

TRAIL BREAK

your report for silent snowsports

Volume 2012, Spring Issue



Clearwater National Forest Gets it Right with Winter Planning

WWA applauds Idaho's Clearwater National Forest, which recently completed a Travel Management Plan that effectively balances motorized and non-motorized winter use on the forest. The Clearwater is one of only a handful of forests nationwide that elected to include winter use in their Travel Management Plan, the process by which each forest designates routes, trails and areas for motorized use. Each forest is mandated by the 2005 Travel Management Rule to complete a management plan for summer ORV use and to provide a Motor Vehicle Use Map, but because of a loophole in the 2005 Rule, management of winter motorized use is left to the discretion of local Forest Service officials. WWA is working through a legal challenge at the national level to remedy this loophole but for now the process for winter remains optional.

WWA is delighted to report that the Clearwater National Forest choice to include winter and over snow vehicles in the travel planning process. Even more encouraging was how fair and competently the travel planning process was conducted. As explained in a statement by Forest Supervisor Rick Brazell, "I sincerely believe the selected alternative provides the best mix of motorized uses while protecting wildlife and fisheries habitat."

The Travel Plan provides well-distributed opportunities for both snowmobiling and traditional non-motorized winter recreation. The Travel Plan also conserves the wilderness character of the 198,200 acres of recommended wilderness designated in the 1987 Forest Plan.

The Clearwater will now focus efforts on creating a Motor Vehicle Use Map that will display the travel management decision for Forest users. WWA and our members look forward to working with forest officials in the implementation of the plan including outreach efforts to educate winter recreationists of new winter travel regulations.

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Backcountry Film Festival Goes Global

What an incredible and amazing winter. Depending on where you were in the country you were either searching for snow drifts or wading through them but either way the Backcountry Film Festival was a sure bet to get you motivated for finding stashes of powder. With 87 showings worldwide, the 2011-12 Winter Wildlands Alliance Backcountry Film Festival tour set new records for attendance and fundraising.

This year, the 7th annual, the film festival toured 87 cities, 6 continents, 9 countries, 18 states and was enjoyed by more than 12,000 outdoor enthusiasts!

Dave from Gold River California walked away with the Black Diamond Grand Prize Sweepstakes prize of a new pair of BD Justice skis, Pure Carbon poles and an Agent Avalung pack.

Collectively, this year's Backcountry Film Festival raised more than \$90,000 dollars for our Grassroots Member Groups and SnowSchool sites. The dollars raised benefitted local communities by funding outdoor education programs, avalanche centers, purchasing winter equipment and advocating for human-powered winter activities.

Planning for next year's Backcountry Film Festival is already underway. If the Backcountry Film Festival did not make it to your community please give us a holler and let us know how we can bring the festival to you. Thank you in advance for your continued support and involvement - we look forward to the shared adventure.



Shelley Pursell, Outreach and Events Coordinator
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Yellowstone Winter Use Plan Inches Toward Resolution

As noted in the winter issue of Trail Break, Yellowstone National Park officials last fall delayed release of the long-anticipated Winter Use Plan for one more year in order to conduct additional analysis necessary “sustainable” plan.

The good news is that during the recent scoping period for the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on a final plan, WWA and our coalition partners rallied our constituents to submit more than 66,000 comment letters advocating for a final rule that holds over-snow vehicle numbers at or below the level of the past five years. This five-year period of lower vehicle numbers and higher standards for noise and emissions is a direct result of legal action by WWA and our partners and has led to a remarkable recovery for Yellowstone’s winter ecosystem, wildlife and visitor enjoyment.

The next step will be the release of a final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement with a new range of alternatives. This will be followed by a 60-day comment period during which it will again be imperative that WWA marshal strong public support for a plan that safeguards against the return of higher numbers of over-snow vehicle numbers and their negative impacts on Park resources. During this period, WWA and our coalition partners will also continue direct dialogue with Interior and Park officials to ensure a final winter transportation plan that protects the park and improves the visitor experience. A final long-term plan is now scheduled to be released in November 2012.

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Aerial Surveys Document Positive Impact of Winter Wilderness Stewardship Project

With support from LightHawk and David Stubbs Photography, Winter Wildlands Alliance continues to monitor and document illegal motorized incursions in the Greater Yellowstone region. For the past three years WWA has conducted aerial photography surveys of the Jedediah Smith Wilderness, Winegar Hole Wilderness, and the winter motorized closure on Mount Jefferson. In March 2012, the southwest corner of Yellowstone National Park was also included in the aerial survey.

Aerial view of the west side of the Teton Range and the Jedediah Smith Wilderness. Photo by David Stubbs with support from LightHawk.



Past documentation of snowmobile tracks in the Winegar Hole and Jedediah Smith Wilderness Areas were part of the impetus for the Winter Wilderness Stewardship Project, a partnership with Targhee National Forest, intended to better understand and manage winter recreation on the Jedediah Smith and Winegar Hole Wilderness Areas. Observations from this annual aerial survey found motorized trespass has decreased – an indication that recent education and outreach efforts are effective. Motorized trespass does continue to be a problem in several specific areas. These places will be the focus of Winter Wilderness Stewardship Project and the installation of additional wilderness boundary signs this fall.

In Montana, aerial and ground monitoring documented snowmobile tracks within the Mt. Jefferson winter non-motorized area. Once designated as recommended wilderness, the Montana side of Mt. Jefferson including the Hellroaring Drainage is part of complex Forest Service decision that allows snowmobiles in the upper half of the drainage, jeopardizing the area’s eligibility for wilderness protection as well as degrading the its value for quiet recreation and as an important wildlife corridor. Past aerial photographs have been used in annual reports to the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest as well as in congressional testimony on the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act.

Winter Wildlands Alliance is happy to report no signs of trespass in the Southwest corner of Yellowstone National Park.

FM



Educational Recreational Adventures – Portland, Oregon

Educational Recreational Adventures (ERA) joined the SnowSchool network in January 2011. Since then ERA has had huge success in launching its winter programming by providing outreach trips to students in Oregon and Southwest Washington. Working with local partners and a highly trained staff, ERA develops just the right mix of challenges, winter ecology, survival and science to meet the goals of each group.

ERA was also highly involved in hosting and participating in the 2011-12 Backcountry Film Festival, raising more than \$2000 from their event in Hood River, Oregon. Proceeds were used to purchase snowshoes and support ERA winter programs. ERA also conducts programs in cross-country skiing, fly fishing (Western and Japanese), traditional archery, backpacking and canoeing.



Educational Recreational Adventures, based in Portland, OR takes kids out on the snow for a science based field trip. Here they are testing the density of the snowpack.

For more information on Educational Recreational Adventures, please visit www.edurecadv.org. For more information on the Winter Wildlands Alliance Snow School program, please visit www.snowschooll.org

LW

Idaho Outdoor Business Council Works to Conserve Idaho’s Wild Places

WWA and 25 Idaho-based outdoor businesses and recreation groups are working through the Idaho Outdoor Business Council to preserve Idaho’s spectacular wild lands and waters through educating public officials as to the importance of conservation measures and public lands funding initiatives as drivers for Idaho’s outdoor recreation economy and quality of life.

Data from the Outdoor Industry Association shows that active outdoor recreation supports 37,000 Idaho jobs; generates \$154 million in annual state tax revenue and produces \$2.2 billion dollars annually in retail sales and services across Idaho. A recent Department of Interior study found that recreation accounts for nearly ten times more jobs than grazing and timber on Idaho federal lands and three times more than energy and minerals.

The Idaho Outdoor Business Council recognizes that our businesses, our employees and our customers depend on healthy lands, clean water, and opportunities for peace and quiet in Idaho’s great outdoors. The Council works to support public lands funding initiatives such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund as well as appropriate conservation measures including roadless areas, wild and scenic rivers, and public lands management efforts that expand and improve opportunities for hiking, biking, paddling, climbing, backcountry skiing and snowshoeing, camping, hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing and other forms of both backcountry and close to home outdoor recreation. For more information visit www.idahooutdoorbusinesscouncil.org

MM

Idaho business owners, Chris Haunold and Noah Bryan visit Washington DC to speak with the Idaho delegation on the importance of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and how it impacts Idaho businesses





Skinny Skis – Jackson, Wyoming

Operating for more than 35 years in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, Skinny Skis was born out of a passion for Nordic skiing and has since evolved into a specialty outdoor store offering the latest gear and expertise for running, hiking, skiing and climbing. Nordic skiing remains at the root of Skinny Skis’ success and they are an active component of the local Nordic racing scene as well as the backcountry ski scene. A long time supporter of WWA, Skinny Skis hosted an in-store fundraising event this winter that raised nearly \$2,000 for WWA.

This year in particular, no mention of Skinny Skis would be complete without offering heartfelt condolences and deep respect to the coworkers, friends and family of Steve Romeo who died in an avalanche in the Jackson Backcountry this winter. Rando Steve, as he was known to his thousands of followers on his blog, Teton AT, was a longtime employee at Skinny Skis. His infectious enthusiasm for all things backcountry and his constant smile will be sorely missed.

FM

Cailin O’Brien-Feeney Joins WWA as Policy Coordinator

WWA welcomes Cailin O’Brien-Feeney as our new Policy Coordinator. Cailin joined WWA in May and is working from the Boise office. He will focus on recreation policy issues in Idaho and the surrounding states and will also assist on national policy issues that impact winter recreation.

Cailin just finished a highly competitive and sought-after fellowship with the EPA and and has recently completed a Masters of Science degree in Natural Resources & Environmental Science from the University of Idaho. He also worked as a Forestry Technician for the U.S. Forest Service and in that capacity served an apprenticeship as an avalanche forecaster with the Payette National Forest. An avid backcountry skier, former National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) and McCall Outdoor Science School (MOSS) instructor, and river guide, Cailin is a perfect fit for WWA and our mission.



Alaska
Alaska Quiet Rights Coalition
Mountaineering Club of Alaska

Arizona
Prescott College

California
Mammoth Nordic Foundation
Snowlands Network

Colorado
Colorado Mountain Club
Friends of Berthoud Pass
Friends of the Routt Backcountry
Friends of Red Mountain Pass
Summit Winterlands and Trails

Idaho
Central Idaho Recreation Coalition
High Desert Nordic in Twin Falls
Idaho Mountain Recreation
Nordic and Backcountry Skiers Alliance
Southeast Idaho Recreation Alliance (SIRA)
Teton Valley Trails & Pathways
University of Idaho – Outdoor Program

Minnesota
Backcountry Trail Patrol

Montana
Beartooth Recreational Trails Association
Montana Backcountry Alliance
Montanans for Quiet Recreation

Oregon
Bend Backcountry Alliance

Utah
Nordic United

Washington
El Sendero
Kongsberger Ski Club
Steven’s Peak Backcountry Coalition
The Mountaineers

Wyoming
Friends of Pathways
Jackson Hole Ski & Snowboard Club
Togwotee Pass Backcountry Alliance
Wyoming Wilderness Association

Canada
Friends of the Rossland Range

The Inland Northwest Backcountry Alliance

The Inland Northwest Backcountry Alliance (INBA) is a grassroots organization whose members value quiet human-powered winter recreation in the Inland Northwest, a region that includes eastern Washington, northern Idaho and western Montana. INBA’s goals include building community among human-powered winter recreation enthusiasts, educating others about the value of quiet human-powered winter recreation, conserving opportunities for quiet human-powered winter recreation, and advocating for the proposed Stevens Peak Backcountry Winter Non-Motorized Area.

The Stevens Peak backcountry comprises approximately 6,500 acres in the Idaho Panhandle and Lolo National Forest located near the Idaho-Montana state line. Because of its subalpine terrain, snow, and accessibility, the area has long been popular with snowshoers, cross-country skiers, backcountry skiers and snowboarders. Quiet winter recreation in the Stevens Peak backcountry is being displaced by increasing snowmobile usage and the proposed expansion of Lookout Pass Ski Area.

The Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF) is currently completing the revision of its Forest Plan. INBA and WWA are working with forest officials to secure opportunities for human-powered snowsports through a comprehensive winter recreation plan for the Stevens Peak backcountry.

FM



Eric Ryan and Diane Latta enjoying the Stevens Peak backcountry. Stevens Peak in the distance. Photo by John Latta.

Outdoor Alliance Hosts Landmark Partnership Summit

Last December, WWA and the other members of Outdoor Alliance hosted the first ever Partnership Summit in Golden, Colorado. This ground-breaking event aimed to learn from successful partnerships between Federal land managers and local advocates for human powered recreation. Attended by 150 land managers and their counterparts from grassroots advocacy groups, the Summit covered 19 different success stories, from river restoration projects to innovative mountain bike trail building. In big plenary sessions and small groups, pairs of agency staff and local advocates told their partnership stories, followed by discussions aimed at finding the common themes between each success.

One top success story was WWA’s flagship SnowSchool site at Bogus Basin, Idaho. No case better illustrated how an effective partnership between a land manager and a local organization can get more kids outside – growing SnowSchool from a pilot season of 180 kids to a current total of 6,300 kids introduced to winter recreation and ecology. Along with the SnowSchool case study, many of the discussions at the Summit covered winter recreation and the important role partnerships play in protecting year-round recreation.

Attendees left the Summit energized by the success stories and better equipped to build more partnerships in more places. Outdoor Alliance has published a report from the Summit, available at outdooralliance.net, which carries the lessons learned to land managers and members of the human powered community interested in fostering new partnerships.

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The Outdoor Alliance Partnership Summit at the American Mountaineering Center in Golden, CO.

Corporate Partners





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Winter Wildlands Alliance relies on our members to continue our work in protecting the pristine and beautiful backcountry places we all enjoy year after year. If you are a backcountry skier, snowshoer, winter hiker, or simply enjoy the peace and quiet of a cold snowy day, we need your support! Become a member today. Visit us at www.winterwildlands.org or call Lana at (208)336-4203.

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