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Comments:

To Whom It May Concern,

This is my 3rd comment on the revision plan. My stance is fully opposing plans C and D and supporting plan B if I had to choose between it and plan A. I'm a lifelong Alaskan that grew up in Homer and moved to Anchorage for college. I regularly visit the Chugach National Forest 20+ times per winter and one of my favorite parts of being Alaskan is being able to snowmobile the vast lands all winter long. Seeing the pristine beauty of the frozen world in the mountains has been my favorite past time since my first trip to Lost Lake when I was 10 years old. The connection that a lot of Alaskans hold to nature is a strong one, no matter how you get to it. Snowmobiles specifically can get you to areas that are very difficult to reach any other way. We get to see things in nature other people in the world, even in the U.S., will never see. It's hard for me to understand why anyone would want to take that away, especially citizens that don't live in or have not even seen our great state. I know it's a federal land but shouldn't the people that use it the most have a big say?

After reading other comments and observing input from big names in the snowmobile industry, it reminded me of a story I'd like to tell where snowmobiles saved a woman's life. This story happened out of the Snug Harbor trail but really could happen anywhere, to any type of recreational user. I was out riding with a group of friends and we ran into a crew of riders that had witnessed a lady riding, in another group, into a 30' creek bed hole. Conditions were very rough with blizzard snow conditions, so a mistake was probable that day. She severely injured herself with a broken leg. She was rescued from the hole but was in severe need of medical attention. A medevac helicopter was called in but could not traverse the mountain pass safely. We saw the chopper and waved to it and attempted communicate but it proved too difficult. They eventually dropped one person to us and landed the chopper nearby. We relayed the info that was given to us to the chopper personnel. Soon after, the crew that told us about the incident arrived. We were all told that snowmobiles were the only way to access the injured lady so we headed back to the parking lot to grab extra fuel and prepare to assist. Fortunately there were many other riders that recently arrived. My group ended up giving all of our extra fuel to anyone who was assisting and they went on their way with about 5 riders and 2 medical personnel from the helicopter. I had heard later that they eventually rode the woman out on a snowmobile after she received some medical care. Eventually she made it back to the hospital and has since made a full recovery. Truly a life and limb saved.

Now what you could take away from this is that no one should have been out there that day, snowmobile or not. I however think this could be an incident in any forested areas where helicopters are not able to reach the victims and motorized equipment is needed to assist. Even better would be having those motorized vehicles out on the ground already with people willing to assist in anyway possible. Snowmobilers get a bad rep for littering, loud noise, high speeds and reckless driving but I believe that's a minority of the group and it is unfortunate that they exist but bad eggs exist in every facet of our lives whether it be out in the wild or in any large mass of people. Everyone I personally ride with takes all their trash home and helps grab others too if we can. The snowmobile community is a loyal and charitable bunch and most would help anyone out there in a heartbeat. I also believe that nature on trails and other areas are protected adequately by snowfall. The forestry service controls openings and closing of areas accordingly and I think that helps any damage impact that riding has on nature.

Snowmobiles can save lives and with proper regulations and enforcement we can remove loud cans, limit or even end littering and slow down racers on the trail. I believe snowmobilers and other recreational users can live in harmony without shutting down massive areas where we recreate.

Alaskan Snowmobilers already have a limited area where we can ride. Shutting down areas to motorists would only cause more congestion in other areas leading to potentially higher danger for riders and other recreationists in those areas alike. I also believe local economies would be hurt. Vendors such as gas stations, retail stores, food establishments and hotel/lodging accommodations would see a big drop in business without winter riding areas near them. Removing areas for motorists is not the right action, I believe we can do better than simply shutting down zones. Snowmobiles make so many people so incredibly happy; would you really want to take that away from those that already have a tough time getting through the winter? Please keep our riding areas open.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Picture: You can always find your happy place with a snowmobile.