



Forest Service Issues Final Decision for Kaniksu Over-Snow Vehicle Use Designation Project

COEUR D'ALENE, Idaho, December 29, 2023— The Idaho Panhandle National Forests has issued a final decision for the Kaniksu Over-Snow Vehicle Use Designation Project.

The Kaniksu Project designates a system of over-snow vehicle routes and riding areas, along with seasons of use, for motor vehicles that travel over snow on tracks or skis. The project area covers more than 1,046,000 acres of National Forest System lands across the Sandpoint, Bonners Ferry, and Priest Lake Ranger Districts.

The new winter travel plan will go into effect when the Forest Service produces an over-snow vehicle use map that describes the riding routes and areas and the seasons of use. The map will be free to the public and available in both hard copy and online. The map is expected to be available by next winter, 2024-2025, but not for the current winter.

Travel management planning is undertaken in accordance with the 2005 federal Travel Management Rule, which requires all national forests and grasslands to develop a system of roads, trails and areas for motorized travel. The rule was later expanded to include snowmobiles and other “over-snow vehicles.” The Forest Service finalized national policy for the management of snowmobiles in 2015.

Specifically, the Travel Management Rule requires the Forest Service to designate over-snow vehicle routes to minimize:

- damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, and other forest resources,
- harassment of wildlife and disruption of wildlife habitats,
- conflicts between motor vehicle use and existing or proposed recreational uses of National Forest System land or neighboring federal lands, and
- conflicts among different classes of motorized vehicle uses.

As part of the planning effort, a collaborative group, facilitated by the National Forest Foundation and made up of representatives from diverse, interested parties, Tribes, and government agencies, met in 2022 to develop an initial set of recommendations.

The Forest Service continued to gather public input on an initial proposal during a scoping comment period and again during the draft environmental assessment public comment period.

“We want to thank everyone who participated in the process. Your engagement has made the final decision more representative of north Idaho and balanced motorized and non-motorized use while protecting important wildlife habitat,” said Sandpoint District Ranger Jessie Berner.

For more information and to view the project planning documents, visit [Idaho Panhandle National Forests - Home \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/land-management/forests/idaho-panhandle-national-forests)

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