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My name is Sandra Mitchell and I come before you today with the envious task of "explaining" the state of snowmobiling. Snowmobiling is woven into the fabric of Idaho and of every snow state. Snowmobiling facilitates a sense of solitude in an ever-crowded landscape. Snowmobiling reveals the awe-inspiring beauty of this incredible country dressed in white at a time of year when most are at home on a couch in front of a fireplace. Most importantly, snowmobiling unites families and friends in play. After all, life's best memories are seldom created from one's couch.

Snowmobiling in American is big business. It generates about 26 billion annually. In Idaho, snowmobiling's total economic impact is \$197.5 million and over 100,000 full-time jobs are generated by the snowmobile industry. Snowmobiling is not only important to the quality of life of Americans but it is critical to the economic stability of many rural communities. Recreation may well be the deciding factor in whether or not many rural communities survive.

Snowmobilers are proud of the fact that they pay their own way. They do so by taxing themselves through a sticker program, often with a portion of state and federal gas tax. These funds are pooled and use to build the expensive infrastructure needed, which includes grooming trails, building and maintaining parking lots, education, law enforcement and signage. Every trail, every facility built is used year-around by non-motorized and summer motorized users as well. We gladly share all that we build including our groomed trails.

Snowmobiling is changing. It is getting younger thanks to the growing popularity of the snow bike, fat tire bike and the hybrid...backcountry skiers who use a snowmobile to access the mountains. They sled up and ski down. Also, many UTV's & ATV's users are putting tracks on their vehicles and riding the groomed trails. All are welcome.

All recreationists use the public lands for the same reason...every visitor study shows that. Regardless of the mode of transportation, all go to experience the backcountry because of its beauty, the wildlife--for the adventure and the challenge.

That does not mean that a snowmobile belongs on every acre. There are places where there should be no use, places where motors belong and places that should be shared. I think it important to note, that as far as I know, there is no such thing as an 'exclusive snowmobile area', there are shared use areas where motors are allowed and non- motorized areas.

So snowmobiling is good for the economy, quality of life, our tracks don't last because we ride on a cushion of snow, critters go down, we go up, so life must be good for the snowmobile community, right? We have challenges:

- Using 'conflict' as a reason to justify a snowmobile access closure:

We understand that there will be restrictions but they should be established on good scientific data, not on perceptions or assumptions. Decisions driven by real and substantive resource problems or by congressional designations are not at question. However, social issues, such as conflict, drive many allocation decisions. All users of the public lands must be treated equitably. We suspect that when motorized recreation is granted its first exclusive use area, and it becomes evident that raising issues of conflict can hurt one side as much as the other, most of the shouts of conflict will abate.

- The Management of Recommended Wilderness:

In the Northern Region, Region One, which includes 12 national forests, recommended Wilderness is managed as Designated Wilderness. This policy was adopted around 2006. The assumption behind the policy statement seems to be that motorized and mechanized recreation is automatically incompatible with RWA's. The proper test is whether the specific motorized/mechanized activity somehow compromises the area's future potential for designation as wilderness. That remains the official policy of the Forest Service today but not the policy of Region 1.

A consistent nationwide policy is needed. We believe that can be accomplished with a Secretarial Order.

- Winter Travel Planning:

I have yet to see a Forest Plan or a Travel Plan increase motorized recreational opportunities. In fact, in every process in which I have been involved, snowmobilers lose areas and summer motorized users lose trails. The solution would be to start every Forest Planning process with a clean slate. Remove all the lines except for the designated areas and reevaluate the uses and the needs.

I thank you for this opportunity to talk about snowmobiling. We truly value the opportunity to ride on our Public Lands. Their value is unmeasurable and we know that, because loss has taught us the worth of those lands. A young snowmobiler told me that he had spent hours listening to 'old timers' talk about where they used to ride. He uses that as a source of motivation because he never wants to tell his children and grandchildren about where he rode, he wants to take them there and let them experience the wonder and joy for themselves.