



March 20, 2023

Park County Wyoming Commissioners
1002 Sheridan Ave
Cody, WY 82414

RE: Outdoor Recreation Study

Dear Park County Wyoming Commissioners,

I'm President of the Wyoming State Snowmobile Association (WSSA) and am writing regarding the request from Park County Travel to support the RRC-ITRR Outdoor Recreation Study.

We believe that this study will only be looking at plowing HWY 212 without consideration for a replacement trail or for additional parking in Cooke City. We are also concerned with the short amount of time that they plan to survey users in person. The snowmobile season is 4 months (or more) long and a 2-week time frame for their survey would not likely give sufficient data.

If you recall from the letter that was sent to you in July of 2022, several decades ago the WSSA was instrumental in developing various local areas into what has become the great statewide network of snowmobile trails we currently have across Wyoming. And WSSA and our local clubs are particularly proud of the fact that this winter trail system that we helped build now contributes an economic impact of over \$255 million annually across our state, according to the '2020-2021 Wyoming Snowmobile Survey' recently completed by the University of Wyoming's (UW) Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics. Most importantly, this economic impact occurs during winter when local economies often need extra support to help keep our small businesses open. Highway 212 is 'the heart and core' of the Beartooth Mountains snowmobile trail system which, according to the UW study, accounts for over \$7.8 million in annual trip and equipment expenditures in the Beartooths/Park County area. So, we remain heavily vested in trying to keep this trail system viable and offer the assistance of our local club members to help do whatever it takes to keep this particular trail system fully open. This includes the section of Highway 212 that's often referred to locally as "the plug" between Cooke City and Pilot Creek.

Plowing this roadway "the Plug" would likely eliminate half of the existing revenue for the Beartooths snowmobile trail system since, on average; half is generated annually from permit sales in Cooke City. With the roadway plowed and the trail's connectivity eliminated, there would be no opportunity or reason for riders from Wyoming to go to Cooke City, or vice versa. This is why we encourage a replacement trail to keep out two trail systems connected. This isn't as easy as just dropping the plow even though some people think so. There are many governmental agencies that need to be involved.

If this were to happen, it is likely that total revenues for the area would fall to the point there could be insufficient funds to continue maintaining any of the remaining snowmobile trail system in Wyoming (i.e., the entire Beartooths snowmobile trail system could potentially be lost). And while Cooke City currently provides a popular niche for snowmobile visitors during winter, this niche would likely disappear if the highway is plowed as a vehicle through-way.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

Brenda Miller

Brenda Miller, President

Wyoming State Snowmobile Association

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