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Comments:

Groomed Trails in Turnagain Pass, in Front Country of Non-Motorized, originating from Center Ridge Parking Area:

A groomed trail originating from the Center Ridge parking lot at Turnagain Pass would be a great benefit to the Girdwood, Anchorage & other South Central Communities. Elevation is key to having future sustainable nordic skiing in Alaska. Kachemak Nordic Ski Club in Homer (Lookout Mountain), and the Mat- Su Ski Club in the Valley (Archangel & Independence Mine), all have higher elevation nordic areas that have been able to provide Nordic skiing during current & past warm winters. Turnagain Pass is an ideal location at 1,015 feet where winter exists often and groomed ski trails would be a huge benefit to Chugach National Forest non-motorized users.

The Girdwood Nordic Ski Club with help from the USFS groomed approximately 2.6 KM of Trail on 1/29/2016, and the success of the weekend was astounding. Winter exists at 1,000 feet and the availability and opportunity of groomed trail brought many non-motorized users to Turnagain Pass: families with kids, APU & UAA ski teams, and many others.

For families, knowing a groomed trail was available provided the impetus to go explore to have a successful & enjoyable outing. Without a groomed ski trail, many families won't enjoy Turnagain Pass as frequently, if at all. I have spent over 12 years recreating on the non-motorized side of Turnagain Pass, and I have never seen or heard about as much family outings as this past weekend. Most often kids & families are absent from Turnagain Pass, as the two most common user groups: backcountry skiers & snowmachiners are activities that do not lend itself to kids & families. Hatcher Pass Recreation Area, in comparison, has groomed nordic trails and sledding hills, along with backcountry skiing & snowmachine. The diversity of user groups and non-motorized options with groomed trails, provides opportunities for all ages and abilities.

Grooming trails in the Turnagain Pass Front Country greatly enhances non-motorized opportunities & the user experience for bikers and skiers. Without grooming, the Turnagain Pass Center Creek Area will be utilized mostly when conditions are ideal. Groomed trails will increase non-motorized users to Turnagain Pass and provide the impetus for front country users to explore the backcountry when ready to venture off groomed trails.

I fat biked on Sunday 1/31/2016 on the Turnagain Arm Trail and the difficult conditions and lack thereof a consistent winter trail base was such that we opted to turnaround. With periodic grooming the accessibility into and use of the Turnagain Pass Iditarod Trail would be greatly enhanced. The relatively new trail is under utilized in the winter season and would be a huge draw in the winter for skiers & bikers, if groomed periodically to maintain a more level base.

Turnagain Pass at Center Ridge is a winter wonderland landscape and world renowned for backcountry skiing and snowmachine use. There is ample space within the front country non-motorized area of Turnagain Pass to have periodic grooming and the benefits for additional non-motorized use for skiers & bikers will greatly enhance the Turnagain Pass Winter Recreation Area.

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