

THE LONG-AWAITED WINTER PLANNING RULE IS OUT, WHAT'S NEXT?



Photo courtesy of Jay Beyer

The result of a decade-long initiative by Winter Wildlands Alliance and our constituents, the new Over-Snow Vehicle Rule (OSV Rule) was released January 27, 2015 and became law 30 days later. Thanks to unprecedented number and quality of public comments from the backcountry community, the final Rule is a significant improvement over the draft rule, which was released for public comment in June 2014.

Now that the Rule is in place it's time to move on to the nuts and bolts of winter travel planning, and what comes next depends on how much individual forests have done to "zone" trails and areas for motorized and human-powered recreation in the past

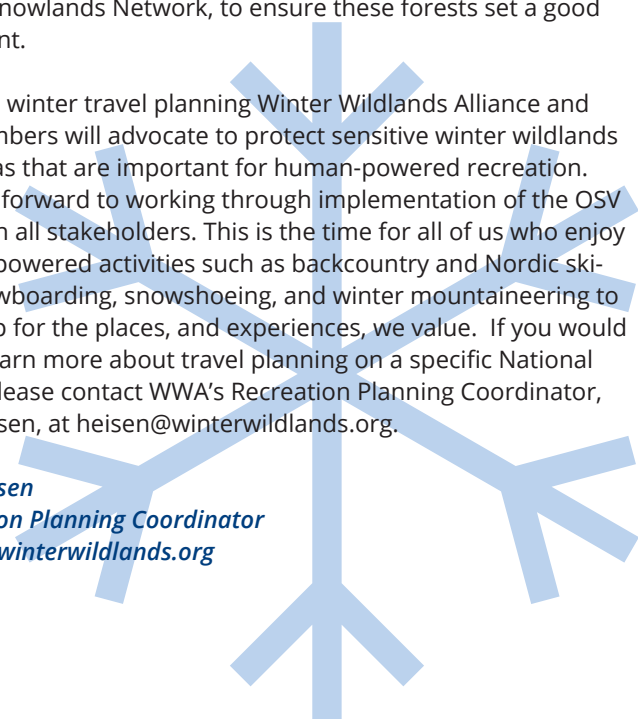
Forests that already have acceptable regulations in place will simply need to provide public notice that they will be moving forward with existing management and print Over-Snow Vehicle Use Maps in order to comply with the new rule. The Forest Service has indicated that we should see maps by next winter for those national forests that are already in compliance. Forests that do not have winter travel plans will need to determine specific routes and areas that will be open to snowmobiles, with all areas not specifically designated open being closed, and then publish these designations on a map. This winter travel management planning process is subject to the National Environmental Protection Act and thus there will be several opportunities for the public to weigh in with comments as the plans are developed.

All in all, winter travel planning on any given forest will likely take 2-3 years from start to finish. The Forest Service has not set a timeline for when specific forests must complete these travel plans, and is still in the process of determining what sorts of decisions are already on the books. WWA, along with our grassroots partners, will continue to communicate our priorities locally, regionally, and nationally about where winter travel planning is critical to improve the backcountry experience and resolve long-standing issues.

The first forests in the country to tackle winter travel planning under the new Rule are all located in California. The Lassen, Tahoe, Eldorado, Stanislaus, and Plumas National Forests are just starting this process. In early 2015 the Lassen released their Proposed Action (a starting point for travel planning) and solicited scoping comments from the public. The Tahoe and Stanislaus have also begun this phase with El Dorado and Plumas to follow. At the scoping stage the Forest Service is looking for input on what elements should be included in the new plan and what issues to consider as they develop Alternatives. The next step is for the Forest Service to develop Alternative management scenarios and then analyze and compare these Alternatives to determine which Alternative, or combination of Alternatives, should become the final travel plan. This same basic process will be replicated across the country, and we are working with our local partner group, Snowlands Network, to ensure these forests set a good precedent.

Through winter travel planning Winter Wildlands Alliance and our members will advocate to protect sensitive winter wildlands and areas that are important for human-powered recreation. We look forward to working through implementation of the OSV Rule with all stakeholders. This is the time for all of us who enjoy human-powered activities such as backcountry and Nordic skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, and winter mountaineering to speak up for the places, and experiences, we value. If you would like to learn more about travel planning on a specific National Forest please contact WWA's Recreation Planning Coordinator, Hilary Eisen, at heisen@winterwildlands.org.

Hilary Eisen
Recreation Planning Coordinator
heisen@winterwildlands.org



NEWS FROM WWA

2015 GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY CONFERENCE

Mark your calendars and start planning a trip to Golden, CO for **June 18-20** because you are officially invited to the Winter Wildlands Alliance 2015 Grassroots Advocacy Conference. Every two years Winter Wildlands Alliance hosts the Grassroots Conference in order to bring our community together to learn from and inspire each other. The conference is open to Winter Wildlands Alliance members, our partners, and anybody who is passionate about human-powered recreation and protecting winter wildlands. Board members, volunteer leaders and devoted advocates from our grassroots network are especially encouraged to attend as we transition into winter travel management planning across the national forest system.

Our keynote speaker, Donny Roth, will kick things off on Thursday evening. Donny is a Winter Wildlands Alliance ambassador, ski guide, sponsored athlete and free range skier who focuses on, and advocates for, human powered skiing. Additional presentations and seminars will range from effectively utilizing the new Over Snow Vehicle Rule to protect winter backcountry areas, to using maps as advocacy tools, to defining a set of ethics for the winter backcountry community.

Attendees to past conferences have come away with new skills and renewed vigor to continue in their efforts to protect their local winter wildlands. The conference will take place June 18-20, 2015 at the American Mountaineering Center in Golden, CO. To register please visit the conference webpage at <https://winter-wildlands.org/grassroots-registration/> and if you have any questions please contact Hilary Eisen, at heisen@winter-wildlands.org. We hope to see you there!

-HE

WWA AMBASSADOR JIM HARRIS RECOVERING FROM EXPEDITION ACCIDENT

WWA Ambassador Jim Harris, aka Perpetual Weekend, suffered spinal and cranial trauma from an accident while preparing for a Trans-Patagonia expedition in Punta Arenas, Chile in December. Within days of the accident the backcountry community helped raise more than \$100,000 to bring Jim home and help with his medical expenses. With further aid from the High Fives Foundation Jim continues to make remarkable progress and is now taking steps on his own with the use of hand crutches. Follow his progress on Facebook.



After instructing wilderness mountaineering courses for seven years, Jim was hired for a photo shoot in 2011. Since then, he's written about and photographed expeditions for National Geographic, Powder, Backpacker, Men's Journal, and others. He found a niche shooting Type II Fun and wilderness trips in places like Mongolia, Bolivia, and Antarctica but loves tromping around his home mountains in Utah. Jim says the fact that ski touring in the heavily-used Wasatch mountains can feel more like a social outing than a wilderness experience highlights the importance of Winter Wildlands Alliance's work to guide land stewardship. In an area where touring, chairlift access, and heli skiing often overlap, Jim is an enthusiastic supporter of preserving access for human powered recreation on public land.

WWA WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBER HAL HALLSTEIN



WWA is pleased to add Harold Hallstein IV of Boulder, Colorado to our Board of Directors. Hal's interest in alpine and cross-country skiing has been evolving steadily for more than 25 years. He is an active volunteer for the Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research (INSTAAR) on the Green Lakes Snow Survey, which conducts snowpack, water, and atmospheric research at the Niwot Ridge Long Term Ecological Research Site. His time spent in that highly protected valley, and at both human-powered and motorized trailheads across the Mountain West has shown him the environmental and spiritual value that lives in these quiet places. He hopes his work with the WWA will help ensure the viability of reflective winter experiences for future generations. When he isn't ski touring, Hal is running an investment management business based in Boulder, CO.



Winter Wildlands Alliance is a national nonprofit organization promoting and preserving winter wildlands and a quality human-powered snowsports experience on public lands.

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winterwildlands.org/join/

SNOWSCHOOL SPOTLIGHT

SNOWSCHOOL CONTINUES TO EXPAND

A program of Winter Wildlands Alliance, SnowSchool is a national network of winter education sites working collaboratively to introduce K-12 students to the joy of exploring their local snow-bound ecosystem. This year, with snowshoes on their feet and the guidance of inspired SnowSchool educators, thousands of students investigated winter ecology in a manner that directly aligns with classroom science curricula. Here's a quick snapshot of some of what we've been up-to:

This winter WWA added 4 new SnowSchool sites to our national network and provided critical resources to help launch these new programs:

"So far we've been running snowshoe programs at six different elementary schools and just added one middle school as well. WWA's snowshoe and snow science curriculum guides have been incredibly helpful resources". – Brad Little, Duluth MN Area YMCA (New SnowSchool site winter 2014-15)

Working to support the continued growth of existing SnowSchool sites WWA has provided numerous field-based training experiences for professional and volunteer educators across the country:

"The WWA SnowSchool training gave me more confidence in developing a program that would keep the students involved and interested with a mix of fun and educational activities" – SnowSchool Educator, Project SNOW, Bend OR (New SnowSchool site winter 2013-14)

And at WWA's national flagship SnowSchool site near Boise, Idaho, WWA has continued to develop new learning experiences; including snow science explorations that connect to climate change and facilitate extended classroom learning. For further updates on these developments visit www.snowschooll.org

Kerry McClay
National SnowSchool Director
kmcclay@winterwildlands.org

BACKCOUNTRY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

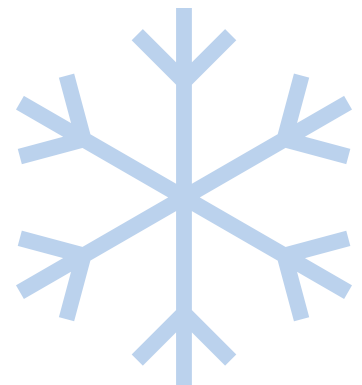
OUTDOOR PROJECT INSPIRES NEW ADVENTURES

We enthusiastically welcome our newest Backcountry Partner, Outdoor Project. Outdoor Project is an online adventure resource to help you connect with every outdoor activity imaginable while finding you routes and campgrounds along the way. Outdoor Project's goal is to create the most comprehensive online resource and the largest community for outdoor adventure and travel, with a plan to revolutionize the way that people find, search for and share their outdoor experience. The website provides photos, maps, and guides for all types of human-powered outdoor activities. The content aims to inspire users to explore new places, head a little bit further down their favorite trails, and get outside more often to find adventure.



Outdoor Project members complete the picture. As a member, you become an integral part of a community of outdoor enthusiasts who are working together to explore the outdoors and share incredible experiences. All Winter Wildlands members and fans can sign up for a free membership and in the comments if you mention WWA your membership will be elevated to a Pro-membership which includes use of maps. Head on over to outdoor-project.com, the offer is valid through April 24, 2015.

Shelley Pursell
spursell@winterwildlands.org
Events and Outreach Director



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Winter Wildlands Alliance
910 Main Street, Suite 235
Boise, ID 83702

208.336.4203
208.336.0648 (fax)

info@winterwildlands.org
www.winterwildlands.org



[instagram.com/winterwildlandsalliance](https://www.instagram.com/winterwildlandsalliance)
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BACKCOUNTRY FILM FESTIVAL TOUR REPORT

Winter is coming to an end and so is the 10th Annual Winter Wildlands Alliance's Backcountry Film Festival Tour. Celebrating the human-powered experience and the snow less traveled, this year's film festival toured 96 cities, 4 continents, 6 countries, 18 states and was enjoyed by over 15,000 outdoor enthusiasts!

The Festival raised more than \$150,000 dollars for our Grassroots Members, SnowSchool sites and University Outdoor Education Programs. The dollars raised benefitted local communities by funding outdoor education programs, avalanche centers and purchasing winter equipment.

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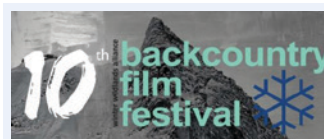
JOIN US

Join WWA's efforts and become a member today! You can do your part to help protect the places we play. Visit winterwildlands.org/join or call Brittany Jones at 1.208.336.4203 ext. 2.

Without the generous support from our like-minded friends, members, hosts and attendees the success and growth of the Winter Wildlands Alliance Backcountry Film Festival would not be possible. Your support allows us to expand and strengthen the festival program and offer it again as an effective outreach and fundraising tool to our ever-growing network of partners.

Planning for next year's Backcountry Film Festival has already begun. We are searching high and low for the next crop of films, so keep an eye out and send those films our way. Thank you in advance for your continued support and involvement - we look forward to the adventure it will bring!

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BACKCOUNTRY FILM FESTIVAL

CELEBRATING THE HUMAN POWERED EXPERIENCE
winterwildlands.org/what-we-do/backcountry-film-festival/