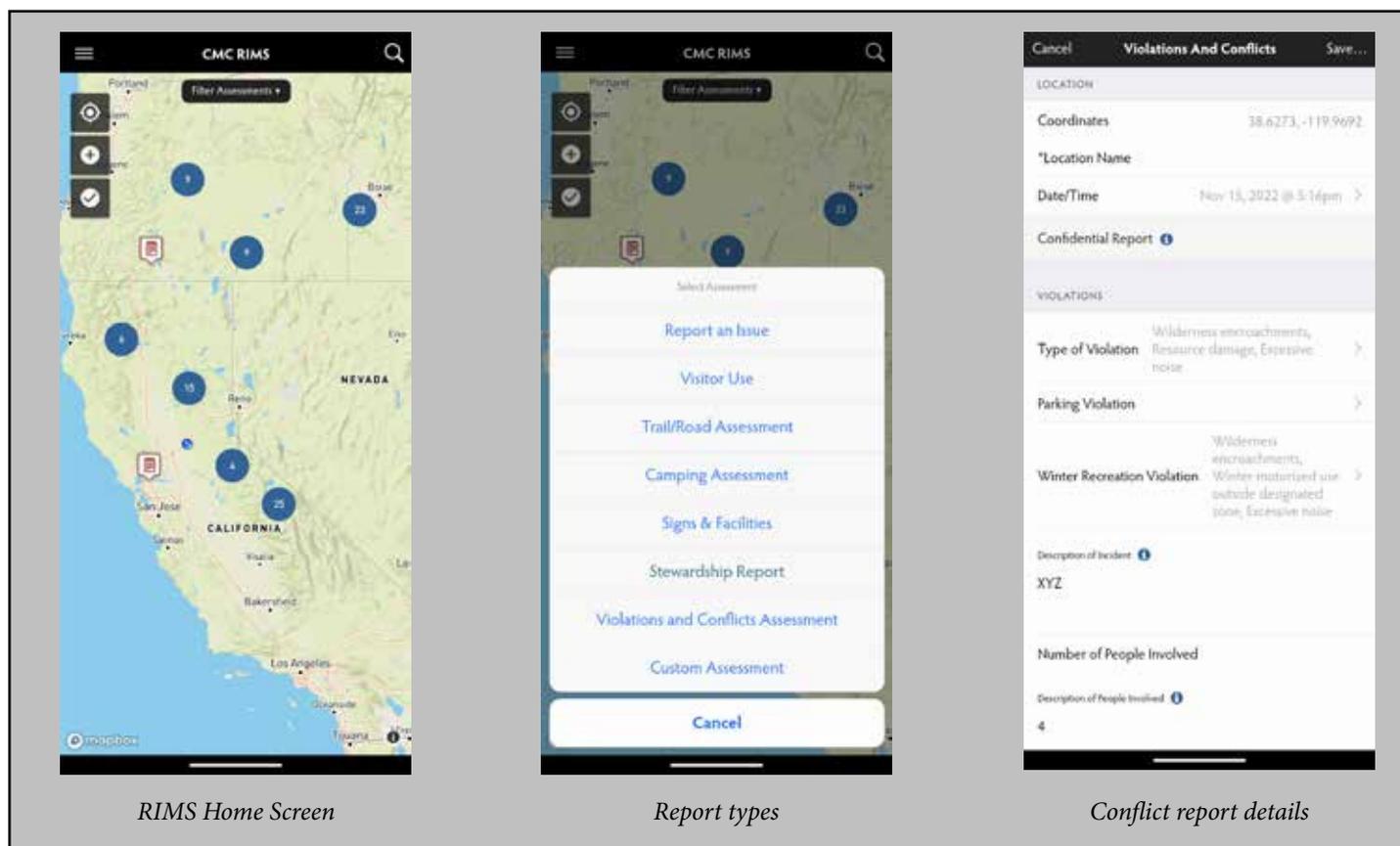
Below are some screenshots of the app interface. The menus are intuitive and straightforward as such things go. We encourage you to try out the app when you are out and about this winter. The iOS version is available here:

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/cmcrims/id1451683494>

The Android version is available here:

[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.canallc.cmc&hl=en\\_US&gl=US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.canallc.cmc&hl=en_US&gl=US)

We already have a few ideas for additional features and welcome your thoughts.



# Backcountry Film Festival Goes Virtual for the Holidays

If you are looking for a way to stoke up your snow desire, or looking for the perfect holiday gift, look no further. The Backcountry Film Festival will be virtual this year! You can purchase your private viewing ticket and watch in the comfort of your home, on your phone, or at your friend's place. The films, all independently produced, range from

outrageous to wild to scientific to personal. There is a film to touch every heart.

Look for the email from Snowlands Network mid-December letting you know ticket sales are open. Only \$20, and you can watch the film festival any time between Jan 14<sup>th</sup> and Jan 29<sup>th</sup>. Make it a quiet evening, or bring in the whole gang.

## Scheduled Films

### **Soñadora**

By Jr Rodriguez, Sofia Jaramillo, Micheli Oliver, and Luke Kaneb  
*Vanessa Chavarriaga is quite literally a trailblazer, and with vulnerable storytelling, she is making space for those after her in the outdoor industry. In doing so she is often in predominantly white spaces and thus has had to find ways to stay connected to herself and her culture. This film explores Vanessa's journey and anyone else who lives between worlds.*

### **Tools of Ascension**

By Chris Murphy and Max Lowe / Produced by YETI  
*Conrad Anker knows the value of suffering through the climb — letting difficult experiences build. Learn more about his ascension with new climber Malik Martin.*

### **Mapping Snow**

By Aaron Kalischer-Coggins and *The Hill*  
*Mapping Snow explores how scientists are trying to better understand snow around the world, to save lives and mitigate the impacts of climate change on our most precious resource.*

### **Ski Local**

By Skyler Martin  
*Ski Local explores the past and present culture of skiing on the Palouse.*

### **First Time Adventure**

By The Mad Trees / Produced by Subaru and REI  
*WWA Ambassador Vasu Sojitra takes fellow athlete Kira Brazinski backcountry skiing for the first time. A short and sweet film about the joy of getting outside together, sharing in our experiences and how we connect to our bodies in the outdoors.*

### **HUT VIBES**

By Noah Howell / Produced by Flylow and SHELTER  
*A group of friends head into the Eastern Sierras to share in the well-known and historic backcountry hut experience. A quick look at the magic of huts in the winter and what they provide.*

### **The Bottom Line**

By NWAC  
*This short film produced by the Northwest Avalanche Center dives into a typical day for NWAC forecasters out in the field along with their routine once back in the office to get the forecast out to the public.*

### **Ski Together**

By Greg O'Connor  
*Zach McCarthy moved back to Maine from Boston and found purpose in sharing his love of ski touring with others.*

### **The Avalanche Hunter**

By Wool Hat Creative  
*In this adventure vignette, we get a look behind the scenes into the often invisible world of avalanche control and avalanche professionals. The story follows Roz Reynolds, an "avalanche hunter" and certified badass, who is not only blazing trails in her field and keeping the public safe in the mountains, but also laying first tracks on backcountry slopes, climbing ice walls, and more.*

### **TENSION**

By WNDR Alpine  
*An immersive deep pow experience.*

### **Stepping Out: An Alaskan Expedition**

By Top Top Studio  
*Three women set out to ski in the Alaska range for their first time. Serving as their own guides they were excited to arrive on the glacier and were quickly humbled by the complex structure of the terrain. In a new setting, they reimagine what success looks like beyond the familiar expectations of adventure athletes. The mission? Thrive in new roles and progress as a team to test their limits as skiers and leaders. No trip is perfect but the most memorable ones evolve beyond sport.*

### **Next Stop Sneg**

By Marco Tribelhorn  
*After receiving a suspicious message on his computer screen, Sven Rauber goes on a hallucinating ski trip into a pillow filled forest in the middle of nowhere. He finds him self in a camp alongside a beautiful river between some hills which hold some of the best snow and skiing terrain in the world. A movie for ski and snowboard fanatics with an affectation for deep powder tree skiing.*



From *First Time Adventure*, by The Mad Trees

## Featured Tour

# Frog Lake Hut

Frog Lake is nestled in the backcountry north of Interstate 80 near Boreal Ridge. Once private, Frog Lake and the land surrounding it were purchased by the Truckee Donner Land Trust. They have transformed the area into a truly amazing backcountry winter destination.

The Land Trust renovated the old buildings, making one of those a community building. It is made of stone and houses a lounge area, reading room, dining area, and an amazing commercial-like kitchen that satisfies all your cooking needs. Among other items, you will find a commercial stove and griddle, microwave oven, and refrigerator.

The Land Trust also built three rental cabins. Like the community building, the cabins are deluxe. There is nothing to compare to them in the backcountry of the Sierra – or maybe anywhere.

Two cabins sleep four on platform beds, and one sleeps eight. Each cabin has a table and seating area. There is also a bathroom with hot and cold running water for each cabin, and the cabins are heated with propane, so a light-weight sleeping bag is appropriate for your visit. You will even find a USB charging port by each bed should you need to charge electronics.

There are three routes to Frog Lake Hut. The two shortest are very difficult due to the steepness of the terrain and required navigation. The third is suitable for intermediate skiers but requires dealing with passage through Tahoe Donner Cross Country Ski Center.

Below is a synopsis of the three routes.

## Castle Valley Route

The Castle Valley route, 3.7 miles one-way, begins at the Castle Valley trailhead near Boreal Ridge. You follow the road for one-half mile until you reach the meadow in Castle Valley. This is the end of the easy skiing. You then cross the meadow and begin to climb, which you continue to do so for 2.2 miles. There is one section that is very, very steep.

At the highest point you still have the most difficult terrain ahead. First you need to navigate very carefully to a notch from which you must descend to Frog Lake. The descent is very steep and narrow. Only expert skiers will be able to ski all of it. It is not unusual for visitors to boot down the very steepest part.

Be aware that avalanche conditions may exist along this route.

## Johnson Canyon Route

The Johnson Canyon route, 4.5 miles one-way, begins at the Johnson Canyon trailhead near Donner Lake. On the positive side, the first 2.1 miles are on roads. The negative is that the roads are narrow and in places steep making both ascending and descending difficult. For example, the first 0.6 mile climbs 350 feet.

Once you leave the road, you are faced with extensive navigation and a very steep climb. The Johnson Canyon route is also subject to avalanche conditions.

## Tahoe Donner Route

The Tahoe Donner route is 6.3 miles one-way, and begins at the Tahoe Donner Cross Country Ski Center. This route is of intermediate difficulty and is relatively safe when avalanche conditions exist on the other two routes.

The route from Tahoe Donner Cross Country Ski Center follows groomed trails for more than 50 percent of the distance and the entire route is on roads. This makes navigation relatively easy, though care must be taken to stay on the correct groomed trail within the ski area boundary and not miss any turns once beyond the ski area boundary.

The downside to starting this route at Tahoe Donner is the logistics. You will need to purchase a Nordic ski pass to ski through the resort area. Check with the resort for details about this and any parking restrictions. The upside is that the route is not excessively difficult, and intermediate skiers who can ski with a backpack should be able to negotiate it.



Photo by Terri Michel

## Use the following links to learn more

**Castle Valley Route**

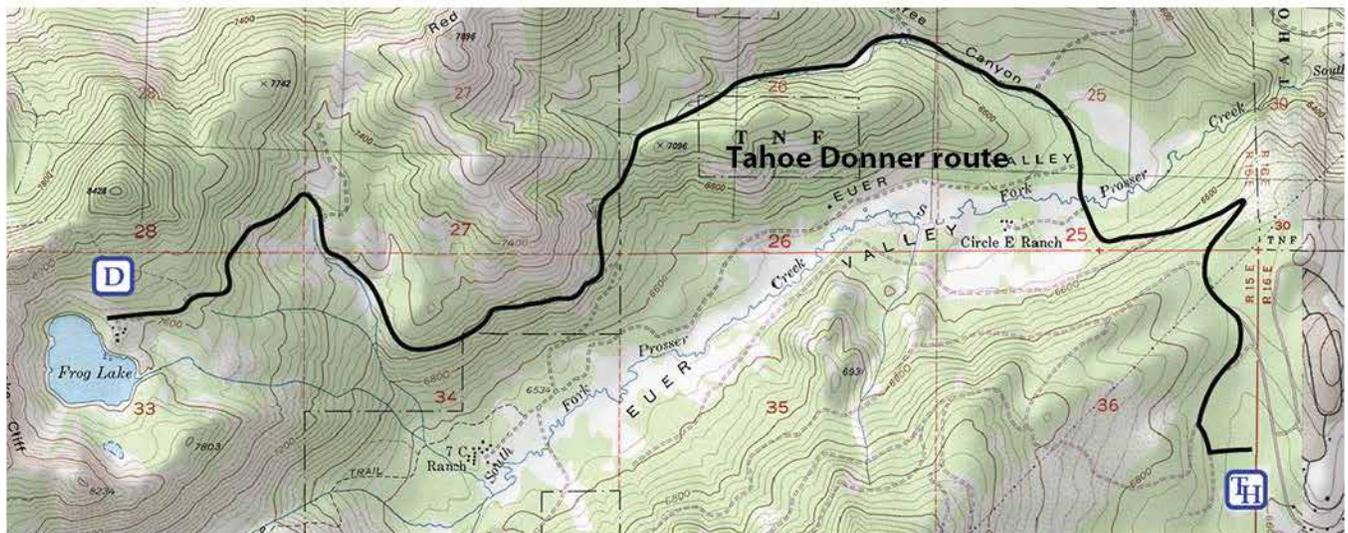
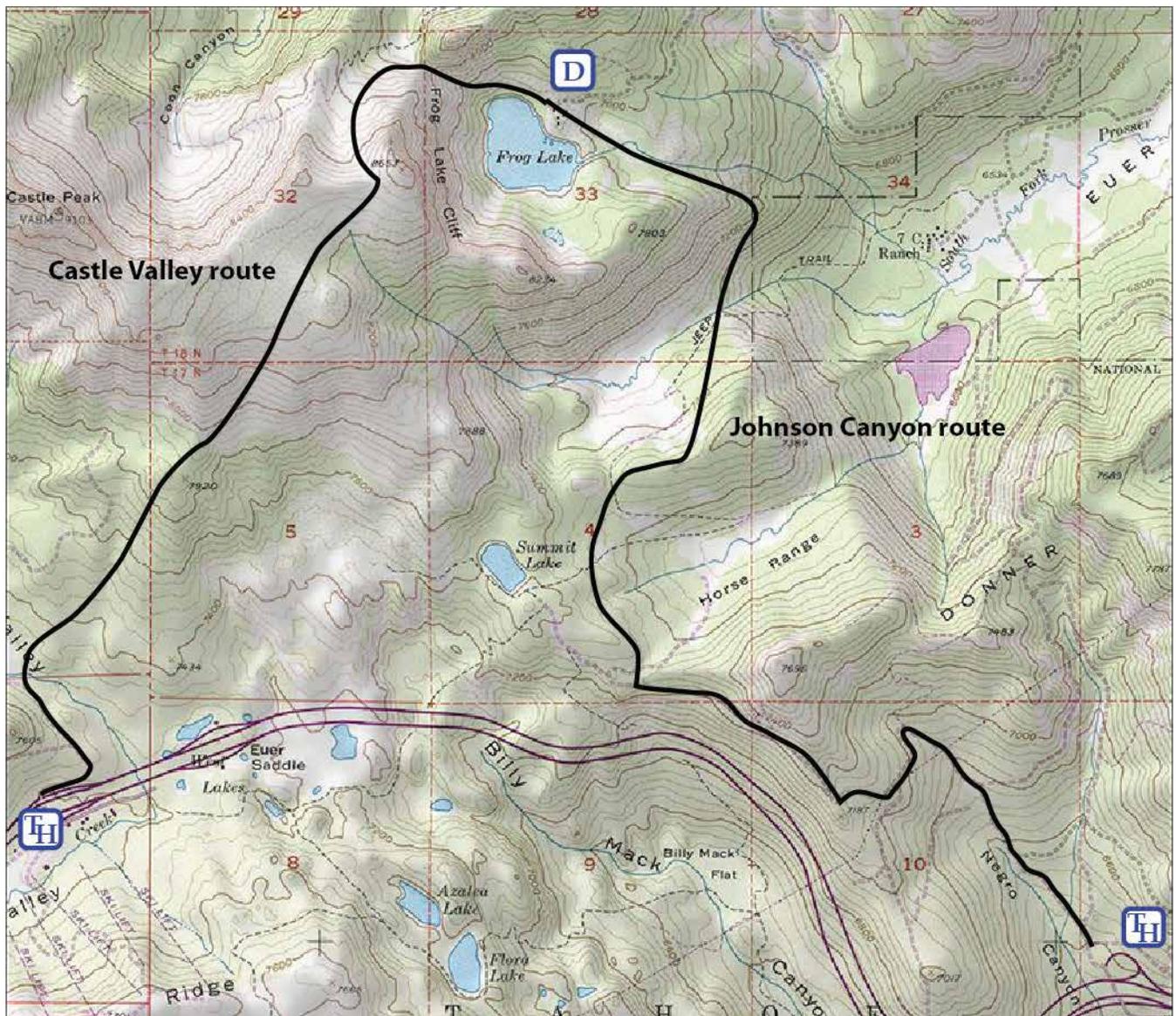
[tours.snowlands.org/tours/03/0338\\_tour.htm](https://tours.snowlands.org/tours/03/0338_tour.htm)

**Johnson Canyon Route**

[tours.snowlands.org/tours/03/0339\\_tour.htm](https://tours.snowlands.org/tours/03/0339_tour.htm)

**Tahoe Donner Route**

[tours.snowlands.org/tours/03/0340\\_tour.htm](https://tours.snowlands.org/tours/03/0340_tour.htm)



Three routes to Frog Lake as described in the article on page 5

# Snowmobile Management Plan Status

This past year saw the finalization of two Over Snow Vehicle (OSV) Use Designation plans by two California National Forests: Stanislaus and Lassen. In settling a lawsuit brought for not doing environmental analysis on the grooming of snowmobile trails, the Forest Service agreed in 2013 to complete the appropriate analysis for five forests in California in two years. Expansion of the settlement to include comprehensive use designation to determine where snowmobiles were permitted and where they were prohibited as well as various factors such as forest fires, a global pandemic, and procedural mistakes pushed the completion date for all five forests well beyond the initial deadline. This year, we are finally seeing the fruition of a decade-long effort to improve the opportunities for non-motorized winter backcountry recreation.

So far, only one forest, Stanislaus, has issued an Over Snow Vehicle Use Map (OSVUM) that makes their new OSV plan official and enforceable. Lassen has yet to issue an OSVUM, but could do so at any time. Other forests are lagging in this effort, and we are not likely to see any new OSVUM maps areas issued by Eldorado, Tahoe, or Plumas National Forests this season.

Here is the status of OSV plans for California forests:

## Stanislaus

Stanislaus NF issued a map in January, 2022, showing where OSVs may travel. This map will be the rule indefinitely until it is changed at some point in the future. The decision closes most of the Near Natural areas designated by the Stanislaus Forest Plan in 1991. These areas were always intended to be closed to motorized recreation, but Forest Orders were never issued to close these areas legally and make the closures enforceable. Consequently, snowmobiles have been using the Pacific Valley and Eagle/Night Near Natural areas at will for recreation.

The new map leaves the most popular parts of the Near Natural areas open to OSV use as a compromise and amends the Forest Plan to allow these areas to remain open. Because these areas are far from the nearest winter trailhead and thus unsuitable for use by most non-motorized recreationists, Snowlands does not think that the small open areas remaining can be considered a violation of the minimization of use conflict requirement of the Travel Rule.

The new management plan keeps the Round Valley area closed to snowmobiles and closes the area south of Lake Alpine and a small area at Big Meadow. Unfortunately, the decision does not close, as Snowlands had requested, such popular non-motorized areas at Cabbage Patch, Osborne Ridge, Cottage Springs, or Osborne Hill.

Snowmobile interest groups and individuals have filed a lawsuit opposing the new plan on the grounds that it closes areas that have been historically used by snowmobiles and that it does not justify closures that were done to protect wildlife, such as the Sierra Nevada red fox. WildEarth Guardians has chosen to intervene in

the lawsuit and present counter-claims, such as the decision not doing enough to prevent harm to wildlife and the incompatibility with the current Forest Plan, requiring amendments to the Forest Plan without full public involvement. Snowlands Network and Winter Wildlands Alliance are for now standing on the sidelines and waiting to see how this lawsuit progresses.

## Lassen

Lassen NF has issued a final decision on its OSV plan but has not yet issued a travel map, which means that the final plan is not yet enforceable. The OSVUM is in effect immediately when issued.

## Tahoe

The Tahoe decision has been delayed while certain issues regarding the Pacific Crest Trail are being worked out. Tahoe is not likely to issue anything this season, but they hope to have a plan in place for the 2023-2024 season.

## Eldorado

The Eldorado decision is now expected in May, 2023. Eldorado will have a new Forest Supervisor in place early in 2023. The work on the OSV decision was delayed by the Caldor Fire.

## Plumas

Plumas NF had announced that its OSV plan is now “on hold.” What this means is not certain. Plumas issued a draft decision in August, 2019, but never published a final version. There were numerous objections to the draft decision by both motorized and non-motorized interest groups and individuals. An objection resolution meeting was scheduled for May, 2020, but was canceled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The new Forest Supervisor Chris Carlton held public workshops on the plan last year, but nothing has been forthcoming from that process.

## Lake Tahoe Basin

The LTBMU started work on an OSV designation plan last year. See the feature article on page one of this issue for more information.

## Inyo

Inyo NF has resumed work on an OSV designation plan. They initially began work on a plan in 2016, but decided to wait for the completion of an update to their Forest Plan. They have now resumed work and are in the Pre-scoping phase, developing a Proposed Action that will be released sometime in 2023.

## Stay Involved

To keep informed about these plans, sign up for the Snowlands Alert List at <https://www.snowlands.org/alerts>. These plans, when finalized, will be the rule for snowmobile recreation for the next 20-30 years. If you are affected by the presence of snowmobiles in the backcountry, get involved and make your opinions known.

*Note: Plumas and Lassen forests were contacted for information for this article about their OSV plans, but they did not respond.*

**Snowlands Network**  
**PO Box 321171**  
**Los Gatos CA 95032**

**Snowlands Network**

PO Box 321171  
Los Gatos, CA 95032  
[www.snowlands.org](http://www.snowlands.org)  
info@snowlands.org  
530.265.6424

**Board of Directors**

Marcus Libkind, President &  
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Colin Wood

**Coordinators**

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**Mission**

*We promote opportunities for quality human-powered winter recreation and protect winter wildlands. We educate the public and government agencies about winter recreation and environmental issues.*

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