

National Park Service  
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Grand Teton/Yellowstone National Parks  
John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway  
Wyoming/Montana/Idaho



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**Temporary Winter Use Plans**  
**Finding of No Significant Impact**  
**November 2004**

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# FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT TEMPORARY WINTER USE PLANS

## YELLOWSTONE AND GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARKS JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR., MEMORIAL PARKWAY

### WINTER USE HISTORY

The National Park Service (NPS) has been managing winter use issues in Yellowstone National Park, Grand Teton National Park, and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway (parkway; collectively the parks) for several decades. In 1990, the NPS completed a Winter Use Plan for the parks, but by 1993, it was clear that winter visitation was increasing much more rapidly than the plan had projected, with peak day use exceeding 1,600 snowmobiles and 50 snowcoaches in the parks. This prompted the Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee (composed of the park superintendents and national forest supervisors) to begin data collection for the analysis of winter use within the entire Greater Yellowstone Area. Their work culminated in 1999 with a document entitled, *Winter Visitor Use Management: A Multi-Agency Assessment*.

However, in 1997, the Fund for Animals and other plaintiffs filed a lawsuit in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, claiming, among other things, violations of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in developing the winter use plan for the parks. In October 1997, the Department of the Interior and the plaintiffs reached a settlement agreement wherein the NPS agreed, in part, to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for a new winter use plan for the parks. The Final EIS was released in October 2000, and the Record of Decision was signed on November 22, 2000. The decision stated the intention of the NPS to eliminate both snowmobile and snowplane use of the parks, based on a finding that these uses (at historical and essentially unregulated levels) caused an impairment of the parks' resources and values. A final rule to implement this decision was published in the Federal Register on January 22, 2001.

In early December 2000, the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association (ISMA) and several other plaintiffs (subsequently including the States of Wyoming and Montana) named the Secretary of the Interior, the Director of the National Park Service, and other officials in the Department of the Interior as defendants in a lawsuit filed in the United States District Court for the District of Wyoming. The lawsuit asked for the decision to prohibit snowmobiles to be set aside, alleging that the NPS violated NEPA and the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), among other things, in reaching the decision. The Interior Department and the NPS settled this lawsuit by agreeing to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) in order to incorporate any new or additional information regarding cleaner and quieter snowmobile technology and to allow for additional public involvement in the process.

On November 18, 2002, the NPS published a rule in the Federal Register delaying the snowmobile phase-out by one year, allowing time for completion of the SEIS. This regulation was challenged by the Fund for Animals and other plaintiffs. On February 20, 2003, the NPS issued the Final SEIS, which proposed to continue allowing snowmobile use under three strict

conditions: 1) winter visitation was to be limited to no more than 950 snowmobiles per day in Yellowstone; 2) all snowmobiles would have to use best available technology; and 3) snowmobilers would have to be led by trained guides. A Record of Decision was signed on March 25, 2003, and a final rule implementing the decision was published in the Federal Register on December 11, 2003.

The new decision was challenged by the Fund for Animals and the Greater Yellowstone Coalition in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. On December 16, 2003, the court vacated the new regulation and effectively reinstated the January 22, 2001, rule phasing out the recreational use of snowmobiles in the parks. Under the amended 2001 rule, approximately half the number of snowmobiles that would have been allowed under the 2003 rule were allowed into the parks for the 2003- 2004 winter season, and snowmobiles were to be phased out entirely beginning with the 2004- 2005 winter season.

Following the D.C. court's decision, ISMA and the State of Wyoming reopened their lawsuit against the Department and the NPS in the Wyoming court. On February 10, 2004, the Wyoming court issued a preliminary injunction preventing the NPS from continuing to implement the 2001 phase- out rule, and directing the park superintendents to issue emergency rules that would be "fair and equitable" to all parties. The parks' compendia were revised to allow a total of up to 780 snowmobiles per day into Yellowstone, and 140 for Grand Teton and the Parkway. In Yellowstone, the requirement that all snowmobilers travel with a commercial guide remained in effect. Thus, the 2003- 2004 winter season was essentially split into two sub-seasons, with different rules regarding use of the parks in effect at different times. This created a highly uncertain atmosphere for park visitors, the local communities, and others with an interest in the parks, with many people not knowing how or whether they could visit the parks in winter. On October 14, 2004, the Wyoming Court vacated and remanded the 2000 EIS and ROD and the January 22, 2001, rule to the NPS.

Judicial proceedings are continuing in both Wyoming and Washington, D.C.

## **PURPOSE OF THE TEMPORARY PLAN**

The Temporary Winter Use Plans Environmental Assessment<sup>1</sup> has several purposes. First, it is intended to ensure that park visitors have a range of appropriate winter recreational opportunities for an interim period, pending completion of a long- term analysis on winter use. The purpose of the plan is also to ensure that these recreational activities are in an appropriate setting and that they do not impair or irreparably harm park resources or values. The NPS Organic Act, which is the fundamental law guiding national park management, mandates both of these purposes in that it requires that park resources are protected in an unimpaired condition, while allowing for their enjoyment.

Another purpose of this plan is to allow the NPS to collect additional monitoring data on the strictly limited snowmobile and snowcoach use permitted under the plan. For some time, the NPS has been studying air quality, natural soundscapes, wildlife, visitor experience, water quality, and employee health and safety. The winter of 2003- 2004 was the first winter of strictly

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<sup>1</sup> This document incorporates the full text of the Temporary Winter Use Plans Environmental Assessment (as corrected by the errata sheets) by reference.

limited and managed snowmobile use since the program's inception in 1963. The new monitoring information from the winter of 2003- 2004 and the winter of 2004- 2005 will be important in developing a long- term plan. This information will be used in preparation of a long- term analysis and permanent regulation for winter use management in the parks.

Another purpose of the Temporary Winter Use Plans EA is to provide the public with some degree of certainty about how winter use will be managed in the parks for an interim period. There is substantial confusion and uncertainty among the public about winter use, as illustrated by park visitation statistics from the 2003-2004 season.

Finally, this plan will provide a structure for winter use management in the parks for an interim period. The purpose of this EA is to provide an interim winter use plan pending completion of a long- term winter use analysis that would further address concerns identified by both Federal Courts in Washington D.C. and Wyoming.

The scope of the EA and FONSI are limited to the recreational winter use of the parks and do not apply to administrative uses (as was also the case with the SEIS and EIS).

This EA and FONSI are not intended to result in a permanent regulation authorizing continued snowmobile use in the parks. A permanent regulation on snowmobile use in the parks would be the product of a long- term winter use analysis.

This FONSI is not the final agency action for those elements of the plans that require regulations to implement. New regulations are being promulgated, which constitute final agency action for elements of the Temporary Winter Use Plans.

## **THE DECISION**

The preferred alternative identified in the EA was Alternative 4. This FONSI adopts alternative 4, with slight modifications intended to better meet the purpose and need of the EA. The Temporary Winter Use Plans are included as Appendix A of this FONSI. This decision continues the requirement that all snowmobiles and snowcoaches must remain on roads that automobiles use in the summer months, or in the case of Jackson Lake, lakes that motorized boats also use. Snowmobiles are limited in Yellowstone, for example, to approximately 180 miles of roads (plus 14 miles for snowcoaches only) out of some 350 miles of roads that are open during the summer. Most recreational snowmobiles in both parks would be required to meet Best Available Technology (BAT) requirements. Because of the interim nature of this plan, the preferred alternative allows snowmobile and snowcoach use through the winter of 2006- 2007.

Table 1 identifies the daily snowmobile entry limits authorized by this FONSI.

**Table 1, Total daily snowmobile entry limits.**

Entrance	Commercially Guided Snowmobile Limits	Unguided Snowmobiles	Total
<b>Yellowstone National Park</b>			
West Entrance	400	-	400
South Entrance	220	-	220
East Entrance	40	-	40
North Entrance*	30	-	30
Old Faithful*	30	-	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>720</b>
<b>Grand Teton National Park and the Parkway</b>			
CDST	0	50	50
Grassy Lake Road (Flagg- Ashton Road)	0	50	50
Jackson Lake	0	40	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>140</b>

\*Note: Commercially guided snowmobile tours originating at the North Entrance and Old Faithful are currently provided solely by Xanterra Parks and Resorts. Because this concessioner is the sole provider at both of these areas, this FONSI and interim plan allow the daily entry limits between the North Entrance and Old Faithful to be adjusted by the concessioner as necessary, so long as the total number of snowmobiles between the two entrances does not exceed 60. For example, the concessioner could operate 25 snowmobiles at Old Faithful and 35 at the North Entrance if visitor demand warranted it. This will allow the concessioner to respond to changing visitor demand for commercially guided snowmobile tours, thus enhancing visitor service in Yellowstone. It also benefits visitors using other concessioners and entering at other locations, if they choose to stay overnight at Old Faithful or Mammoth Hot Springs (near the North Entrance). These visitors will have greater options for guided snowmobile tours given this change, since the daily entry limits can be adjusted (as long as they don't exceed 60 snowmobiles) to meet changing demand.

This decision modifies the preferred alternative in the EA to allow non- BAT snowmobiles to be used on the portion of the Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail (CDST) within Grand Teton National Park from the east park boundary to Moran Junction, a distance of only 4 miles (approximately 1 ½ of which are outside the park). The NPS is allowing the use of non- BAT snowmobiles on this segment because it functions much like other short segments within the park that are used primarily to provide access to nearby public or private lands. This section of the CDST is in some places within the park boundary and in some places outside of it, and is immediately adjacent to U.S. Highway 26/287. This is the major highway through this section of Wyoming and carries a high volume of automobile and truck traffic. Air quality and soundscape issues on this segment of the CDST were not related to the impairment findings in 2000 EIS and 2003 SEIS. Taken together, these factors make the BAT requirement unnecessary and impractical on this segment of the CDST. In addition, the numerical daily entrance limits will not apply on this segment of the CDST for the same reasons.

Other major features of this decision include:

- All recreational snowmobiles in Yellowstone must meet BAT requirements
- All recreational snowmobilers in Grand Teton and the Parkway must meet BAT requirements, except for those traveling only on the Grassy Lake Road and originating in

the Targhee National Forest, and those on the CDST between the east park boundary and Moran Junction.

- Recreational snowcoaches and snowmobiles are authorized to operate in the parks through the winter of 2006- 2007
- All recreational snowmobilers in Yellowstone must travel with a commercial guide
- The Firehole Canyon Drive will be open to snowcoaches only from 7 am- noon and open to both snowmobiles and snowcoaches from noon- 9 pm.

As described in the EA (and in the previous EIS and SEIS), each entrance and use area of Yellowstone has specific localized resource impacts due to oversnow motorized use, and each entrance contributes to park- wide snowmobile numbers and thus to park- wide resource impacts. The decision will allow the National Park Service to ensure that impact levels forecast in the environmental assessment, both at specific locations (such as staging areas) and park- wide along the motorized use corridors, remain no greater than moderate- adverse, when compared to objective impact definitions. This is fully within the parameters for making a Finding of No Significant Impact. Generally, impacts that are negligible, minor, or moderate are not considered significant.

For natural soundscapes, the impacts forecast in the EA for alternative 4 were moderate overall. However, on peak use days, when as many as 720 snowmobiles may enter Yellowstone, the EA predicted that impacts on those days (when combined with an average of 18 snowcoach entries into the park) could be major in intensity. These peak visitation days are expected to occur less than 13 times per winter season (generally on Saturdays during January and February and holidays), which is less than 15% of the winter season. Therefore, based on the definitions of impact to natural soundscapes (on pages 105- 106 of the EA), the impacts remain moderate in intensity overall, since peak days, and their attendant major impacts, do not occur more than 15% of the winter season.

There are several primary features incorporated in the decision that mitigate the impacts to natural soundscapes. First, snowmobile and snowcoach technology have a significant effect on soundscapes, as quieter vehicles yield less impact. This decision requires all recreational snowmobiles in Yellowstone to be BAT – the quietest snowmobiles commercially available. Second, as noted by the EA, requirements that all snowmobilers be led by commercial guides reduces the percent of time snowmobiles are audible throughout the day by concentrating snowmobilers into fewer groups and creating predictable visitation patterns. Such groupings also allow for greater temporal spacing among groups. This decision already requires that all snowmobilers in Yellowstone be led by commercial guides. Impacts are also to be mitigated by strictly limiting the number of snowmobiles that may enter the parks each day. In addition, speed limits and temporal zoning (defining the times during which oversnow vehicles may enter the park) are used to manage impacts on sound. The nighttime use restriction is an example of this, and additional temporal zoning was considered (but not adopted at this time) in alternative 3. These and other ideas will continue to be analyzed in the long- term plan.

## RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

This decision best balances winter use with protection of park resources to ensure that adverse impacts from historical types and numbers of snowmobile uses do not occur. The decision also demonstrates the NPS commitment to monitor and use results to adjust the winter use program. Last winter, the NPS implemented the monitoring program that it committed to in the 2003 decision, and the results of that monitoring were used to help formulate the alternatives in the EA as well as guide the decisions being made. This decision applies the lessons learned in the winter of 2003- 2004 relative to commercial guiding, which demonstrated, among other things, that 100% commercial guiding was very successful and offered the best opportunity for achieving goals of protecting park resources and allowing balanced use of the parks (see for example, pages 29- 31 of this FONSI and pages 109 and 111- 113 of the EA). Law enforcement incidents were reduced well below historic numbers, even after taking into account reduced visitation. That reduction is attributed to the quality and success of the commercial guiding program.

This decision uses strictly limited snowmobile numbers (at a level below the historical average use level for Yellowstone) combined with best available technology requirements for snowmobiles and 100% commercial guiding to ensure that the impacts to park resources and values are not significant. With strictly limited snowmobile use combined with snowcoaches, park visitors will have a range of appropriate winter recreational opportunities. With the significant restrictions built into snowmobile use, this decision also ensures that these recreational activities will not impair or irreparably harm park resources or values. In adopting an interim winter use plan for public recreational oversnow use while NPS continues to further monitor and study the impacts of winter use, NPS recognizes that this action is consistent with Department of Interior policies (such as the February 17, 2004, memorandum from the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks to the Director of the NPS).

The winter of 2003- 2004 was the first time the NPS had the opportunity to collect information on a strictly managed snowmobile program. This decision will allow the NPS to continue to collect additional monitoring data on strictly limited snowmobile and snowcoach use. The monitoring data is extremely important in helping the NPS understand the results of its management actions. Prior to the winter of 2003- 2004, the only monitoring information the NPS had was on historical snowmobile use at essentially unregulated levels with substantially dirtier and noisier snowmobiles. By contrast, the EIS, SEIS, and to a certain extent the EA relied on modeling to forecast impacts. The modeling is useful for comparison purposes so that managers can understand the relative differences among alternatives, but it does not replicate on- the- ground conditions. Monitoring measures actual outcomes. With only one winter's data on strictly managed snowmobile use, the ability of the NPS to understand the impacts of a strictly controlled management regime is limited. Implementing this plan will allow monitoring information to be collected for up to three additional winters.

Access by either snowmobile or snowcoach is the only feasible means of travel for most visitors wishing to see Yellowstone's most famous sites in the winter, including the Old Faithful area, and is also generally the only feasible means to travel to most interior areas of the park in order to enjoy cross- country skiing or snowshoeing. Of the 350 miles of roads in Yellowstone that are open to motorized vehicles in the summer, snowcoaches and snowmobiles share access with 180 miles in the winter, with snowcoaches alone using an additional 14 miles.



This decision also helps support the communities and businesses both near and far from the parks and will encourage economically sustainable winter recreation programs. Snowmobile numbers allowed under this decision are below the historic peak averages, however the snowmobile limits should provide a viable program for winter access to the parks, and in combination with snowcoach access, provide the opportunity for achieving historic visitor use levels. This plan also provides certainty for park visitors, communities, and businesses by laying out a program for winter use for up to the next three winters.

Additionally, implementation of a temporary winter use plan is needed not only to comport with the results of the Wyoming and D.C. district court decisions that vacated the 2000 and 2003 records of decision and the 2001 and 2003 implementing regulations, but also to insure that snowmobiling in these parks does not return to the essentially unlimited levels afforded by the prior 1983 regulations. The successful promulgation of regulations to implement this plan will avoid any uncertainty as to whether these regulations, and the resulting impacts in park resources and values, would be reinstated as a result of the Wyoming court's October 2004 decision.

As was the case with the previous winter use plans, the current EA and the temporary winter use plan address only public recreational use in these three park units. Administrative use, including the packing of roads for snowmobile and snowcoach use by park, contractor, and concessioner employees is not covered by this winter use planning, but remains essential for park operations, including the protection of natural and cultural resources. More than 100 employees and their families live in developed areas within Yellowstone that are accessible in the winter only by oversnow vehicle. Oversnow access by these employees is critical for protection, maintenance, and preservation of park buildings and other facilities (including, for example, this winter's essential rehabilitation of the Old Faithful Inn, a 100 year- old National Historic Landmark), utility systems, historic resources, and employee health and safety. This administrative use takes place irrespective of public use. Oversnow access is also need for wildlife monitoring and research projects that are continuing in the parks.

The EA did not re- evaluate the issue of whether the use of snowplanes should be allowed on Jackson Lake (see page 6 of the EA). The decision to prohibit snowplanes was based on analysis provided in the 2000 Winter Use Plans Final Environmental Impact Statement and subsequently incorporated into the 2003 Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement analysis, which found that snowplane use impaired park resources and values. Although both of these documents have been vacated by the courts on procedural grounds, the NPS maintains that the underlying analysis in them regarding the impacts of snowplanes is valid, and adopts anew their conclusion here. Therefore, since the use of snowplanes was discontinued following the 2001-2002 winter season, the NPS did not separately consider the reinstatement of their use in the EA or this Finding of No Significant Impact (this issue was also not a subject of the decision in either the D.C. or Wyoming district courts).

## OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Four other alternatives were considered in the EA:

**Alternative 1:** Limit motorized access to snowcoaches in the parks. This alternative is similar to the 2000 decision, which was enjoined by the Wyoming court during the 2003- 2004 winter season and was vacated and remanded to the NPS on October 14, 2004.

**Alternative 2:** Allow 318 commercially guided snowmobiles in Yellowstone and 50 unguided snowmobiles in Grand Teton, all BAT. This alternative reflects visitation levels and patterns during the winter of 2003- 2004 (but below the actual peak day levels) and allows that winter's monitoring to be used for analytical and comparative purposes. This alternative also reflects use levels that were of concern to the Wyoming court when it vacated the 2000 decision and 2001 regulation.

**Alternative 3:** Allow 540 BAT snowmobiles per day in Yellowstone, 82% commercially guided; 18% unguided. Allow 75 unguided BAT snowmobiles in Grand Teton. This alternative allows a comparison between the tradeoffs of an all- commercially guided program and winter use with some unguided snowmobiles, but fewer snowmobiles overall. Under Alternative 3, all unguided machines would need to enter Yellowstone prior to 10:30 AM to mitigate impacts.

**Alternative 5:** Allow 950 BAT snowmobiles per day in Yellowstone, 80% commercially guided and 20% non- commercially guided. Allow 190 BAT snowmobiles in Grand Teton, unguided. This is similar to the 2003 decision and rule, which were vacated by the D.C. court.

## ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferred alternative is the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed by §101 of the National Environmental Policy Act. That section states that it is the responsibility of the federal government to improve and coordinate federal plans, functions, programs, and resources "to the end that the Nation may:

- Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
- Ensure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
- Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
- Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice;
- Achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and
- Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources."

Given these criteria, alternative 1 is the environmentally preferred alternative. Alternative 1 is based on Final EIS alternative G and Final SEIS alternative 1b, each of which was determined to be the environmentally preferred alternative by both the NPS and the EPA. Alternative 1 best

preserves the unique historic, cultural, and natural resources associated with the parks. This alternative yields the least impacts to air quality, water quality, and natural soundscapes because it relies on mass transit snowcoaches to provide oversnow motorized recreational access to the parks.

Alternative 1 was not selected as the NPS's preferred alternative because it does not best fulfill the purpose and need for the temporary plan and environmental assessment due to the limited range of uses allowed. Alternative 1 also has a negative impact on those visitors desiring a wider range of choices among winter recreational activities, because it would eliminate visitors' historically preferred means of access to the parks (that is, snowmobiles). The experience from the 2003- 2004 winter season demonstrated that some level of motorized access, including both cleaner and quieter snowmobiles and snowcoaches, can operate without significant impacts or causing impairment of park resources (see for example, pages 27- 30 of the EA and Chapter 4, generally). Alternative 4 is believed to best meet all the purposes and needs, as articulated in the EA and this FONSI.

## **WHY THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

### **Status of the "No Action Alternative"**

As discussed in the EA on pages 25- 26, there remains uncertainty as to what presently constitutes the "no- action alternative" for purposes of measuring the impacts of the proposed action in this interim winter use plan. Since the publication of the EA, the U.S. District Court for the District of Wyoming, on October 14, 2004, issued an order invalidating the 2001 regulations and remanded them to the NPS for further proceedings. At this time however, the Wyoming court has not entered final judgment.

Given this remaining uncertainty, the NPS has compared the impacts of the preferred alternative to both historical conditions (i.e., under the 1983 regulations that governed snowmobile use in the parks prior to the 2001 regulations) as well as the 2001 regulations themselves (i.e., the snowcoach only alternative: alternative 1 in this EA) in considering whether the preferred alternative will have "significant impacts." As discussed in more detail below, moderate to minor beneficial impacts were found when the preferred alternative was compared to historical conditions, and adverse impacts ranging from minor to moderate were found when the preferred alternative was compared to the snowcoach only alternative. As discussed in the EA, on page 26, the February 2004 superintendents' compendia amendments closely mirror the winter conditions and restrictions contained in alternative 4 of the EA and accordingly, an independent analysis of the impacts compared to this potential no action alternative are unnecessary.

As defined in 40 CFR 1508.27, significance is determined by examining the following criteria:

### **Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse**

The beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed action are described in detail in the environmental assessment. For air quality, compared to historical conditions, moderate, direct,

beneficial, regional and long- term improvements would occur due to use of only BAT snowmobiles and snowcoaches. Compared to snowcoaches only, effects would be negligible and adverse in most of Yellowstone, and moderate, direct, localized, and adverse in travel corridors and developed areas.

For soundscapes, the snowmobile and snowcoach use would cause moderate, adverse, direct, and short- term impacts in roadway corridors and developed areas; and moderate, adverse, direct, and short- term impacts in backcountry areas. Compared to historical conditions, moderate beneficial impacts to park soundscapes would occur because of BAT requirements and because the use of professionally trained guides can reduce sound impacts by minimizing full throttle starts and helping reduce overall travel speeds. Soundscapes are also benefited by the fact that guided parties are generally larger in size, which reduces the overall number of groups operating in park (in conjunction with the daily entry limits) and consequently lessens the amount of time snowmobiles are audible.

For visitor experience, compared to historical conditions, this alternative would have moderate, direct, short- term, and beneficial impacts on all facets of the visitor experience. Trained guides can provide a high quality interpretive experience for visitors, helping them better understand the resources of the parks. In 2003- 2004, a number of companies offered personalized tours of the park; that is, the guides worked with park visitors to take them to the features that visitors wanted to enjoy. Compared to Alternative 1, moderate, direct, short- term, and adverse impacts would occur due to the effect of more vehicles on quiet, solitude, and road surface quality.

Impacts to wildlife have four components in the analysis. Vehicle- related mortality would be negligible adverse because the daily snowmobile entry limit of 720 approximates the historical average, which resulted in few wildlife deaths and would likely be reduced even more because of commercial guiding requirements. Disturbance and stress response would be moderate adverse because the higher numbers of snowmobiles (as compared to alternatives 1- 3) are offset by 100% commercial guiding. Displacement would be moderate adverse because even though the number of vehicles would be roughly equal to historical levels, all vehicles would be guided. Professionally trained guides have the knowledge and experience to insure that adverse interactions with wildlife are minimized. In addition, commercial guides (and their companies) have financial incentives to ensure that negative interactions are minimized. Wildlife population impacts would be none to minor because the historical average levels of oversnow vehicles resulted in no discernible impacts. Compared to historical conditions, beneficial impacts upon all facets of wildlife- oversnow vehicle interactions would occur because most visitors would be traveling in guided groups.

The economic impact analysis compared the alternatives against two different baselines: historical snowmobile use and a snowmobile ban. In addition, both high impact and low impact scenarios were modeled. The analysis was also conducted on a 3- state, 5- county, and community level for both economic output and employment. Given the historic snowmobile use baseline, NPS estimates that the total impacts of Alternative 4 on the five counties range from a decrease of \$145,000 (low impact assumptions) to a decrease of \$10.1 million (high impact assumptions). Given the snowmobile ban baseline, the estimates of the total impacts for Alternatives 4 on the five counties range from an increase of \$10 million (low impact) to an increase of \$16.7 million (high impact).

### **Degree of effect on public health or safety**

Compared to historical conditions, the effect on vehicular travel accidents would be moderate, beneficial, direct, and long-term due to guide requirements. Toxic pollutant impacts would be moderate, beneficial, long-term, and direct due to BAT requirements and restrictions on snowmobiling compared to historical conditions. Avalanche control activities would result in moderate adverse impacts due to the exposure of control personnel to avalanche dangers. Compared to Alternative 1, the provision for snowmobile use in this alternative would result in moderate, direct, long-term, and adverse impacts.

### **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas**

With the exception of the impacts identified in the EA on the three park units, the decision would have no other impacts on these types of resources.

### **Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial**

The management of winter use in these parks has generated a great deal of public interest. Specifically, there is controversy surrounding the question of whether or not snowmobiles should be allowed to access the parks. This controversy is reflected in the number of public comments received throughout the various planning and rulemaking processes that the NPS has initiated since the late 1980s. However, the degree to which snowmobiling affects the quality of the human environment has not been nearly as controversial. Most commentators on this issue recognize that historic levels and types of snowmobiles use had adverse effects on the quality of the human environment.

Further, there is little debate within the scientific community about the degree to which winter use affects air quality, natural soundscapes, or public health or safety. Most experts agree that snowmobile and snowcoach use will have some adverse effects on these resources. The question of whether or not road grooming influences bison distribution and abundance has been controversial within the scientific community (see for example, pages 19- 20, 80- 81, and 143- 145 of the EA). However, the NPS is currently evaluating these issues, in part through a contract with Dr. Cormack Gates of the University of Calgary. Dr. Gates' work is a logical first step in answering the road grooming question and is a precursor to a more in depth analysis that will be in the long-term plan. Dr. Gates' report will not be available until early 2005; therefore these issues are not addressed in this EA, but will be addressed in the long-term plan. In the meantime, there is no clear evidence that road grooming has adverse effects on bison distribution and abundance. Further, there is no dispute that the bison population is healthy.

### **Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks**

Motorized winter use in Yellowstone and Grand Teton has been occurring for nearly 50 years, with snowmobiles operating in the parks since the early 1960s, and snowcoaches since 1955. The environmental assessment analyzed impacts to natural soundscapes, air quality, wildlife,

socioeconomics, and employee and visitor health and safety. In addition, the EA dismissed other impact topics on the basis that there were no impacts to the environment, as documented by the EA, Final SEIS, and/or EIS. None of the impacts identified under Alternative 4 were highly uncertain or involved unique or unknown risks. Further, monitoring of park resources has occurred, and will continue as part of this decision. This monitoring is intended to detect unacceptable or unforeseen impacts to the human environment.

### **Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration**

The proposed action is a temporary plan for winter use in the three parks. One of the purposes of implementing the temporary winter plan and EA is to collect additional monitoring information regarding winter use in the parks under highly regulated conditions. The information will be useful in helping develop and analyze alternatives in the long-term plan, however it will not set a precedent for the alternatives, nor will it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. Alternatives that propose allowing more or less snowmobile and/or snowcoach use, along with various restrictions (such as guiding and BAT requirements), would be considered in the long-term analysis. Further, motorized winter recreation has occurred in the parks for more than 50 years. The decision allows these uses to continue (for an interim period), but imposes strict limitations on these uses to protect park resources. The action is consistent with the policies provided by the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks to the Director of the National Park Service regarding snowmobile use throughout the National Park System in a memorandum dated February 17, 2004.

### **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts**

The proposed action has adverse impacts that range in intensity from minor to moderate. These effects, in conjunction with the adverse effects of any other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions, would not have significant impacts on any park resources or values. Further, the cumulative effects analysis (see for example, pages 158- 165 of the EA) indicates there would be no significant adverse impacts to park resources or values.

### **Degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources**

The proposed action will not adversely affect historic properties.

### **Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat**

The EA did not identify any significant effect to endangered, threatened or species of special concern. The NPS formally consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the Winter Use SEIS, and a biological opinion was issued on March 21, 2003. No new information is available that would alter the assessment of impacts from those originally disclosed in the 2003 biological opinion. In a September 30, 2004, letter to the NPS, the Fish and Wildlife Service concluded that “the effects remain as disclosed in our 2003 biological opinion. That is, although the

original action has been modified the effects of the proposed action remain at the same level or less.”

### **Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, state, or local environmental protection law**

This action would not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

## **IMPAIRMENT**

The National Park Service has determined that implementation of this decision will not constitute impairment of Yellowstone or Grand Teton National Park or the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway’s resources or values (see for example, pages 12- 13 and 154- 159 of the EA). This conclusion is based on the analysis of impacts to park resources and values in the EA and the actual results of the 2003- 2004 winter season.

Based on the analysis described in the EIS and supported by the SEIS, the NPS concludes here that use of snowplanes on Jackson Lake in Grand Teton National Park would impair park resources and values. Accordingly, snowplanes are not permitted under this decision.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

### **Scoping**

The public scoping period for this EA was open from June 14 to July 13, 2004. The NPS received 15,082 documents commenting on the scope of the EA, including 13,636 in electronic format and 1,446 in hard copy. Of these documents, 10,534 were one of ten different form letters received; 4,201 were personal or “non- form” letters (some people sent more than one kind of form letter as well as one or more non- form letters, so the form/non- form total does not match the total number of documents). At least nine people from each state in the country sent comments, plus four from Puerto Rico. Eight percent of the commentors were from the three states intersecting in Yellowstone: 534 from Montana, 332 from Wyoming, and 324 from Idaho.

Although this public scoping period was primarily intended to allow people to comment upon the scope of this Environmental Assessment, many people expressed their opinions regarding winter use management in Yellowstone. A detailed breakdown of the public scoping comments and opinions on winter use management is provided in Appendix C of the EA.

### **Public Review of EA and Draft FONSI**

The EA and Draft FONSI were on public review for 32 days, from August 20, 2004, through September 20, 2004. Comments were accepted through mail, hand delivery, and through the Internet. Some individuals faxed comments to the park. The faxes were read to determine if there were substantive comments, however they were not included in the formal record of public comments, nor were they generally retained, since this was not an accepted method of submitting public comment (as stated in the on page i of the EA). Other comments were received after the close of the comment period on September 20. These comments were also

read to determine if they were substantive; however, they were not included in the formal record.

A total of 82,323 people commented on the EA, with 95,006 comment documents received (some individuals chose to comment more than once). Of all the comment documents received, 92% were form letters, while 8% were unique letters. A majority of the commentors (97%) requested that the NPS choose Alternative 1. Approximately 1% of the commentors favored Alternative 4, the NPS preferred alternative. Responses to substantive comments are included in the Errata Sheets attached to this document. A more detailed summary of the public comments is also included as Appendix B of this FONSI.

## CONCLUSION

This decision does not constitute an action that necessitates preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). Based on the environmental assessment, this decision will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Negative environmental impacts that could occur are minor to moderate and generally temporary in effect. This is a temporary winter use plan, intended to be in effect for up to three winters and to be supplanted with a new long-term plan. There are no significant and unmitigated adverse impacts on public health, public safety, threatened or endangered species, sites or districts listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or material unknown risks, cumulative effects, or elements of precedent were identified. Implementation of the action will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection law.



Recommended:

*Suzanne Lewis*

11/04/04

Superintendent, Yellowstone National Park

Date

*Mary O'Sullivan*

11/04/04

Superintendent, Grand Teton National Park and  
John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway

Date

Approved:

*Steve Martin*

11/04/04

Intermountain Regional Director

Date

Effective:

11/04/04

Date

# ERRATA SHEETS

## TEMPORARY WINTER USE PLAN

### ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

#### YELLOWSTONE AND GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARKS AND THE JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR., MEMORIAL PARKWAY

#### CORRECTIONS TO THE EA

- Change all references to “snowcoach BAT” in the EA to “snowcoach technology requirements.”
- Page 22, change the first sentence of the first bullet under “Snowcoach BAT requirements” to the following: Beginning in the 2005- 2006 season, all non- historic snowcoaches must meet technology requirements, which will be the EPA emissions standards in effect when the vehicle or engine was manufactured, whichever is later.
- Both snowmobiles and snowcoaches are intended under the EA alternatives to be allowed in the parks for up to three years, due to the temporary intent of the plan. Therefore, on pages 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 35, 37, and 38 the phrase, “through the winter of 2006- 2007” should be added after “Routes open to Snowcoach Use.” Also, in Table 9, on page 41 of the EA, the entire row entitled, “Snowmobiling after the interim period” should be deleted.
- Insert the following at the end of the section entitled, “Worst- case Assumptions” on page 94: “Worst case CO conditions at Old Faithful may be underestimated for all alternatives due to the use of the ISCST<sub>3</sub> model instead of the Screen 3 model. The question of the most appropriate model will be addressed in the long- term plan.”
- Page 94: Under the section titled, “Snowcoach Emissions Factors,” delete the following words in the third sentence: “only an engine test, not a.” The corrected sentence should read: “To date, there has only been one emissions test of an engine operating under conditions to simulate snowcoach performance, and it was a chassis dynamometer test of a snowcoach.”
- Insert the following to become the final paragraph on page 95:

“For all alternatives, snowcoach emissions are likely overestimated. NPS used data from the 2001 SWRI snowcoach emission report as input into the model. In the SWRI report, open loop operation results in 120 times more carbon monoxide emissions (g/mile) and 35 times more hydrocarbon emissions (g/mile) compared with closed loop operation. Nitrogen oxide emissions would also be overestimated by the current assumptions. Because modern snowcoach engines would rarely operate in open loop, the EA likely overstates their emissions.”

- Add the following references to the bibliography, in appropriate alphabetical order:

Borkowski, J. J. 2004. Evaluating wildlife responses to winter human use in Yellowstone National Park: a statistical analysis of the bison, elk and trumpeter swan winter use wildlife road survey data, December 2003 to April 2004. Report on file, Yellowstone National Park, WY.

Dept. of the Air Force, 1995. Final EIS Alaska Military Operations Areas. Vol. III, Technical Appendices. Elmendorf AFB, Alaska).

Everest, FA. 2000. Master Handbook of Acoustics, 4th Edition; McGraw- Hill.

Janssen, S. and T. Schettler. 2003. Health Implications of Snowmobile Use in Yellowstone National Park. Report submitted to the NPS, AR 81860- 81892.

Meagher, M., M.L. Taper, and C.L. Jerde. 2002. Recent changes in population distribution: the Pelican bison and the domino effect. Pp. 135- 147. In Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> Biennial Scientific Conference on the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Stevens, SS. and G. Stevens. 1975. Psychophysics Introduction to Its Perceptual, Neural and Social Prospects. New York: Wiley.

Rossing, TD, FR Moore and PA Wheeler. 2002. The Science of Sound, 3rd Edition; San Francisco: Addison- Wesley.

## RESPONSE TO COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE EA

### Adaptive Management

Comment: NPS is proposing to allow a level of snowmobile use that violates the adaptive management thresholds identified in the SEIS. This is inconsistent with previous statements made by NPS that it would take action should the thresholds be exceeded. Instead of reducing snowmobile entries or tightening BAT requirements to meet the protective threshold, NPS is now choosing to allow levels of human-made noise it previously considered unacceptable and simply define these impacts as less problematic than it previously did. NPS provides no rationale for this change and shuns an alternative that would meet its natural soundscape thresholds.

Response: Adaptive management is not a direct part of the decision; that is, during the three year term of this decision, significant changes in numbers, BAT requirements, commercial guiding, or other aspects are not expected to be made. In part, this is to help provide some certainty to local communities, businesses, concessionaires, and park staff as to how winter use will be implemented for the next three winter seasons. From a broader perspective, however, the knowledge gained through monitoring strictly limited snowmobile and snowcoach use during the interim period will contribute significantly to the development of a new long-term plan and to a long-term decision. Further, as noted by the EA, it would be impractical to implement adaptive management since changes under the adaptive management framework would have generally occurred after at least one or two years of monitoring, followed by a 6-12 month notification and waiting period. This could account for the entire interim period of the EA.

The adaptive management thresholds represent guidelines for park managers to use as one means of determining if the actions being implemented are achieving the overall goals of the winter use plans. Managers would also use other means, aside from just monitoring those specific indicators, to determine the effectiveness of the implemented actions. With this overall knowledge, managers could determine if modifications to the actions were appropriate.

The adaptive management thresholds were not established as a means of determining the intensity or duration of impacts. Rather, definitions of impacts were developed for each resource category to help guide the impact analysis in determining what category of intensity (no effect, negligible, minor, moderate, or major) a particular impact might fall into. The adaptive management thresholds, as proposed, are not keyed to a specific category of intensity, nor are they a means to solely determine if an impact is acceptable or unacceptable.

Managers may determine that impacts are unacceptable long before the adaptive management thresholds are reached. The converse is also true. An impact may be acceptable and no change in management may be called for even though a threshold may be exceeded.

The thresholds can be best thought of as a “yellow flag” for managers. The result of meeting (or exceeding) a threshold may be more intensive monitoring. It may be a reexamination of the threshold in light of other indicators (that is, is the threshold itself correct?) or it may be modification of the action to mitigate the impacts.

In the long-term, the concept of adaptive management will result in an ever-adjusting program

as more knowledge is gained from monitoring. In the short term (1 – 5 years), few changes may occur, and during the interim period of the EA significant changes would not be expected.

Although they are not a part of this Temporary Winter Use Plan EA, the adaptive management thresholds are included as Appendix C of the EA. These thresholds will be evaluated based on monitoring during the interim of this plan and incorporated as appropriate into a long-term analysis on winter use in the parks.

Comment: The adaptive management thresholds identified in the SEIS were designed to ensure that impairment and unacceptable impacts do not occur and were intended to yield environmental protections consistent with the conditions that would have resulted under the snowcoach-only alternative. EPA recognizes that these thresholds are not regulatory limits. EPA continues to support these thresholds as significant to protecting park resources and encourages the NPS to modify its preferred alternative as needed to meet these thresholds and to be consistent with NPS resource protection policies to the maximum extent possible during this interim period.

Response: The NPS believes it is prudent to implement this decision and conduct monitoring on the impacts to park resources and values. This monitoring would be used in the development of a long-term plan governing winter use in the parks. The monitoring will help provide park managers with more data about the impacts of a strictly managed winter use program, as well as the adaptive management thresholds themselves. Further, if monitoring determines that unacceptable impacts to park resources or values are occurring, the superintendents could take emergency actions under 36 CFR 1.5.

Comment: NPS should provide an abbreviated comment period for any “emergency” closures based on impairment findings.

Response: The NPS would take emergency action using the authority of 36 CFR 1.5 if there were any impairment findings. The procedures of how 36 CFR 1.5 is implemented are beyond the scope of this EA. The regulation does not require that NPS accept public comment before taking emergency actions, although it does require notification to the public. The National Environmental Policy Act, furthermore, provides managers with the ability to make such emergency decisions without public comment.

### **Air Quality**

Comment: NPS needs to include a discussion of the benefits derived from use of E10 and biodiesel fuels, which have become more common in recent years.

Response: While the use of such fuels has provided some reductions in air emissions<sup>2</sup>, the use of BAT machines has resulted in larger reductions. The NPS applauds the efforts of local merchants both to utilize such fuels and embrace BAT machines. Improving the air quality in Yellowstone will involve both the use of machines with lower emissions and the use of cleaner-burning fuels.

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<sup>2</sup> Lela, C. and J. White. “Laboratory Testing of Snowmobile Emissions,” Final Report, Southwest Research Institute. July 2002.

Comment: The EA contains no analysis of visibility impacts. The lack of visibility modeling leaves unanswered whether or not park visibility may be impacted by any of the alternatives.

Response: A visibility analysis was not conducted in this EA because there was insufficient time. The EA notes on page 96 that, “it is unknown whether or to what degree the alternatives may impact visibility.” Visibility was addressed in the EIS and SEIS, and this would also be addressed in a long- term planning effort. In the SEIS, impacts to air quality, including visibility, were determined be no worse than adverse and moderate, for alternative 4. This decision calls for fewer snowmobiles, all of which are BAT, reducing the level of impact from that described in the SEIS. Visibility will also be monitored during the interim period of this plan.

Comment: For the purposes of the air quality modeling, the EA assumes that snowcoaches operate two- thirds of the time without emission controls (open- loop mode). This significantly overestimates modern snowcoach emissions in all alternatives.

Response: The NPS agrees that this overestimates snowcoach emissions in the parks, especially for those coaches which are of 2004 or more recent model years. These vehicles are tested using Supplemental Federal Test Procedures, which began to be implemented in 2002 and were fully implemented by 2004 models. These test procedures, in concert with the SC<sub>03</sub> test procedures, dramatically reduce or even eliminate the amount of time the engine operates in “open- loop” mode, even under the increased power requirements of oversnow operation. Understanding snowcoach emissions is complicated because there are a variety of different types of snowcoaches operating in Yellowstone, ranging from historic Bombardier snowcoaches (most of which have modern engines), to conversion vans that are as much as twenty years old. There is little data on emissions for each of these vehicles, as there has only been one laboratory emissions test of a snowcoach operating under conditions to simulate field performance. This uncertainty was acknowledged on page 94 of the EA. Any potential overestimation of snowcoach emission is largely offset by the fact that there are so few snowcoaches operating in the park (up to 78 per day under current concessions contracts), especially when compared with the number of snowmobiles. The NPS intends to include additional snowcoach emissions studies as part of the long- term analysis on winter use in the parks.

Comment: The Screen 3 model should be substituted in future modeling using the worst case meteorology. Due to modeling assumptions in the EA, worst case CO conditions at Old Faithful may be underestimated.

Response: The NPS understands there may be some disagreement over the use of the Screen 3 model versus the ISCST<sub>3</sub> model for estimating air quality impacts. This question will be explored in more detail in the long- term plan to determine if either or both are the most appropriate.

Comment: Alternative 1 has the best air quality impacts not because snowcoaches have better pollution control equipment or higher sophistication than modern (especially BAT) snowmobiles (whose engines are quite sophisticated), but rather because the total number of engines operating at any one time would be reduced.

Response: Certainly the reduction in total number of engines has a strong influence on emissions reduction, but the use of sophisticated pollution control equipment in modern

snowcoaches does as well. Nevertheless, alternative 1 was not found to best meet the purpose and need articulated in the EA.

Comment: Condensable particulate emissions were addressed in a 1999 study by Southwest Research Institute and in the SEIS. This concern was also studied in field conditions by Tyler and Peterson and reported in one of Peterson's papers. These papers identify the range, characterization, and size distribution of particulate, including the portion that would be condensable.

Response: Compared to the severe conditions experienced at YNP during the winter months, the laboratory methods used to evaluate condensable particulate matter likely will not capture all the emissions associated with operation at Yellowstone. Daytime temperatures in YNP during the coldest times of the year are frequently below zero degrees Fahrenheit. Filters with temperatures up to 120°F could certainly allow emissions that could condense at sub- zero temperatures to pass through. For future analyses, the testing protocol will be investigated to determine the exact limitations of the speciation data.

Comment: The NPS should have considered hazardous air pollutant data collected by the Southwest Research Institute in its hazardous air pollution emissions estimates.

Response: The NPS acknowledges this issue. The hazardous air pollutant inventory was based on emissions from marine engines as representative for snowmobile emissions. A better analysis would use data from Lela and White (2002), which measured hazardous air pollutant emissions in snowmobiles. This will be corrected in the long- term analysis.

Comment: The reference to the engine test on a snowcoach is inaccurate. The testing was a chassis dynamometer.

Response: The NPS acknowledges this mistake and it is corrected in the errata sheets.

### **Employee and Visitor Health and Safety**

Comment: Allowing continued employee exposure to toxic air pollutants violates the park's commitment to employee welfare and safety. Further, proposing to more than double the number of snowmobiles, despite documented violations of Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) Minimal Risk Levels (MRLs) for benzene and toluene, violates NPS management policies.

Response: Although it appears the adaptive management thresholds (ATSDR MRLs) for benzene and toluene may have been exceeded during the winter of 2003- 2004, no other standards, including those of OSHA, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists, were exceeded. There is also some uncertainty how the ATSDR standards are applied and interpreted in these settings. NPS will continue its efforts to ensure a safe work environment. The three- year interim period will provide NPS the opportunity to better understand the applicability of the ATSDR MRLs and continue monitoring employee exposure to toxic air pollutants. BAT requirements and limits on snowmobile numbers will help mitigate potential violations of ATSDR MRLs or other health standards.

Comment: The EA fails to account for the impacts on visitors with asthma or other respiratory diseases, pregnant women, children, and the elderly. Impacts to these individuals may be elevated.

Response: The NPS recognizes that these populations could be at increased risk for adverse health effects from toxic air pollutants. However, BAT requirements and limits on snowmobile numbers will help mitigate this.

Comment: ATSDR fact sheets on benzene and toluene indicate that even exposure to low doses of these toxins can produce adverse health effects.

Response: The NPS recognizes that adverse health effects could occur in relatively low doses of exposure to benzene and toluene. However, BAT requirements and limits on snowmobile numbers will help mitigate this.

Comment: Visitors not acclimated to Yellowstone's high elevation are more likely to be more susceptible than local residents to adverse health effects from CO exposure. People who suffer from compromised oxygen delivery and those with cardiac disease are more likely to experience adverse health effects.

Response: The NPS recognizes that visitors from low altitudes could be at increased risk for adverse health effects from toxic air pollutants. A report submitted to the NPS notes that "for individuals unacclimated to high altitudes, the resultant decrease in oxygen delivery to tissues and organs can be highly significant." (Janssen and Schettler 2003, p. 9). It is beyond the scope of this EA to investigate the precise effects of altitude on park visitors. However, the EA did analyze health effects on individual park visitors. BAT requirements and limits on snowmobile numbers will help mitigate this.

Comment: Because snowmobilers travel single- file, they are directly breathing the exhaust of the vehicles in front of them for hours at a time. The EA does not address the possible health effects of this exposure.

Response: This issue has been researched with CO and two- stroke snowmobiles in the report, "An Investigation of Driver Exposure to Carbon Monoxide while Traveling in the Wake of a Snowmobile," by Lori Marie Snook (Lori Fussell), August 1996. This University of Tennessee dissertation work has not been repeated for BAT machines. Subsequent to her dissertation, Dr. Fussell was one of the original organizers of the Clean Snowmobile Challenge, an SAE-sponsored student design competition to develop clean and quiet snowmobile technology.

There have been two studies done in Yellowstone National Park on employee exposure to toxic air pollutants, one with two- stroke and the other with predominately BAT machines. Both of these studies have focused on the exposure of employees working around snowmobiles in staging areas and maintenance garages, which were assumed to be representative of worst- case conditions. Neither of these studies measured the exposure of snowmobilers to emissions from other snowmobiles ahead of them. Thus, the levels of exposure to emissions for these individuals is unknown, however, it is likely to be at lower levels than employees working in staging areas. BAT requirements and limits on snowmobile numbers will also help mitigate this.



Comment: The EA does not address what the possible synergistic effects of CO, PM, HC, toluene, and benzene exposure may be, especially at high altitudes.

Response: The synergistic effects of these particular compounds is unknown and this information is beyond that which could be reasonably obtained by this EA process. The synergistic effects of various combinations of toxic compounds are largely unknown by science, and resolving these scientific questions is beyond the management scope of the NPS. However, the BAT requirements and limits on snowmobile numbers will help mitigate potential synergistic effects.

Comment: There is no data or modeling to determine worst- case scenarios for benzene and toluene levels.

Response: An estimate of hazardous air pollutants, including benzene, 1- 3 butadine, formaldehyde, and acetaldehyde is included on pages 90- 91 of the EA. Toluene was not included in this estimate. Toluene will be addressed in the long- term analysis.

Comment: The number of snowmobiles allowed under the preferred alternative would create rough roads detrimental to employee safety and welfare, especially on warm days.

Response: The EA acknowledges that road conditions could deteriorate on days with poor snow conditions or warm temperatures, especially if the number of snowmobiles approaches the daily entry limits. Road conditions would be likely to be poorest at the West Entrance, where up to 400 snowmobiles may enter Yellowstone each day. However, at the other three snowmobile entrances, it is less likely that there would be poor road conditions, since the entry limits are much lower and the weather is often colder with greater snowfall.

Comment: The law enforcement discussion on page 59 needs to be put in context. For example, how does the historic average of 2.6 moving violations per day violate NPS management objectives, law enforcement resources, and comparable summer statistics?

Response: The objective of the NPS is to make the parks as safe as possible for visitors and employees. Thus, a lower law enforcement incident rate is inherently better than a higher one.

Comment: The law enforcement statistics on table 15 on page 59 should be illustrated as a proportion of visitor use. Even if visitor use is restricted to commercial guides, there will still be a need for law enforcement.

Response: The statistics are illustrated as proportion of visitor use. In addition, the NPS recognizes that law enforcement personnel will still be needed, as will park interpreters and resource managers, even with requirements that all snowmobilers travel with commercial guides.

#### **Natural Soundscapes:**

Comment: NPS provides no rationale for accepting levels of noise that were previously considered unacceptable.

Response: As stated above, the adaptive management thresholds represent guidelines for park

managers to use as one means of determining if the actions being implemented were achieving the overall goals of the winter use plans. Managers would also use other means, aside from just monitoring those specific indicators, to determine the effectiveness of the implemented actions. The adaptive management thresholds were not established as a means of determining the intensity or duration of impacts.

Comment: NPS needs to explain why it prefers larger groups that are audible farther away than small groups (though less frequently) over smaller groups that are less audible (but more frequently).

Response: Allowing larger groups reduces the overall number of such groups, which decrease the percent time oversnow vehicles (OSVs) are audible. The commentor is encouraged to read the soundscapes analysis in the EA on pages 102- 117.

Comment: BAT snowmobile noise has been exaggerated (EA p. 100), and a more realistic comparison of their noise would be to compare them to the buses and motorcycles entering the West Entrance in summertime.

Response: While BAT snowmobiles are indeed quieter than non- BAT machines, they still produce high levels of noise when accelerating or traveling at high speed. As discussed in the EA, such noise levels may constitute adverse affects on park resources. Sound data for the effects of other vehicles in the summertime is not available, although it is likely that sound may propagate better in the winter due to the more reflective nature of snow and other conditions. Finally, the purpose of this EA is to address winter use, not summer activities.

Comment: Audibility depends not only on distance to the sound source and the sound level, but also on temperature, elevation, humidity, and frequency of the sound wave.

Response: The NPS recognizes that a variety of factors, including temperature, elevation, humidity, and sound wave frequency influence audibility. However, distance to the sound source and sound level are the two primary influences upon audibility. Another factor that affects sound is snowmobile speed, which is limited to 45 mph on most park roads, with other areas limited to 35 mph or less.

Comment: The EA does not include new soundscape modeling to quantitatively assess the impacts, and there was no analysis of the magnitude of impacts in terms of acreage affected.

Response: The EA includes a qualitative analysis of the impacts of the alternatives on the soundscapes, which is a prediction of the percent time that OSVs may be audible in the park. These predictions are based in part on monitoring information from the winters of 2002- 2003 and 2003- 2004. The predictions are also based on information in the SEIS, EIS, and other studies about snowmobile and snowcoach sound. On the other hand, the SEIS and EIS soundscapes analyses used modeling to quantitatively predict the impacts of the alternatives. Impacts in the SEIS were predicted for the number of park acres where sound would be audible at all, audible 10% of the day, and audible 50% of the day. The differences in the two analyses prevent a reader from making direct comparisons between them. Because modeling was not completed for the EA, the number of acres that the alternatives affect is unknown.

Comment: The sound analysis should note that each time the number of sources with an identical sound level is duplicated, the sound pressure level increases by 3 dB, and that 3 dB is a doubling of sound, not 5 dB. Therefore, reducing group size would reduce noise levels, as would allowing people to travel on their own in Yellowstone.

Response: The NPS believes audibility – or the amount of time oversnow vehicles are audible in the parks – is critical in assessing impacts to soundscapes. With a daily limit on the number of snowmobiles, the number of groups and loudness of the individual machines (assuming all other variables are equal) determine audibility. That is, more snowmobiles per group means fewer groups and less time the machines are audible. If all snowmobilers were to travel individually or in small groups, the amount of time snowmobiles were audible would increase, as compared with all snowmobilers traveling in groups of 8- 11 sleds. Larger groups of snowmobiles, concentrated together, would provide more frequent periods of natural quiet in the parks for visitors to enjoy. Further, while an increase of 3 dB constitutes a doubling of sound energy levels, it does not equate to a doubling of perceived loudness apparent to a human listener. Generally, humans perceive an increase of 10 dB as a doubling in sound level (Stevens and Stevens 1975, Rossing et al 2002, Everest 2000, and Dept. of the Air Force 1995). Therefore, all else being equal the larger the group size the greater the benefit for both perceived loudness and uninterrupted natural quiet. For example, a group of ten snowmobiles would sound only twice as loud as a single snowmobile.

Comment: If visitors who seek solitude could get away from the most popular attractions (i.e., Old Faithful), they could likely find other areas next to the travel corridor that are relatively quiet, such as Grassy Lake Reservoir or Bechler Meadows.

Response: Though these areas may be quieter, the NPS believes that visitors to popular attractions should also have the opportunity to reasonably find periodic quiet and solitude.

### **Socioeconomics**

Comment: On page 68, Table 16 there should be a footnote noting that the tax rate in West increased in 2003- 2004 from 4% to 7%, so that that winter's data can be accurately analyzed.

Response: The resort tax, which is a targeted sales tax, has been 3% since its inception, which is the legislated limit. However, the accommodations tax increased from 4% to 7% in 2003. Table 16 includes only resort tax revenues.

Comment: Analyzing the regional socioeconomic effects obscures the local economic effects; NPS should focus more tightly on effects to local communities.

Response: A discussion of effects on local business output and local employment is on pages 119- 120 of the EA. Specific projections about economic impacts are made in the EA for the communities of West Yellowstone, Jackson, and Cody on pages 123- 124. Discussing the regional economic impacts helps to put the effects of winter use management in an appropriate context.

Comment: Socioeconomic predictions should reflect that visitation will likely drop if snowmobiles are banned or guides are required.

Response: The assumptions for the socioeconomic analysis are on pages 117- 118 of the EA. The

socioeconomic analysis assumes, based on survey data, that 40- 74% of visitors will still visit the parks for other activities or return to the Greater Yellowstone Area to recreate outside the park if they cannot or choose not to snowmobile in the park due to restrictions proposed by the alternatives. The analysis uses a high impact scenario and a low impact scenario, which are reflected in the 40% and 74% return rates, respectively.

Comment: The visitor survey that was completed in 2002- 2003 and used as a basis for the economic model in the EA was inherently flawed as it only surveyed visitors who were in the parks (the large majority of whom were snowmobile users). This survey was skewed towards these visitors and ignored those people who may not be visiting the parks due to the impacts of snowmobiles.

Response: Two earlier surveys (Duffield et al 2000b and Duffield et al 2000c) were summer and nationwide telephone surveys that allowed the NPS to look beyond only winter visitors. These results are summarized in the SEIS.

Comment: NPS did not utilize data provided on snowmobile registrations and the effect of “park closure” on Fremont County’s snowmobile program. Income in that county declined 6.5%.

Response: The NPS recognizes that the uncertainties of last winter discouraged visitors from traveling to the Greater Yellowstone Area and contributed to a reduction in visitor use. The Fremont County data made available in the comment letter reflects the uncertainty.

## **Wildlife**

Comment: There is no evidence in the data or studies to date demonstrating that wildlife disturbance or displacement “may have a sufficient consequence to the population.”

Response: Though the NPS agrees with this statement, it is important not only to avoid wildlife impacts that have “consequence to the population,” but also to minimize wildlife harassment. Some forms of wildlife harassment do not result in population- level effects, but still constitute unnecessary harassment that is bothersome to both wildlife and park visitors. NPS believes that guiding and other requirements under the preferred alternative will minimize such adverse effects.

Comment: Because larger group sizes disturb animals more than small groups, the EA should examine alternatives allowing smaller groups, such as private ones.

Response: While smaller groups may disturb wildlife less than larger groups, allowing larger group sizes reduces the overall number of winter visitor groups. The smaller number of such groups, then, poses less harassment or disturbance potential to wildlife. In addition, larger group sizes have an important benefit to natural soundscapes. The presence of guides more than compensates for any additional disturbance these larger groups might otherwise cause compared to smaller unguided groups. Commercial guides also ensure that snowmobiles travel within the speed limit, thus mitigating disturbance to wildlife and reducing the potential for collisions.

Comment: In recent years, Yellowstone has experienced mild to moderate winters. Given a

more severe winter, or a series of severe winters, animals will experience higher stress levels as they are challenged to locate forage, maintain body warmth, defend themselves and undertake other life- sustaining activities. It would be inappropriate to assume wildlife experiencing mild winters will react similarly to snowmobiles during severe winters. NPS should not be basing future wildlife management on a series of mild winters, given that it does not have data from a severe winter.

Response: The NPS agrees that a severe winter could have significantly different effects on wildlife than moderate winters. The EA acknowledges on page 140 that “data on wildlife responses to winter recreation in YNP has been gathered over a series of relatively mild to moderate winters (1998- 2004).” However, severe winters have occurred occasionally during the 40- 50 –year history of winter use in the parks. Wildlife monitoring will continue during the three year interim period of this plan. A severe winter during this period would provide important information in assessing the effects of all oversnow vehicles on wildlife. Finally, population levels of both elk and bison remain at sound levels.

Comment: The artificiality or unnaturalness of winter ecology attributable to bison use of the groomed road system is causing substantive and deleterious impacts to individual bison, the bison population, and bison habitat by allowing far more bison to survive and successfully reproduce than would exist if natural factors provided a natural control on bison population dynamics, movements, distribution patterns, and habitat use patterns. The interior bison population of Yellowstone faces an uncertain future.

Response: As stated previously, the science concerning the effects of road grooming on bison and elk is unclear, with significant disagreement among experts in the field. These issues are discussed on pages 143- 145 of the EA.

Comment: Comparing winter time wildlife impacts to those of summer and its visitors would more accurately reflect the minimal impacts that winter visitation incurs.

Response: Scientists generally agree that winter is the most stressful time of year on wildlife, much more so than summer. Further, several studies confirm that animals expend larger amounts of energy to flee park visitors in winter than in summer, due to the snow through which they must travel. Winter visitation poses a greater risk to wildlife survival than does summer visitation. Finally, the purpose of this plan is to address winter use, not summer activities.

### **Entry Limits**

Comment: Retaining most of the current preferred alternative but reducing the proposed daily entries to the levels of the beginning of the 2003- 2004 season (i.e., 493 per day in Yellowstone) would be a far more reasonable alternative for the NPS to support. It would show a concern to the local businesses as well as a commitment for the health, safety, and welfare of the employees, visitors, and park resources.

Response: The NPS believes such a reduction in snowmobile numbers is not necessary based on the EA analysis. The NPS is attempting to balance appropriate visitor access and a range recreational opportunities, subject to strict limitations, with the protection of park resources. This decision does that.

Comment: NPS should allow 950 snowmobiles/day in Yellowstone after the 2004- 05 season.

Response: As explained in the EA (and in the SEIS), such a number of snowmobiles would result in major adverse impacts and would be inconsistent with the purpose and need of this EA.

Comment: NPS should have considered an option allowing between 950 and 1,200 snowmobiles/day in Yellowstone.

Response: The EA analysis indicates that alternative 5 (with 950 snowmobiles per day allowed in Yellowstone) would yield major adverse impacts. Allowing use above this level would result in even greater impacts. However, other use levels will be evaluated in the long- term plan.

Comment: The NPS should allow for up to 70 snowmobiles per day on Jackson Lake on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, and should allow for a 5- year phase- in period for BAT snowmobiles on the lake.

Response: The NPS will monitor the amount of use on Jackson Lake and collect data on the impacts of snowmobiles on natural soundscapes. This information will be used in the development of a long- term plan and will help to determine whether higher (or lower) daily entry limits should be established. A 5- year phase- in period for BAT snowmobiles exceeds the length of time that this decision is intended to cover and would be inconsistent with the NPS' determination that the use of non- BAT snowmobiles causes unacceptable impacts on the natural soundscape of Jackson Lake and Grand Teton National Park.

## **BAT**

Comment: Requiring BAT snowmobiles on west- bound traffic on the Grassy Lake Road could put a visitor in danger on the Targhee National Forest, where many trails are not groomed and thus present the possibility that a visitor driving the heavier, under- powered BAT machines could get stuck.

Response: The NPS recognizes that the current generation of BAT snowmobiles are better suited to travel on groomed surfaces than on ungroomed areas where they could encounter deep snow. The Grassy Lake Road is groomed to a standard that under normal circumstances is suitable for use by BAT snowmobiles. Visitors who wish to recreate in ungroomed areas outside of the Parkway should be aware of their own abilities and the limitations of their equipment. Visitors may also choose to access the Grassy Lake Road from the west side, where two- cycle machines are permitted.

Comment: YNP should not allow any non- BAT machines this winter or at all.

Response: As discussed in the FONSI, this decision does not allow any non- BAT recreational machines in Yellowstone.

Comment: The Grassy Lake Road should be open to non- BAT snowmobiles regardless of whether they originate in the Targhee National Forest or at Flagg Ranch. The provision that allows non- BAT snowmobiles to travel eastbound from the national forest to Flagg Ranch and then return westbound, but prohibits non- BAT snowmobiles to originate at Flagg Ranch is confusing.

Response: The NPS believes that the use of BAT snowmobiles within the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway is necessary to mitigate the adverse impacts on natural soundscapes as described in the EA. However, the NPS recognizes that due to the remoteness of the area, access to Flagg Ranch for snowmobilers who are recreating in the Targhee National Forest may be necessary for safety reasons such as obtaining fuel or supplies, or to report an emergency. For these reasons, the BAT requirement is not imposed on snowmobiles originating in the Targhee.

Comment: The use of BAT snowmobiles should not be required on the Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail through Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway because this route is along a plowed highway which is open to vehicles. In addition, this route would provide recreationists from Wyoming the opportunity to ride from Wyoming to Idaho and on to West Yellowstone without traveling through Yellowstone National Park.

Response: The NPS believes that the use of BAT snowmobiles within Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway is necessary to mitigate the adverse impacts on natural soundscapes as described in the EA. Notwithstanding the fact that the route is immediately adjacent to the plowed roadway through the two park units, the NPS believes that the use of non- BAT snowmobiles would result in unacceptable impacts to the natural soundscapes. The CDST will continue to provide a link from Wyoming to West Yellowstone.

Comment: Snowmobilers on Jackson Lake should not be required to use BAT snowmobiles because of the expense of acquiring a BAT snowmobile.

Response: The NPS recognizes that the cost of a new BAT snowmobile is currently higher than for a new non- BAT snowmobile. However, the NPS continues to believe that the data and analysis in the EIS and SEIS as well as the EA are valid and shows that the use of non- BAT snowmobiles on Jackson Lake would result in unacceptable impacts to park visitors and could result in impairment of the natural soundscape. Therefore, the NPS could be in violation of the NPS Organic Act if it were to allow the recreational use of non- BAT snowmobiles on Jackson Lake.

Comment: The portion of the Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail through Grand Teton National Park that is located along U.S. Highway 26/287 from Moran Junction to the eastern park boundary should not be subject to BAT requirements in order to allow access to nearby public and private lands.

Response: The NPS agrees with this comment. This relatively short portion of the CDST is located immediately adjacent to the major U.S. highway serving northwest Wyoming, which carries a high volume of automobile and commercial truck traffic. The park boundary is such that the CDST over this segment is sometimes within the park and sometimes out of the park. This portion of the CDST provides access to nearby public and private lands. For a variety of practical reasons as well as to ensure access to public and private lands, this portion of the CDST will be treated like other access routes in Grand Teton and is subject to neither BAT requirements or to the daily entrance limits.

Comment: There should be no exemptions from BAT for historic snowcoaches.

Response: The EA, SEIS, and EIS air quality analyses indicate that the vast majority of air pollution generated in the parks results from the historic use levels and types of snowmobiles. Little pollution is generated by snowcoaches as a whole, partly because their numbers are far fewer relative to snowmobiles, and also because modern coaches are far cleaner on both grams of CO and particulate matter emissions per mile and greater passenger capacity relative to snowmobiles. For sound emissions, the SEIS soundscape modeling noted that a group of 4 BAT snowmobiles, carrying up to 8 people total, has a distance to audibility of 5,810 feet in open terrain under average background conditions. A comparable snowcoach, potentially carrying even more passengers, is audible for only 2,630 feet under the same conditions. The NPS is allowing additional time to phase- in BAT requirements for snowcoaches because of the substantial investment required to upgrade snowcoach technology. Historic snowcoaches are being initially exempted because the NPS wishes to provide incentives to continue operation of these machines to maintain the character of winter touring, as they add to the overall winter experience. Further, there are not very many of these vehicles operating in the parks (approximately 29), and they provide additional options for visitors.

Comment: The definition for Best Available Technology snowcoaches is inconsistent with the traditional meaning of “Best Available” and inconsistent with the BAT language in the past two NEPA documents. The proposed definition would allow vehicles of widely varying emissions and noise profiles to continue to operate for three years without improvement.

Response: The NPS agrees that the term “best available technology” is applied differently to snowcoaches than it is to snowmobiles. Under this decision, snowcoaches are not required to utilize the best commercially available technology to reduce air and sound emissions. Instead, they are required to have the emissions control equipment that was installed on the vehicle at the time it was manufactured. There are a variety of different vehicles operating as snowcoaches, ranging from vans manufactured in the 1980s to the most recent model- year. Vehicles that were manufactured twenty years ago would be likely to yield higher emissions than vehicles manufactured today because of advances in emissions control technology. It would be impractical to require owners of snowcoaches to convert their entire snowcoach fleets to the newest engines because of the substantial investment that would be required. Conversion vans, used as wheeled vehicles in the summer to provide tours, and converted to tracks in the winter, often can last for 10- 15 years if properly maintained, whereas snowmobiles used by commercial guides typically only have a life expectancy of three seasons. The expense of requiring owners to convert their snowcoaches to the newest technology would essentially impede the use of snowcoaches in the park, which is contrary to the purpose and need of this EA. In addition, the EA, SEIS, and EIS air quality analyses indicate that the vast majority of air pollution generated in the parks results from snowmobile use. Little pollution is generated by snowcoaches as a whole, partly because their numbers are far fewer relative to snowmobiles, and also because modern coaches are far cleaner in both grams of CO and particulate matter emissions per mile and have a greater passenger capacity.

Therefore, a note is made in the errata sheet to change all references to “snowcoach BAT” in the EA to “snowcoach technology requirements.” This change will not have any substantive effects on snowcoach operations or emissions requirements, but will avoid confusing which technology requirements are in place for snowmobiles and snowcoaches.

Comment: Unlike the previous EISs, the EA does not include language emphasizing the



environmentally preferred transportation mode and a commitment to actively develop and implement BAT snowcoaches for park use. This language should be included as a way to reduce impacts from all alternatives.

Response: The NPS continues to believe that snowcoaches are the most environmentally protective mode of oversnow transportation currently available. This is why alternative 1 is the environmentally preferred alternative. NPS is very interested in purchasing new generation snowcoaches, and this is evidenced by the fact that Yellowstone National Park recently issued a request for proposals and hopes to purchase as many as six new generation snowcoaches later this year for administrative uses. The NPS goal (as described in the EIS and SEIS) is to have all modes of transportation as clean and quiet as is feasible. The NPS remains committed to this long-term goal for both snowcoaches and snowmobiles.

Comment: ISMA encourages NPS to consider a variety of factors that affect sound measurements including altitude, speed, and operation of snowmobiles on snow or grass. Appropriate recognition of these factors is the only way to ensure sound testing and standards.

Response: The Society of Automotive Engineers sound testing procedures do take into account these variables. This is why they allow a tolerance of 2 dB above the sound limit.

### **Guiding**

Comment: Maximum group size should be 9 snowmobiles (the guide plus 8 guided snowmobiles), because experience last winter suggested that guides had difficulty controlling clients at the end of their line, especially if that person did not wish to be guided.

Response: NPS will continue to monitor guided groups and adjust group size requirements if necessary. In most cases, a guide can adequately control a group of 10 other snowmobiles. However, no matter what the maximum group size is, some visitors may be difficult for guides to control, which highlights why park rangers must work cooperatively with guides in such situations.

Comment: There is no evidence to suggest that guides will always behave responsibly. Guides are not a panacea to all problems.

Response: The NPS recognizes that commercial guides cannot resolve all concerns associated with winter issues. However, the EA analysis, based on evidence and monitoring, strongly supports that commercial guides are outstanding in responsible wildlife viewing and in ensuring the safety of park visitors. Further, they are an important component in mitigating the impacts of snowmobile use in the parks.

Comment: Not all visitors would enjoy traveling with a guide; guides do not necessarily enhance visitor experience.

Response: The NPS recognizes that some visitors would not enjoy guided touring. However, experience in Yellowstone and in other national parks such as Denali, in Alaska, suggests that the majority of visitors enjoy guided touring because it offers them educational experiences they would otherwise not have. In addition, visitors would have more opportunities to view wildlife, due to a guide's expertise and knowledge of the parks.

Comment: Private parties, with leaders who are knowledgeable about wildlife, would have the same ability to find wildlife as commercial guides (EA p. 133).

Response: While some visitors are familiar with wildlife viewing locations in Yellowstone, many are not; in fact, the majority of winter visitors live outside the northern Rockies region and would not be familiar with wildlife viewing locations. By contrast, all, or nearly all, commercial guides are local residents, and quite familiar with Yellowstone and its wildlife viewing locations. Guiding has become a sustainable business in the Yellowstone area year- round, and many visitors utilize guiding services to enhance their wildlife viewing success. The purpose of commercial guides is not solely to find wildlife; they also ensure responsible wildlife viewing and visitor safety. Commercial guiding is the best way to secure these additional benefits during this interim period.

Comment: NPS should develop training that would allow non- commercial guides (usually around 20% of daily entries) to lead groups through Yellowstone, and to permit 20% of daily entries to be non- commercial guides.

Response: Because of the timing of this FONSI and the commencement of the 2004- 2005 winter season, it would be impossible to develop an adequate non- commercial guide training program for the upcoming winter season. In addition, it would be expensive and inappropriate during the winters of 2005- 2006 and 2006- 2007 due to the temporary nature of this plan. As noted by the EA, commercial guides have significant incentives to insure that their group does not disturb wildlife. The winter of 2003- 2004 demonstrated that commercial guides significantly reduce law enforcement incidents and provide for a safer and high quality visitor experience. Commercial guides have professional obligations to the NPS and as such, risk losing their permit to operate guiding services in the park should they fail to perform adequately. Non- commercial guides, who are leading family and friends through the park, do not face such consequences, since they do not have a long- term financial interest in operating in the park. The NPS also noticed implementation problems when it attempted to implement a non- commercial reservation system after the March 25, 2003, Record of Decision was signed. For example, some individuals in gateway communities purchased large blocks of non- commercial reservations (i.e., a reservation every day of the season) with the potential intent of reselling them to other visitors or including them in a larger package for their clients. This was contrary to the purpose of the non- commercial guide reservation system. Permitting unguided or non- commercially guided access to the parks would be addressed in a long- term winter use plan.

Comment: NPS should allow up to 80% of the daily usage on the CDST and Grassy Lake Road to be commercially guided.

Response: The NPS would consider allowing commercially guided use on these road segments as a portion of the daily entries authorized by this FONSI if the NPS determines there is a need for the service and the service was economically feasible.

Comment: Unguided snowmobile access as proposed in alternative 3 is flawed because it has a lack of accountability.

Response: Such concerns are a significant portion of the reason the NPS did not choose Alternative 3 for the preferred alternative. In addition, NPS believes there may be a similar lack

of accountability with non- commercial guides, which is partly why this decision requires that all snowmobilers travel with commercial guides.

### **Side Roads**

Comment: NPS should open Firehole Canyon Drive all day for snowmobile use.

Response: The NPS wishes to create a range of experiences for park visitors, including the opportunity for snowcoach passengers to experience areas free of snowmobiles. Previously, this objective was achieved by closing the Firehole Canyon Drive entirely to snowmobile use. However, temporal zoning of this road segment may also achieve this objective, while responding to public comments requesting snowmobile access to the road.

Comment: NPS should open all other historically open side roads to snowmobiles. Further, opening all side roads historically accessible to snowmobiles would provide better opportunity to collect monitoring data.

Response: The NPS would like to provide a variety of winter touring options, including the ability to tour areas exclusively by snowcoach. Very few park roads are open exclusively to snowcoaches (the side roads amount to approximately 14 miles of road); the side roads present the most feasible options for such opportunities. Keeping side roads closed to snowmobiles provides a valuable opportunity to compare roads open to snowmobile use with those closed to such use. Indeed, retaining this closure presents the only such monitoring opportunity in Yellowstone. In addition, the NPS wishes to provide for a range of opportunities for visitors, including opportunities for visitors riding a snowcoach to experience areas free of snowmobiles. An exception is made to allow snowmobile use on the Firehole Canyon drive in the afternoons because it is typically only used by snowcoaches in the morning. This temporal zoning achieves the objective of maintaining some areas of separation between snowmobile and snowcoach use.

### **Snowplanes**

Comment: NPS cannot allow historic snowcoach use to continue merely because such vehicles are historically associated with winter use in Yellowstone, if such reasoning was not adequate to retain snowplane use on Jackson Lake.

Response: Historic snowcoaches, of which only 29 are operating, do not present unacceptable impacts to park resources and values; in fact their impacts are extremely slight. By contrast, and as found herein, snowplanes present unacceptable impacts to park resources and values due to their extremely noisy operation, and are inconsistent with park management objectives.

Comment: The EA should re- evaluate the issue of snowplanes on Jackson Lake. The NPS has failed to supply a reasoned analysis for total elimination of snowplane use.

Response: The NPS continues to believe that the data and analysis in previous environmental analyses remain valid and has concluded herein that the use of snowplanes on Jackson Lake would result in impairment of the natural soundscape. The NPS is not aware of any new or additional information regarding snowplanes that would suggest any different conclusion. Therefore, the NPS would be in violation of the NPS Organic Act if it were to allow the recreational use of snowplanes on Jackson Lake. In addition, with their unguarded propellers and high travel speeds, snowplanes present unacceptable safety risks, even on the surface of

Jackson Lake.

**Consistency with Laws, Policies, Executive Orders, Court Decisions, etc.**

Comment: NPS must adopt the snowcoach- only alternative in order to comply with NPS regulations, Executive Orders, and NPS Management Policies. The EA concludes that snowmobile use will continue to cause adverse effects previously considered unacceptable to air quality, public and employee health, natural quiet, wildlife, and visitor experience.

Response: Additional language has been added to the FONSI clarifying why the NPS believes this decision is consistent with NPS regulations, Executive Orders, and NPS Management Policies.

Comment: Simply calling NPS policies “objectives” does not make them optional for the NPS. It is particularly disturbing that these policies have devolved into objectives that are not expected to be achieved.

Response: NPS policies are contained in the 2001 Management Policies. Management objectives are based on these management policies. However, the 2001 Management Policies do not dictate specific management objectives, rather it “sets the framework and provides direction for all management decisions.” (p. 6). This EA and FONSI do not confuse policy and management objectives. While this decision is consistent with the 2001 Management Policies, it also serves broader park objectives by facilitating a range of appropriate winter uses.

Comment: The EA must address the concerns outlined in the District Court for the District of Columbia’s rulings.

Response: The NPS believes that the EA, combined with the additional studies on road grooming, do provide a structure to address the concerns outlined by the D.C. District Court. For example, the NPS has contracted with Dr. Cormack Gates of the University of Calgary to address concerns about the effects of groomed roads on bison. The three- year interim time period of this plan will also provide the NPS the opportunity to monitor the effects of limited and strictly managed snowmobile use.

Comment: One comment suggested that the Temporary Winter Use Plans would interfere with rights under R.S. § 2477, an 1866 statute (repealed in 1976) that conferred “the right of way for the construction of highways over public lands, not reserved for public uses.”

Response: No party has ever claimed the existence of any R.S. § 2477 rights- of- way within the Parks, and to the best of NPS’s knowledge, no such rights- of- way do exist. Due to Wyoming state law and the very short period of time between the passage of the statute and the establishment of Yellowstone, the existence of any such rights is unlikely. Under Wyoming state law, R.S. § 2477 highways could only exist if they were officially declared by the county (see Board of County Commissioners of Sublette County v. Norton, No. 02- CV- 193- B (D. of Wyo. March 9, 2004)). NPS is not aware of any such highways were officially declared in any of the Wyoming portions of the parks prior to the parks’ establishment. In addition, because R.S. § 2477 rights could be obtained only on public lands not reserved for public purposes (such as national park purposes) an R.S. § 2477 highway could only exist in a unit of the national park system if it pre- dated the establishment of the unit. NPS is aware of no evidence that highways

were created anywhere in Yellowstone (including those portions lying in Montana and Idaho) during the six- year period between the enactment of R.S. § 2477 and the establishment of the park in 1872 – indeed, the park had not even been thoroughly explored at that time.

Even if access rights under R.S. § 2477 did exist in the parks, the Temporary Winter Use Plans would not interfere with those rights. Snowmobile and snowcoach use will continue to occur on existing roads. The Temporary Winter Use Plans represent the best way to preserve public access along these routes while also complying with other applicable laws.

Comment: In the state of Idaho, the Board of County Commissioners is the only jurisdiction with zoning ordinance authority. The NPS should not take any action to “zone” without prior approval from the appropriate board of county commissioners.

Response: This decision does not affect county zoning. In any event, Yellowstone National Park retains exclusive federal jurisdiction, and the property clause of the U.S. Constitution, the NPS Organic Act, and other laws provide the NPS with the authority to regulate uses within park boundaries and would preempt any inconsistent zoning ordinances.

Comment: The NPS must complete a comprehensive takings analysis, a regulatory flexibility analysis, and a statement on environmental justice.

Response: These issues are not required to be addressed in an EA, although they may be required through the rulemaking process. Therefore, this comment is beyond the scope of the EA. They are addressed in the proposed rule implementing this EA of September 7, 2004, and will also be addressed in the final rule.

### **General EA Analysis Concerns**

Comment: Using the virtually unregulated snowmobile situation that prevailed before 2002 as a baseline falsely skews comparisons with last year’s guided situation. Instead, NPS should use a mix of use and regulated entry numbers to determine whether commercial guided requirements are needed.

Response: As noted in the FONSI and EA, it remains uncertain what presently constitutes the “no- action” alternative. Three different no- action scenarios were described in the EA for comparison purposes, and this FONSI is based on all three comparisons. Thus, there would not be significant impacts in comparison to any of the three possible no- action scenarios. Further, the unregulated snowmobile use that prevailed before 2002 (the historic conditions baseline) did include a mix of unguided and commercially guided access. During these years, there were many businesses authorized to provide guided snowmobile tours in Yellowstone. It is therefore appropriate to compare this past use with the use that occurred during the winter of 2003- 2004.

Comment: Allowing 20% non- commercial guides in the winters of 2005- 06 and 2006- 2007, and a 950- daily- snowmobile limit would give us data to which to compare fully commercial guiding and the 720- daily- snowmobile in the previous two winters.

Response: As discussed above, non- commercial guides pose increased risks for wildlife harassment. Further, 950 snowmobiles per day would pose major adverse impacts upon park soundscapes, increased risks to park employee health and safety, and would also impact the

visitor experience in the park. This level of snowmobile use, especially with allowances for non- commercially guided access, would result in significant adverse impacts. It would be expensive and inappropriate during the winters of 2005- 2006 and 2006- 2007 due to the temporary nature of this plan, however they could be considered in the long- term analysis on winter use.

Comment: The NPS claims that all alternatives would preserve existing levels of visitation are spurious, given that last winter's drop in snowmobile visitation did not produce an equivalent surge in snowcoach visitation. If snowmobiles are banned or guides are required, visitation will drop (EA p. 163).

Response: The EA analysis assumes that all of the alternatives will accommodate historic levels of visitation. The winter of 2003- 2004's drop in visitation came during a time of widespread confusion regarding visitor access to Yellowstone, and should not be used as a measure of the success of one form of visitor access over another. It is of note that snowcoach use actually increased 28% during this winter. Furthermore, evidence suggests that some potential visitors are displaced by widespread snowmobile use in Yellowstone. If snowmobiles were banned, such visitors would be likely to visit. Finally, all EA alternatives are intended to provide the opportunity to continue historic levels of visitation, although modes of access may vary. While management changes may produce short- term adjustments in visitation, long- term trends are unlikely to be significantly affected.

Comment: NPS should not rely on conclusions from the EIS or SEIS, since both have been (or are believed to be) flawed, inadequate, and illegal. This EA should not tier to those documents. Utilizing data from these documents, however, is acceptable.

Response: The NPS is relying on these documents to assist in the EA analysis. Department of the Interior guidance (69 F.R. 10866) encourages the use of previous NEPA documents and tiering. Court decisions in both the District of Columbia and Wyoming have found procedural violations with these documents, but not violations concerning the merits of the documents' data or the conclusions therein.

Comment: The assumption, under Alternative 1, that a snowmobile ban would have the greatest displacement of snowmobilers onto surrounding federal lands is incorrect. As Idaho's data demonstrates, when snowmobiling in Yellowstone declines, it also declines on surrounding federal lands, especially Island Park.

Response: While visitation to Island Park did indeed drop last winter (when snowmobile visitation to Yellowstone dropped as well), it is uncertain whether one winter's experience will hold true in the future. Other confounding factors with last winter's visitation drop were general confusion over Yellowstone's winter status, poor snow conditions in the GYA, as well as the presence of good snow cover in the upper Midwest, where many snowmobile visitors reside. Furthermore, other experience and visitation models suggest that restrictions on Yellowstone snowmobile visitation could result in an increase in snowmobile visitation on surrounding federal lands. Therefore, Alternative 1's assumptions may indeed be correct, but only experience will actually verify the accuracy of these predictions.

Comment: NPS should not use data from "prejudiced" sources like GYC and NPCA (on p. 62);

rather, it should use Harris Miller Miller & Hanson and Jackson Hole Scientific Investigations instead.

Response: The NPS uses data from a variety of sources, including data provided by the snowmobile manufacturers and the States of Montana and Wyoming, in assessing impacts. The data provided by the above referenced study is useful in documenting historical soundscape conditions in Yellowstone.

Comment: The drop in 2002- 2003 visitation was due not to uncertainties about whether parks were open, but rather to poor snow pack.

Response: While the poor snow pack that winter undoubtedly did contribute to the drop in park visitation, it is clear that uncertainty about the future of winter visitation in Yellowstone did as well.

Comment: The analysis for alternative 4 is based on the assumption that 18 snowcoaches and 720 snowmobiles will enter Yellowstone each day. However, up to 78 snowcoaches are authorized by concessions contracts. This could dramatically underestimate the effects of alternative 4 on natural soundscapes, wildlife, and air quality.

Response: The EA analysis assumes that all of the alternatives will accommodate historic levels of visitation. Where the daily entry limits, which vary by alternative, propose levels of snowmobiling less than the historic average snowmobile use, the difference in visitation is accommodated through snowcoach use. This could result in increased levels of snowcoaches for some alternatives. This is noted in Appendix A of the EA under each of the alternative details. For alternative 4 in the EA, which allowed approximately historic average levels of snowmobiling, there would be no expectation for a change in snowcoach numbers. Thus, 18 snowcoaches per day, which is the historic average, would be expected to enter Yellowstone. Up to 78 snowcoaches could enter the park each day under existing concessions contracts, as noted by the commentor. If snowcoach use increased substantially beyond 18 per day on average, impacts to park resources and values could be slightly underestimated. However, the analysis also indicates that snowcoaches yield fewer impacts to the environment relative to snowmobiles, and a difference of 60 snowcoaches per day would be unlikely to significantly change the conclusions in this EA.

Comment: The EA makes it clear that peak days, such as Saturdays and holidays, would yield far greater impacts. The EA downplays the frequency of peak days and fails to acknowledge that these are the only times many visitors may visit the park.

Response: It is possible that peak days (when snowmobile use approaches the daily entry limits) could be underestimated in the EA. However, it is impossible to predict how visitation to the parks will respond based on this EA.

Comment: State and local governments should have been included as cooperating agencies in the EA process. CEQ regulations and current policies support collaborative approaches to decision making and involving local communities.

Response: The goal of the NPS is to have this EA process and rulemaking completed before the

start of the winter season. As articulated in a letter of July 27, 2004, to the state of Wyoming, this highly accelerated timeframe for completing the EA and rulemaking prevented the NPS from allowing former cooperating agencies to participate. In addition, cooperating agencies are generally not included in an EA process, since EAs can only authorize actions which do not have significant impacts. All former cooperating agencies were provided copies of the EA to solicit their comments, and several submitted comments on it.

### **Alternatives**

Comment: Alternative 3's requirement that all visitors enter the park by 10:30 a.m. would concentrate visitors during a few hours, rather than disperse use throughout the day.

Response: This requirement is not adopted in this decision. The NPS feels that concentrating visitor use within certain times of the day could leave other times of the day available for recreationists desiring quiet conditions with minimal snowmobile presence. Further, such a concentration within certain time periods would reduce the percent time that OSVs are audible.

Comment: NPS has stringently limited the alternatives considered in the EA, which effectively eliminates from long- term consideration several alternatives that may be appropriate and compatible with park objectives.

Response: Alternatives are limited in this EA because the process must result in a decision that does not impair park resources and is consistent with the orders of the D.C. and Wyoming district courts. NPS identified a reasonable range of alternatives for this interim plan. Alternatives that allow increased snowmobile use, relative to alternatives 4 or 5, are more likely to result in significant impacts. Therefore, these alternatives were not considered in the EA. Further, this EA does not establish a precedent for future actions or constitute a decision in principle about a future consideration. A long- term study would include an appropriate range of alternatives allowing various levels of snowmobile use, including levels not analyzed in this EA.

Comment: "No action" in this case would be a return to the 1983 regulations allowing snowmobile use in Yellowstone. The baseline for comparison should be historic use, not snowcoach- only travel.

Response: As explained on pages 25- 26 of the EA and in this FONSI, it is unclear what the no action alternative is. There are three possible no- action alternatives: Snowcoaches- only, the superintendents' February 11, 2004, compendia amendments, and the 1983 regulations which allowed for essentially unregulated and unlimited snowmobile use of the parks. Regardless, the EA analysis compared the impacts of its alternatives with historically unlimited snowmobile use.

Comment: NPS has deleted from its environmentally preferred alternative its earlier conclusion that banning snowmobile use would have a negligible to minor economic impact. New information strongly supports NPS earlier predictions. The NPS did not include in the EA official tax data from gateway communities, indicating tax revenues were generally only slightly affected last winter or in some cases actually increased.

Response: NPS continues to believe that while the environmentally preferred alternative could have significant economic impacts to individuals, families, and businesses in gateway



communities, the economic effects in the broader context of the communities and the counties surrounding Yellowstone would be negligible to minor. Further, tax information from the town of West Yellowstone was included on page 68 of the EA.

**Comment:** The EA should analyze alternatives that close park roads to grooming or at minimum, the EA should propose to initiate experimental road closures during the next three years to collect data on bison or other wildlife use of previously groomed areas. It is unacceptable to wait another three years for a long- term plan to analyze these issues.

**Response:** The NPS considered including an alternative in the EA that closed park roads to grooming, but rejected it from detailed analysis in the EA. This discussion is on page 19 of the EA. The science surrounding the issue of the long- term effects of groomed roads on bison and elk is currently unclear. Experts disagree about how groomed roads affect, if at all, bison distribution and abundance. Given the scientific uncertainty surrounding these complex ecological issues, an end to the long- standing practice of road grooming is not warranted at this time, as it would effectively close much of the park to visitors, thereby preventing the NPS from allowing for the public to experience and enjoy many of the park's most significant resources. A total cessation of road grooming would also impact critical park operations, and the ability to protect park resources, and present considerable effects on employee health and safety. The NPS is also in the midst of several important studies, which will provide further information to address these issues. The results of these studies will be available for a longer- term analysis of winter use in the parks.

Experimental closures of a portion of Yellowstone's road system (such as one or two road segments) would also be impractical at this time for similar reasons. First, the NPS believes it is more prudent to wait for the results of the road grooming study before considering any road closures, since it will provide important information about which road segments are most critical to bison distribution and abundance. It is currently uncertain which road segments may play the most important role in facilitating bison travel (if at all). Further, variables in weather could have great influence on bison distribution and their use of groomed roads. However, it would take several years of monitoring the effects of road closures to understand how weather conditions might affect bison movements. This would be beyond the interim period of this plan. Finally, experimental closures of some road segments could inhibit visitor access to some of Yellowstone's most world- renowned features.

### **Cumulative Impacts**

**Comment:** The EA fails to address the cumulative impacts of snowmobiles in combination with existing and foreseeable pollution sources outside the park. For example, the EA should account for adverse effects from the proposed Roundup Power Plant.

**Response:** The cumulative effects analysis is on pages 163- 166, which did account for the effects from power plants.

**Comment:** NPS has never adequately examined the cumulative effects of its winter use program in Yellowstone.

**Response:** A cumulative effects analysis is on pages 163- 166 of the EA.

**Impairment:**

Comment: The two previous EISs concluded that historic winter use resulted in impairment of park resources.

Response: There is no evidence to change NPS's conclusion that the historically unlimited and essentially unregulated snowmobile use resulted in impairment to park resources and values. The NPS has imposed strict limitations on snowmobiling, such as daily entry limits, best available technology requirements, and guiding requirements to insure that impairment does not occur.

**FONSI**

Comment: Given that this decision is "highly controversial" and involves choices that do not resolve serious issues of public health and impairment of park resources for a period of three years, NPS cannot base its new rule on an EA and a FONSI. The impacts to park resources and values identified in the EA are significant. In addition, NPS policies state that significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary. NPS policies also state that preparation of an EA is insufficient when an action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Response: For the reasons stated in the FONSI, the NPS believes this decision can be supported by a FONSI. While there will be impacts to park resources that are adverse, they are no greater than moderate in intensity. Although this decision is of a temporary duration, the FONSI is made for the actual impacts during those three years and does not rest on the fact that the decision is only effective for three years. In addition, as noted by the FONSI the controversy on this EA centers around the question of whether or not snowmobiles should be allowed to access the parks. However, the degree to which snowmobiling affects that quality of the human environment has not been nearly as controversial. This decision continues the requirement that all snowmobiles and snowcoaches remain on roads which are used by automobiles or motorized boats during summer months. Of Yellowstone's 2.2 million acres, approximately 180 miles of road (out of approximately 350 miles in the summer) are open to snowmobile use. Most commentors on this EA recognize that historic levels and types of snowmobile use had adverse effects on the quality of the human environment. This decision will also not establish a precedent, as snowmobile use has been occurring in the parks since the 1960s, and snowcoach use since the 1950s. This decision simply continues it, subject to strict limitations, for an interim period while longer-term planning and study are completed.

Comment: The NPS has failed to provide a legitimate rationale for reversing its November 2000 decision to phase out snowmobile use. Further, there have been no significant changes that would justify allowing recreational snowmobiling in the parks.

Response: Additional information describing the rationale for the decision has been included in the FONSI. This decision best balances winter use with protection of park resources to ensure that adverse impacts from historical types and numbers of snowmobile use do not occur. Strictly limited snowmobile numbers, combined with BAT requirements and requirements for commercial guiding ensure that the impacts to park resources and values are not significant. Monitoring information from the winter of 2003- 2004 demonstrates the important role these strict limitations play in protecting park resources and values. In addition, the NPS has discretion under the 1916 Organic Act to balance the protection of park resources while

providing for appropriate visitor enjoyment of the parks. This decision reflects that balancing mandate. Finally, the 2000 decision (and 2001 rule) was vacated by the U.S. District Court for the District of Wyoming.

Comment: Including a draft FONSI as an appendix to the EA and publishing a proposed rule before the EA's public comment period is complete demonstrates that the NPS predetermined the outcome of this process.

Response: A draft FONSI was included in the EA to allow the public to comment on it. In addition, by publishing the proposed regulation concurrently with the public review of the EA, the public is provided the opportunity to comment and potentially affect in a substantive manner both actions, since no final decisions have been made. This enhances the public's ability to participate in agency decision-making, while at the same time streamlining the process so that it can be completed in time to provide the public with adequate notice prior to the start of the winter use season.

### **East Entrance**

Comment: Helicopter-based operations to control avalanches on Sylvan Pass are expensive, intrusive, and negatively affect soundscapes, wildlife, and visitor experiences. For these reasons, NPS should not consider the use helicopters as a means of avalanche control.

Response: On average, there are 10 avalanche control missions totaling 200 avalanche start attempts on Sylvan Pass per year. The current method of controlling avalanches on Sylvan Pass with a 105mm howitzer is unsafe and other methods such as an avalauncher and hand charges have proven to be ineffective. The current control program is not sufficient to support the necessary levels of safety required to protect employees. Avalanche control personnel currently routinely pass through uncontrolled avalanche zones to reach avalanche control points to perform control work. The possibility of post control avalanches is currently high. The unexploded ordnances associated with the current program require lengthy searches in the summer in an attempt to recover these hazards associated with the program. Approximately 300 unexploded ordnances have not yet been located or recovered.

Roadways in the park are required to be maintained for winter over snow travel for the purposes of visitor enjoyment, as well as administrative use. The U. S. Army gun loan program has its limitations in that the Army can take back the 105mm howitzers at any time. Helicopters are routinely used by private industry and state governments and have proven to be a safe and effective means of avalanche control. The helicopter system is more environmentally compatible than army munitions. There will no longer be shrapnel, spent fuses, or low order detonation rounds and the explosives are environmentally benign (biodegradable latex) compared to those contained in the 105mm rounds.

Comment: Winter access through the East Entrance makes no sense. The operation is both administratively expensive and potentially dangerous for both employees and visitors. Avalanche control work is both hazardous and inappropriate for this operation. The East Entrance serves such a low number of daily users that winter access should be eliminated. Adding helicopter delivery of explosives for avalanche control is a safety improvement to the traditional method of Sylvan Pass avalanche control; however, it is far from risk free and will further increase the cost of the management of winter use in Yellowstone during a period when

budget shortfalls are crippling the ability to properly manage the park.

Response: The NPS agrees that winter access through the East Entrance presents significant challenges due to the avalanche danger on Sylvan Pass. Avalanche control will continue at Sylvan Pass and other locations; however, the program will be modified on a pilot basis during the implementation of this decision to address safety concerns. Helicopter dispensed explosives will be used in addition to the howitzer on Sylvan Pass during at least the first winter of the pilot program. Depending on the success of the helicopter- based program, use of the howitzer may be phased out. Issues related to the long- term cost of maintaining this route for winter access are beyond the scope of the EA.

#### **Miscellaneous**

Comment: Every snowmobile operating within the state of Wyoming is required to display a resident or non- resident user fee sticker. This should be required in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Park.

Response: This issue is beyond the scope of the EA. This state law is not applicable within Yellowstone National Park as a result of its exclusive federal jurisdiction status.

Comment: NPS does not have adequate resources to implement alternative 4.

Response: This issue is beyond the scope of the EA, however the NPS believes sufficient resources are available to fully implement this FONSI.

# APPENDIX A

## TEMPORARY WINTER USE PLAN

### Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway

This plan uses a combination of measures to mitigate impacts on air quality, natural soundscapes, employee and visitor health and safety, wildlife, and visitor experience, while allowing for snowmobile use. Specifically, this plan will allow 720 snowmobiles per day in Yellowstone and 140 snowmobiles in Grand Teton and the Parkway combined, with the requirements that most snowmobiles use Best Available Technology (BAT) and all snowmobilers in Yellowstone travel with a commercial guide. This plan will also open the Firehole Canyon Drive to snowmobiles in the afternoon, while allowing snowcoach visitors the opportunity to view the area in the morning without the presence of snowmobile traffic.

## ACTIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS COMMON TO ALL PARKS

- None of the actions proposed under any alternative preclude closures for safety, resource protection, or other reasons as identified in 36 CFR 1.5 or 2.18.
- Since this plan is only intended to guide winter use management in the parks for an interim period, all three park units would be open to snowmobile and snowcoach use through the winter of 2006–2007 unless new regulations were promulgated.
- Solely for the purposes of describing this plan, the following definitions apply:
  - **Oversnow motor vehicles:** self- propelled vehicles intended for travel on snow, driven by a track or tracks in contact with the snow, and which may be steered by skis or tracks in contact with the snow. This term includes both snowmobiles and snowcoaches.
  - **Snowmobiles:** self- propelled vehicles intended for travel on snow, with a curb weight of not more than 1,000 pounds (450 kg), driven by a track or tracks in contact with the snow, and which may be steered by a ski or skis in contact with the snow. (The EPA definition is: “A vehicle designed to operate outdoors only over snow-covered ground, with a maximum width of 1.5 meters.”)
  - **Snowplanes:** self- propelled vehicles intended for oversnow travel, weighing not more than 1,000 pounds (450 kg), mounted on skis in contact with the snow, and driven by a pusher- propeller.
  - **Snowcoaches:** self- propelled, mass transit vehicles intended for travel on snow, with a curb weight of over 1,000 pounds (450 kg), driven by a track or tracks, steered by skis or tracks, and that have a capacity of at least 8 passengers.
  - **Gateway communities:** the towns of Jackson and Cody, Wyoming, and Gardiner and West Yellowstone, Montana.
- If the EPA adopts standards for any class of oversnow vehicle that are more stringent than the requirements resulting from this NEPA process and decision, the EPA standards will become the NPS standard for all oversnow vehicles entering the parks.

- The plan would continue to implement transition and action plans for accessibility and support the philosophy of universal access in the parks. The NPS will make reasonable efforts to ensure accessibility to buildings, facilities, programs, and services. The NPS will develop strategies to ensure that new and renovated facilities, programs, and services (including those provided by concessionaires) are designed, constructed, or offered in conformance with applicable policies, rules, regulations, and standards, including but not limited to the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards of 1984, and the Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas of 1999. The NPS will evaluate existing buildings and existing and new programs, activities, and services, including telecommunications and media, to determine current accessibility and usability by disabled winter visitors. Action plans to remove barriers will be developed.
- Backcountry non- motorized use will continue to be allowed throughout the parks except where designated otherwise.
- The winter use season will last from mid- December to mid- March.
- The speed limit from the West Entrance to Madison to Old Faithful will be maintained at 35 mph except where set at 25 mph in designated segments along this or other roads to protect wildlife and natural soundscapes, and to enhance visitor safety.
- Motorized travel from 9 P.M. to 7 A.M. will continue to be prohibited except when approved by the superintendent for emergency purposes, or by special permit for necessary travel.
- There are no limits on the number of snowcoaches that may enter the parks each day for the duration of this interim plan. However, snowcoach limits are set through concessions contracts.

## MONITORING

Scientific studies and monitoring of winter visitor use and park resources (including air quality, natural soundscapes, wildlife, employee health and safety, water quality, and visitor experience) will continue. Selected areas of the park, including sections of roads, may be closed to visitor use if scientific studies indicate that human presence or activities have unacceptable effects on wildlife or other park resources that could not otherwise be mitigated. The appropriate level of environmental analysis under NEPA will be completed for all actions as required by Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR parts 1500–1508).

- A one- year notice will be provided before any such closure would be implemented unless immediate closure is deemed necessary to avoid impairment of park resources.
- Due to the temporary nature of this plan, it is impractical to implement the adaptive management provisions of the SEIS and the December 11, 2003, final rule. Most non-emergency changes in park management implemented under the adaptive management framework would have been implemented only after at least one or two years of monitoring, followed by a 6- to 12- month notification and waiting period. The superintendent will continue to have the authority under 36 CFR 1.5 to take emergency actions to protect park resources or values.

## SNOWMOBILE BEST AVAILABLE TECHNOLOGY (BAT)

- All recreational snowmobiles operating in the parks must meet BAT requirements, with the following specific exceptions:

- Snowmobiles starting in the Targhee National Forest and traveling on the Grassy Lake Road to Flagg Ranch would be exempt from BAT requirements. However, these snowmobiles may not travel further into the Parkway unless they meet BAT requirements and any other applicable requirements.
- Snowmobiles used to access public lands adjacent to Grand Teton National Park, or private lands within or adjacent to the park, as designated by 36 CFR 7.22 (g) (16) and (g) (18), are exempt from BAT requirements.
- Snowmobiles operating on the CDST between Grand Teton National Park's East Boundary and Moran Junction.
- The superintendent will maintain a list of approved snowmobile makes, models, and years of manufacture that meet BAT requirements.
- The following emission requirements apply:
- **Snowmobile BAT Air Emissions Requirements**
  - All snowmobiles must achieve a 90% reduction in hydrocarbons and a 70% reduction in carbon monoxide emissions, relative to EPA's baseline emissions assumptions for conventional two- stroke snowmobiles. Specifically, beginning with the 2005 model year (snowmobiles available in fall 2004), all snowmobiles must be certified under 40 CFR 1051 to a Family Emission Limit no greater than 15 g/kW- hr for hydrocarbons and 120 g/kW- hr for carbon monoxide.
  - For 2004 model year snowmobiles, measured emissions levels (official emission results with no deterioration factors applied) must comply with the emission limits specified above.
  - Pre- 2004 model year snowmobiles may be operated only if they have been shown to have emissions that do not exceed the limits specified above.
  - Snowmobiles must be tested on a five- mode engine dynamometer, consistent with the test procedures specified by EPA (40 CFR 1051 and 1065).
- **Snowmobile BAT Sound Requirements**
  - Snowmobiles must operate at or below 73dBA as measured at full throttle according to Society of Automotive Engineers J192 test procedures (revised 1985). Snowmobiles may be tested at any barometric pressure equal to or above 23.4 inches Hg uncorrected (as measured at or near the test site).
- Snowmobiles that have been modified in a manner that may affect air or sound emissions may be prohibited by the superintendent.

## **SNOWCOACH TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS**

- Beginning in the 2005–2006 season, all snowcoaches must meet air emission requirements, which will be the EPA emissions standards in effect when the vehicle or engine was manufactured, whichever is later. This will be enforced by ensuring that all critical emission-related exhaust components are functioning properly. Malfunctioning critical emissions-related components must be replaced with the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) component where possible. If OEM parts are not available, aftermarket parts may be used. In general, catalysts that have exceeded their useful life must be replaced unless the operator can demonstrate the catalyst is functioning properly.

- Because this plan is only intended to guide winter use management for an interim period (up to three winter seasons), sound emissions requirements are not included in this plan. The December 11, 2003, regulation (now vacated), required all snowcoaches used in the parks to meet sound emissions of no greater than 75 dBA beginning in the 2008–2009 season, when measured at 50 feet at 25 mph. Although this requirement is beyond the three- year time frame of this decision, it is mentioned here to let snowcoach operators know NPS expectations regarding possible future requirements for snowcoaches.

## **WATER RESOURCES**

- A focused monitoring program will reduce the uncertainty of impacts from oversnow vehicles, and if necessary indicate best management practices that might be implemented.

## **WILDLIFE, INCLUDING FEDERALLY PROTECTED SPECIES AND SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN**

- At periodic intervals when snow depth warrants, routine plowing operations will include laying back roadside snow banks that could be a barrier to wildlife exiting the road corridor.
- NPS personnel will patrol sensitive resources to ensure compliance with area closures.
- The parks will continue to support the objectives of the Greater Yellowstone Bald Eagle Management Plan, and the eagle population will continue to be monitored to identify and protect nests.
- Monitoring of wolf population will continue.
- Lynx surveys have been completed and there are no plans for further lynx surveys at this time. Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will continue based on information gathered during the survey.
- Assessment of grizzly bear abundance, distribution, and habitat selection, including the location of dens, will continue. The information obtained will assist park managers in protecting important habitats and planning recreational activities that minimize disturbance to bears. Monitoring grizzly bear populations will continue in accordance with the Interagency Grizzly Bear Management Guidelines and the parks' bear management plans.
- Monitoring and protecting trumpeter swan habitats and nests will continue, including the closure of nest sites to public access when warranted.
- Monitoring potential or known winter use conflicts will result in area closures if necessary to protect wildlife habitat.
- Use of groomed, ungroomed, and plowed surfaces by bison and other ungulates will continue to be monitored.

## **CULTURAL RESOURCES**

- If human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony are discovered during construction, provisions outlined in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (25 USC 3001) will be followed.
- Trails and trailheads for skiing and snowshoeing will be sited to avoid adversely impacting known cultural resources, including potential cultural landscapes. In addition, natural materials and colors will be used so that any permanent signs erected will blend into their surroundings.



## ACTIONS SPECIFIC TO YELLOWSTONE

- No more than 11 snowmobiles would be permitted in a group, including the commercial guide's snowmobile.

### **Routes Open to Snowmobile Use through the Winter of 2006–2007**

- Grand Loop Road from its junction with Terrace Springs Drive to Norris Junction.
- Norris Junction to Canyon Junction.
- Grand Loop Road from Norris Junction to Madison Junction.
- West Entrance Road from the park boundary at West Yellowstone to Madison Junction.
- Grand Loop Road from Madison Junction to West Thumb.
- South Entrance Road from the South Entrance to West Thumb.
- Grand Loop Road from West Thumb to its junction with the East Entrance Road.
- East Entrance Road from the East Entrance to its junction with the Grand Loop Road.
- Grand Loop Road from its junction with the East Entrance Road to Canyon Junction.
- South Canyon Rim Drive.
- Lake Butte Road.
- Firehole Canyon Drive, from noon to 9 P.M. only
- In the developed areas of Madison Junction, Old Faithful, Grant Village, Lake, Fishing Bridge, Canyon, Indian Creek, and Norris.

The superintendent may open or close these routes, or portions thereof, for snowmobile travel after taking into consideration the location of wintering wildlife, appropriate snow cover, public safety, and other factors. Notice of such opening or closing will be provided by one or more of the methods listed in 36 CFR 1.7(a).

### **Routes Open to Snowcoach Use through the Winter of 2006- 2007**

- All routes designated for snowmobile use are also open to snowcoach use.
- In addition, the following routes are open to snowcoaches:
  - Firehole Canyon Drive all day.
  - Fountain Flat Road.
  - Virginia Cascades Drive.
  - North Canyon Rim Drive.
  - Riverside Drive.
  - Grand Loop Road from Canyon Junction to the Washburn Hot Springs overlook.

The superintendent may open or close these oversnow routes, or portions thereof, or designate new routes for snowcoach travel after taking into consideration the location of wintering wildlife, appropriate snow cover, public safety, and other factors. Notice of such opening or closing will be provided by one or more of the methods listed in 36 CFR 1.7(a).

### **Guiding Requirements**

- All snowmobilers in Yellowstone would be required to travel with a commercial guide.
- All businesses providing commercial guiding services in the park would be required to have permits authorizing their operation.
- All snowcoaches operating in the park would have to operate in accordance with a concessions contract, incidental business permit, or other NPS- issued permit.

- The number of snowmobiles allowed to enter Yellowstone National Park is limited. Daily snowmobile entry limits are identified in Table 1.

**Table 1. Yellowstone National Park daily snowmobile entry limits.**

Entrance	Commercially Guided Snowmobiles	Unguided Snowmobiles	Total
West Entrance	400	-	400
South Entrance	220	-	220
East Entrance	40	-	40
North Entrance*	30	-	30
Old Faithful*	30	-	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>720</b>

\*Note: Commercially guided snowmobile tours originating at the North Entrance and Old Faithful are currently provided solely by Xanterra Parks and Resorts. Because this concessioner is the sole provider at both of these areas, this FONSI and interim plan allow the daily entry limits between the North Entrance and Old Faithful to be adjusted by the concessioner as necessary, so long as the total number of snowmobiles between the two entrances does not exceed 60. For example, the concessioner could operate 25 snowmobiles at Old Faithful and 35 at the North Entrance if visitor demand warranted it. This will allow the concessioner to respond to changing visitor demand for commercially guided snowmobile tours, thus enhancing visitor service in Yellowstone. It also benefits visitors using other concessioners and entering at other locations, if they choose to stay overnight at Old Faithful or Mammoth Hot Springs (near the North Entrance). These visitors will have greater options for guided snowmobile tours given this change, since the daily entry limits can be adjusted (as long as they don't exceed 60 snowmobiles) to meet changing demand.

- In Yellowstone, the NPS will continue to plow the road from Mammoth to Tower and Tower to the Northeast Entrance (Cooke City) throughout the winter, and support the State of Montana's plowing of U.S. Highway 191 in Yellowstone.
- A designated "non- motorized recreation" route is defined as a marked or otherwise indicated oversnow travel route.
- Sensitive areas within the inner gorge of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and the McMinn Bench bighorn sheep area will continue to be closed to recreational winter use.
- Non- motorized recreational use in wildlife winter ranges and thermal areas will be restricted to designated routes or trails.
- Wildlife- proof winter garbage storage facilities will be constructed in the Old Faithful, Grant, Lake, and Canyon areas.
- Interpretative programs on the unique aspects of the winter environment will be provided at destination areas and warming huts and through guided tours for organized groups on snowcoaches, and interpretive ski and snowshoe tours and programs near areas such as Tower, Canyon, Mammoth, Old Faithful, West Thumb, Madison, and the West Entrance.
- Warming huts will be available for all visitors at Old Faithful, Norris, Madison, Canyon, Fishing Bridge, Mammoth Terraces, and other appropriate sites.
- Avalanche control will continue at Sylvan Pass and other locations, but the program will be modified on a pilot basis during the implementation of the Temporary Winter Use Plan to address some safety concerns. Helicopter- dispensed explosives will be used in addition to the howitzer on Sylvan Pass during at least the first winter of the pilot program. Depending on the success of the helicopter- based program, use of the howitzer may be phased out. Helicopter- dispensed explosives are expected to be used about 10 times per winter,

approximately as frequently as howitzer control. Helicopters are used for avalanche control along highways and in ski areas elsewhere in the United States. Avalanche control on Sylvan Pass may require unscheduled closures of the road to all travel for extended periods of time. Depending on weather and snow conditions, safe travel may not be achieved for several days, regardless of whether howitzers or helicopters are used.

## **ACTIONS SPECIFIC TO GRAND TETON AND THE PARKWAY**

### **Routes Open to Snowmobile Use through the Winter of 2006–2007**

- The Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail (CDST) along U.S. 89/287 from Moran Junction to the north boundary of GTNP.
- The CDST along U.S. Highway 89/287 from the south boundary of the Parkway north to the Snake River Bridge.
- U.S. Highway 89/287 from the Snake River Bridge to the north boundary of the Parkway.
- Grassy Lake Road from Flagg Ranch to the west boundary of the Parkway.
- In the Flagg Ranch developed area.
- The frozen surface of Jackson Lake for purposes of ice fishing by persons with a valid Wyoming state fishing license and the proper fishing gear. Jackson Lake will be open generally from the time that the ice reaches sufficient thickness to make the lake safe for snowmobile use. The season will extend until late March or early April, depending on lake conditions, public safety, and resource concerns.

The superintendent may open or close these routes, or portions thereof, for snowmobile travel and may establish separate zones for motorized and non-motorized use on Jackson Lake, after taking into consideration the location of wintering wildlife, appropriate snow cover, public safety and other factors. Notice of such opening or closing will be provided by one or more of the methods listed in 36 CFR 1.7(a).

### **Routes Open to Snowcoach Use through the Winter of 2006- 2007**

- Along U.S. Highway 89/287 from the Snake River Bridge to the north boundary of the Parkway.

The superintendent may open or close this oversnow route, or portions thereof, or designate new routes for snowcoach travel after taking into consideration the location of wintering wildlife, appropriate snow cover, public safety, and other factors. Notice of such opening or closing will be provided by one or more of the methods listed in 36 CFR 1.7(a).

### **Guiding Requirements**

- Snowmobile guides would not be required in GTNP or the Parkway.
- All snowcoaches operating in the Parkway would have to be operated in accordance with a concessions contract, incidental business permit, or other NPS- issued permit.
- The number of snowmobiles allowed to enter Grand Teton National Park and the Parkway are limited. Daily snowmobile entry limits are identified in Table 2.

**Table 2. Grand Teton and the Parkway daily snowmobile entry limits.**

Entrance	Commercially Guided Snowmobiles	Unguided Snowmobiles	Total
CDST	0	50	50
Grassy Lake Road (Flagg-Ashton Road)	0	50	50
Jackson Lake	0	40	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>140</b>

- In GTNP and the Parkway, the following roads will continue to be plowed:
  - Highway 26/89/287 from the south boundary of GTNP to Moran.
  - Highway 89/287 from Moran to Flagg Ranch.
  - Highway 26/287 from Moran to the east boundary of GTNP.
  - Teton Park Road from Moose Junction to Taggart Lake Trailhead, and from Jackson Lake Junction to Signal Mountain Lodge; the Pacific Creek Road, from Highway 89/287 to the GTNP boundary; from Kelly to the east park boundary; from Gros Ventre Junction to Kelly to Mailbox Corner; the road to the east park boundary at Ditch Creek; the Moose–Wilson Road from the Granite Canyon Entrance to the Granite Canyon Trailhead, and from Moose to at least the Death Canyon Trailhead Road junction.
  
- Current winter closures will remain in effect on the Snake River floodplain, the Buffalo Fork River floodplain, and the Uhl Hill area, Willow Flats, Kelly Hill, Static Peak, Prospectors Mountain, and Mount Hunt.
- Motorized access to inholdings and adjacent public and private lands will continue to be available through a combination of plowed roads for wheeled- vehicles and staging areas for snowmobiles traveling to immediately adjacent lands.
- Reasonable and direct access to adjacent public and private lands, or to privately owned lands within the park with permitted or historical motorized access, will continue via paved and plowed routes or via oversnow routes from GTNP. These routes are:
  - From the parking area at Shadow Mountain directly along the unplowed portion of the road to the east park boundary.
  - Along the unplowed portion of the Ditch Creek Road directly to the east park boundary.
  - The Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail, from the east park boundary to Moran Junction.
  - The unplowed portion of Antelope Flats Road off U.S. 26/89 to private lands in the Craighead Subdivision.
  - The unplowed portion of the Teton Park Road to the piece of land commonly referred to as the “Clark Property”.
  - From the Moose- Wilson Road to the land commonly referred to as the “Barker Property”.
  - From the Moose- Wilson Road to the land commonly referred to as the “Wittimer Property”.

- From the Moose- Wilson Road to those two pieces of land commonly referred to as the “Halpin Properties”.
- From the south end of the plowed sections of the Moose- Wilson Road to that piece of land commonly referred to as the “JY Ranch”.
- From Highway 26/89/187 to those lands commonly referred to as the “Meadows”, the “Circle EW Ranch”, the “Moulton Property”, the “Levinson Property” and the “West Property”. From Cunningham Cabin pullout on U.S. 26/89 near Triangle X to the piece of land commonly referred to as the “Lost Creek Ranch”.
- Interpretive programs on the unique aspects of the winter environment will be provided at destination areas, warming huts and through guided tours.
- Destination and support facilities will continue to be provided at Moose, Triangle X, and Flagg Ranch.

**APPENDIX B**  
**FINAL REPORT**  
**PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**Temporary Winter Use Plans for Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks  
and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway**

Prepared for the National Park Service by North Wind Environmental, Inc., Idaho Falls, Idaho

**CONTRACTOR ACTIVITIES and RESULTS**

The NPS contracted with North Wind, Inc. (North Wind) to collect and analyze the comments. The mechanism was a World Wide Web- based interface through which public comments could be collected electronically. Stakeholders could also send paper comment letters directly to the NPS, and these were forwarded to North Wind for hand processing.

North Wind received 95,006 documents commenting on the EA, including 93,865 in electronic form and 1,141 in hard copy. In accordance with procedures developed for this project, we considered all documents except those submitted anonymously. North Wind analyzed each document and associated the content with one or more text statements that summarize the content of all comments received. The result is a profile for each comment document that reflects its content.

Names of individuals who submitted documents without content or whose content was off scope are included as commentors, but content analysis was not possible.

**SUMMARY TABLES**

The following database queries developed by North Wind provide tabular summaries of the content analysis:

- Number of Commentors and Letters from Each State
- Number of Commentors Who Expressed Each Comment
- Number of Commentors and Letters from "Gateway Communities"
- Number of Form Letter and Non- Form Letter Commentors
- Number of Commentors for Each Type of Form Letter
- Number of Commentors that Responded via the Web or US Mail, for Form Letters and non- Form Letters

All of these tables are provided on the following pages. Additional database queries are possible, depending on the needs of the NPS.

## Number of Commentors and Letters from Each State

State	Number of Letters	Number of Commentors	%Total Commentors
AE	10	8	0.01
AK	229	197	0.24
AL	312	278	0.34
AP	2	2	0.00
AR	309	257	0.31
AZ	2,042	1,789	2.17
CA	20,290	17,403	21.14
CO	4,093	3,669	4.46
CT	1,364	1,205	1.46
DC	235	204	0.25
DE	247	214	0.26
FL	3,863	3,224	3.92
GA	1,522	1,334	1.62
GU	6	4	0.00
HI	549	480	0.58
IA	610	540	0.66
ID	571	499	0.61
IL	3,630	3,074	3.73
IN	1,117	959	1.16
KS	571	459	0.56
KY	593	510	0.62
LA	438	376	0.46
MA	3,148	2,780	3.38
MD	1,606	1,388	1.69
ME	708	628	0.76
MI	2,407	2,065	2.51
MN	1,741	1,565	1.90
MO	1,166	1,000	1.21
MS	127	112	0.14
MT	979	891	1.08
NC	2,070	1,847	2.24
ND	57	49	0.06
NE	269	236	0.29
NH	721	628	0.76
NJ	2,412	2,064	2.51
NM	1,257	1,115	1.35
NV	521	463	0.56

State	Number of Letters	Number of Commentors	%Total Commentors
NY	6,889	5,995	7.28
OH	2,473	2,103	2.55
OK	396	335	0.41
OR	2,871	2,480	3.01
PA	3,316	2,838	3.45
PR	21	19	0.02
RI	358	310	0.38
SC	493	424	0.52
SD	94	79	0.10
TN	1,044	892	1.08
TX	3,747	3,217	3.91
UT	722	619	0.75
VA	2,079	1,809	2.20
VI	24	23	0.03
VT	544	476	0.58
WA	4,247	3,754	4.56
WI	1,750	1,502	1.82
WV	223	191	0.23
WY	432	399	0.48
OTHER	1,491	1,342	1.63
<b>Totals</b>	<b>95,006</b>	<b>82,323</b>	<b>100.00</b>



## Number of Commentors Who Expressed Each Comment

Comment ID	Comment	Number of Distinct Commentors
<b>1</b>	<b>PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE EA</b> <b>Commentors make statements about the purpose and need for the Temporary Winter Use Plans EA.</b>	
1.1	Commentors emphasize that the NPS mission, as articulated in various mandates such as the Organic Act and President Nixon's Executive Order on off-road vehicles, requires NPS to preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for this and future generations. Some commentors add that: · Protecting and preserving the parks is the primary duty of NPS and must take precedence over any public use. · With respect to protection of wildlife in these parks, the EA contradicts public NPS statements, redefining this requirement as an objective that it does not expect to meet.	9,630
1.2	Commentors emphasize that the NPS mission to provide park access for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.	75
1.3	Commentors state that national, not state or local, interests should come first in determining policy for Yellowstone and Grand Teton because they are national parks. Some commentors add that the people of the U.S. own the parks, not the State of Wyoming or gateway communities.	22
1.4	Commentors state that winter use in Yellowstone National Park is a state and/or local issue and should not be overseen or administered by Congress and/or the Federal government.	3
<b>2</b>	<b>ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED</b> <b>Commentors make statements about the alternatives considered in the EA, including the preferred alternative.</b>	
2.1	ALTERNATIVE 1: No Action/Nov 2000/Snowcoach Only (NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE)	24
2.1.1	Commentors state a preference for Alternative 1 and/or for prohibiting snowmobile access to the parks.	80,045
2.1.2	Commentors make statements about Alternative 1.	11
2.1.2.1	Commentors identify various advantages to Alternative 1 including the following: · It offers the best balance of park access and environmental protection. · It will result in less noise and pollution. · It is more considerate of the park experiences of other visitors. · Mass transit is used successfully in other national parks. · Is the only alternative that enables NPS to meet its legal obligations to protect the environment.	74,092
2.1.2.2	Commentors state that NPS is obligated to select Alternative 1 because it is the environmentally preferred alternative.	78,201
2.1.2.3	Commentors object to Alternative 1 because: * Snowcoaches alone cannot provide access to a sufficiently large area of the parks * Snowcoaches do not have sufficient range to cover a full park loop in one day as snowmobiles do. * Eliminating snowmobiling is a blow to freedom. * It will not protect the parks sufficiently.	4
2.2	ALTERNATIVE 2: Limited Snowmobiles/2003-2004	0
2.2.1	Commentors state a preference for Alternative 2.	15
2.2.2	Commentors identify advantages to Alternative 2 such as the following: · This alternative is more appropriate because it reflects the status quo from the winter of 2003-2004.	1

2.2.2.1	Commentors state that the number of snowmobiles allowed under Alternative 2, or an even smaller number, would be in the best interest of park protection.	6
2.3	ALTERNATIVE 3: Balance of Snowcoach/Snowmobiles	0
2.3.1	Commentors state a preference for Alternative 3.	11
2.3.2	Commentors make statements about Alternative 3.	0
2.3.2.1	Commentors object to the portion of Alternative 3 described in the EA that would require snowmobile operators to view a safety presentation if they wished to enter the park without a guide.	1
2.4	ALTERNATIVE 4: Additional Snowmobiles/All Guided (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	0
2.4.1	Commentors state a preference for Alternative 4.	669
2.4.2	Commentors make statements about Alternative 4.	3
2.4.2.1	Commentors object to Alternative 4 as the preferred alternative. Some commentors add that Alternative 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Is not consistent with scientific data in the EA showing adverse impacts on the park and worse impacts than Alternative 1</li> <li>· Lowers standards for park management</li> <li>· Sets a bad precedent for all national parks</li> <li>· Will sacrifice the welfare of the park animals, especially as compared to Alternative 1</li> <li>· Opens NPS up to future lawsuits by employees and visitors whose health has been damaged by snowmobiles.</li> <li>· Is unjustified in departing from the commitment to phase out snowmobiles that the agency made in 2000.</li> </ul>	78,919
2.4.2.2	Commentors object to Alternative 4 because it allows too many snowmobiles into the park.	103
2.4.2.3	Commentors object to Alternative 4 because it does not allow enough snowmobiles into the park. Some commentors add that this number of machines: * Will not provide sufficient data for ongoing studies during the interim period. * May not be enough to meet historic or future visitation demands.	6
2.4.2.4	Commentors identify advantages of Alternative 4, including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· It offers a combination of measures to mitigate impacts while still allowing for snowmobile use.</li> <li>· The number of allowed entries (720) is good starting point for the first year.</li> </ul>	10
2.5	ALTERNATIVE 5: Most Snowmobiles	0
2.5.1	Commentors state a preference for Alternative 5.	309
2.5.2	Commentors make statements about Alternative 5.	0
2.5.2.1	Commentors identify various advantages to Alternative 5 including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 950 snowmobiles is a reasonable limit, allows for better monitoring data, or should be the eventual goal of the temporary winter use plan and the long-term plan (EIS).</li> <li>· It would have the most positive economic value to local businesses.</li> <li>· It provides more time to phase in BAT-compliant machines.</li> <li>· It would allow a mixture of commercial and non-commercial guides and unguided access.</li> </ul>	390
2.5.2.2	Commentors identify various disadvantages to Alternative 5, including the fact that would exempt some unguided snowmobiles from BAT compliance.	3
2.6	Actions/ Assumptions Relating to Alternatives	0
2.6.1	· Monitoring and Adaptive Management	0
2.6.1.1	Commentors support monitoring and/or adaptive management as a means of managing temporary winter use. Some commentors add that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The EA should allow for adaptive management during the interim period.</li> <li>· NPS should incorporate Adaptive Management Thresholds into temporary winter use planning and increase snowmobile entries if appropriate.</li> <li>· NPS should provide an abbreviated comment period for any emergency closures based on impairment findings</li> </ul>	14

2.6.1.2	Commentors state that data in the EA show that the preferred alternative will produce impacts that exceed adaptive management thresholds. Commentors add that Alternative 4 also violates public promises by NPS and the Secretary of the Interior to use adaptive management to tighten restrictions on snowmobile use if necessary to protect park resources and values.	2
2.6.2	· Snowmobile Best Available Technology (BAT)	0
2.6.2.1	Commentors support use of BAT as part of temporary winter use, some without any exceptions. Other commentors support BAT requirements in Yellowstone, but request various exemptions for machines operating on certain routes: * The Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail. * Grand Teton Park. * Jackson Lake, for ice fishing. * From both ends of the Grassy Lake Road.	507
2.6.2.2	Commentors object to use of BAT as part of the temporary winter use plan. Some commentors add that: · BAT machines do not provide sufficient protection for park resources. · BAT does not establish explicit emission standards for snowmobile makers to meet as the EPA mobile sources program does.	38
2.6.2.3	Commentors object to use of BAT as part of the temporary winter use plan because compliant snowmobiles are not readily available to consumers.	8
2.6.2.4	Commentors make various suggestions about how emission and sound testing for BAT snowmobiles should be conducted.	3
2.6.3	· Snowcoach BAT Requirements	0
2.6.3.1	Commentors recommend use of snowcoaches that are BAT-compliant. Some commentors add that historic snowcoaches should not be exempted from BAT requirements.	44
2.6.4	· Daily Entry Limits	0
2.6.4.1	Commentors object to limits on snowmobiles in the park. Some commentors add that · There is no need for limits · Limits for various entrances make it difficult to obtain access on preferred dates.	65
2.6.4.2	Commentors support snowmobile-free or snowmobile-reduced days as part of the temporary winter use plans. This would enable NPS to allow more entries during weekends.	6
2.6.4.3	Commentors state general support for those alternatives that allow continued limited access by snowmobiles.	435
2.6.4.4	Commentors express support for those alternatives that strictly limit snowmobile access to the parks.	219
2.6.5	· Guide Requirements	0
2.6.5.1	Commentors support alternatives that require guided snowmobile access as part of the temporary winter use plan. Some commentors add that * Unguided access has not worked because too many snowmobilers break park rules (such as speed limits, alcohol restrictions, or route restrictions) if unguided. * NPS should reduce group size to promote better compliance.	390
2.6.5.1.1	Commentors state that the temporary winter use plan should require guides in Grand Teton National Park as well as Yellowstone.	2

2.6.5.2	Commentors object to alternatives that require guides. Some commentors add that guiding requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Are unreasonable and burdensome; most snowmobilers are responsible and follow park rules, especially if properly trained.</li> <li>· Reduce visitation for various reasons including the fact that private snowmobilers will not transfer their business to commercially guided tours.</li> <li>· Would not be required if rules were properly enforced by Park Rangers, who are paid to perform this duty</li> <li>· Should be deleted because visitors should not have to subsidize private businesses in order to enjoy federal lands.</li> <li>· Do not eliminate enforcement problems.</li> <li>· Force visitors to tour the park with strangers.</li> </ul>	103
2.6.5.2.1	Commentors request that NPS increase the daily percentage of unguided or noncommercially guided snowmobiles entries into the parks or allow some percentage of unguided/noncommercially guided access for various alternatives. Some commentors request the increase throughout the interim period, while others request that it begin in the second year to provide comparison data. Some commentors add that: * For access, one group member would have to be trained to act as guide (Commentors representing the State of Wyoming and the Wyoming State Snowmobile Assn. offer help with training for snowmobile guides.) * Trained, noncommercial guides would have to be responsible for the behavior of all members of the group.	676
2.6.5.3	Commentors object to alternatives that require guides because they do not provide enough protection for park resources. Some commentors add that: * It will be impossible to limit snowmobiles to commercially guided operations or to supervise commercial guides. * Improperly trained guides allow visitors to break the rules.	2
2.6.6	· Routes	0
2.6.6.1	Commentors support allowing snowmobile use and/or commercially guided groups on the Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail and the Grassy Lake Road, as well as snowmobile access to Jackson Lake for fishing. Some commentors add that allowing commercially guided groups would provide more opportunity for the public to access these areas.	408
2.6.6.2	Commentors support alternatives that would allow snowmobile access to various routes including historically groomed side roads and/or specific sites such as Firehole Canyon, North Canyon Rim Drive and Riverside Drive. One commentor, representing the State of Wyoming, requests access to a previous stakeholder survey used to support route closures.	421
2.6.6.3	Commentors support route restrictions as a means of protecting the parks.	17
2.7	Other Alternatives	0
2.7.1	Commentors support an alternative that would ban all snowmobiles and snowcoaches, with the exception of emergency and administrative vehicles. Some commentors add that such an alternative would enable NPS to evaluate the result of experimental trail closures.	27
2.7.2	Commentors recommend adding an alternative that would allow larger numbers of snowmobiles and more unguided access in order to provide more flexibility in terms of long-term planning for winter use.	5
2.7.3	Commentors support an alternative whereby horses would provide winter transportation within the parks.	4
2.7.4	Commentors recommend a compromise alternative that takes advantage of improvements in technology.	3
2.7.5	Commentors recommend an alternative that would have all roads plowed year-round throughout the parks.	1
<b>3</b>	<b>AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT</b> <b>Commentors make statements regarding the affected environment described in the EA.</b>	
3.1	Impact Topics Addressed	0

3.2	Impact Topics Dismissed	0
<b>4</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES</b> <b>Commentors make statements about the potential impacts of the proposed action and/or alternatives on the affected environment.</b>	
4.1	Air Quality and Air Quality-Related Values	1
4.1.1	Commentors state that alternatives that allow snowmobile access have adverse impacts on air quality.	78,765
4.1.2	Commentors deny that alternatives that allow snowmobile access have adverse impacts on air quality.	21
4.2	Health and Safety	0
4.2.1	Commentors state that alternatives that allow snowmobile access have adverse impacts on the health and safety of visitors and/or park employees. Some commentors add that NPS must distribute ear plugs to staff to protect their hearing.	78,556
4.2.2	Commentors object to the proposal to use helicopters to provide avalanche control due to the resulting environmental impacts.	2
4.2.3	Commentors express concerns about the safety and feasibility of snowcoach use in the parks.	1
4.3	Natural Soundscapes	0
4.3.1	Commentors state that alternatives that allow snowmobile access have adverse impacts on natural soundscapes.	78,832
4.4	Socioeconomics	0
4.4.1	Commentors maintain that protecting the environmental health of the parks will help ensure the long-term economic success of gateway communities.	34
4.4.2	Commentors say that socioeconomic concerns should not be the priority in establishing park policy. Some commentors add that: * NPS is not responsible for the economic well being of gateway communities or businesses * A few people should not be allowed to exploit the parks for personal profit.	70,168
4.4.3	Commentors maintain that snowmobiling has positive socioeconomic impacts on park communities and restricting use damages them economically. Some commentors support a balanced approach whereby visitors can use snowmobiles while maintaining the parks value as a wildlife habitat	60
4.5	Visitor Access and Circulation	0
4.5.1	Commentors state that alternatives that prohibit unguided access will have negative impacts on visitation or visitor circulation.	11
4.5.2	Commentors recommend changes in allotments of snowmobile entries at various park entrances to reduce negative impacts on visitation.	1
4.6	Visitor Experience	0
4.6.1	Commentors state that alternatives that allow snowmobile access have adverse impacts on visitor experience.	78,584
4.6.2	Commentors state that alternatives that allow snowmobile access enhance visitor experience.	10
4.7	Wildlife, including Bison and Elk	0
4.7.1	Commentors state that alternatives that allow snowmobile access have adverse impacts on wildlife (flora/fauna).	78,636
4.7.2	Commentors deny that alternatives that allow snowmobile access have adverse impacts on wildlife (flora/fauna).	55
4.8	Adjacent Lands, Including Cumulative Impacts to Adjacent Lands	0
4.8.1	Commentors state that winter use plans for the parks have impacts on their county that have not been adequately analyzed.	2
4.9	Impairment of Park Resources and Values	0

4.9.1	Commentors state that certain activities and/or alternatives would harm the integrity of park resources or values. Some commentors add that claims by NPS that excess emissions do not constitute an impairment insult the public's intelligence.	7,060
4.9.2	Commentors deny that certain activities and/or alternatives would harm the integrity of park resources or values. Some commentors add that: · The EA acknowledges that none of the alternatives would impair park resources and values and would offer an improvement over historical conditions.	11
4.10	Cumulative Impacts	9
4.11	Adverse Effects That Cannot Be Avoided	8
4.12	Irreversible/Irretrievable Commitment of Resources	5
4.13	Commentors state that snowmobile access will result in generally adverse impacts on the environment.	78,436
<b>5</b>	<b>MITIGATION MEASURES</b> <b>Commentors make statements about potential measures for mitigating the impacts of actions on the affected environment.</b>	
5.1	Commentors recommend that NPS mitigate impacts by other means of controlling access, such as: · Limiting the number of snowmobile entries per hour into the parks. · Instituting a lottery to draw for snowmobile privileges. · Limiting snowmobile access to specific days.	7
5.1.1	Commentors object to use of restricted hours of operation or timed entry as a mitigation measure.	2
5.2	Commentors recommend streamlining entrance of snowmobiles by prepurchasing passes and eliminating ranger check of passes.	2
5.3	Commentors recommend increasing booths and staff at other entrances for various reasons: · To reduce air impacts at the West Gate entrance · To distribute entries across the parks.	28
5.4	Commentors recommend various educational and/or training programs, including programs for noncommercial guides. Some commentors also recommend: · Educating visitors about snowmobile operation to reduce the adverse impacts that result from improper use. · Training individuals during the upcoming season to act as noncommercial guides in future years. · Educating citizens to appreciate the natural parks	11
5.5	Commentors object to daily limits as a mitigation measure because they will not address the growth in winter visitation that will occur in coming years.	1
<b>6</b>	<b>PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT</b> <b>Commentors make statements about opportunities for public involvement in the EA or previous NEPA documents related to winter use of the parks.</b>	
6.1	Commentors make statements about the process of scoping for the EA	1
6.2	Other Public Involvement: Commentors make statements about other public involvement issues such as: · Desire to participate in the upcoming EIS for winter-use planning. · Importance of local/county/state participation in the EA. · Lack of opportunity of local/county/state entities to participate in planning for the EA. · Lack of documentation of an Endangered Species Act consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Some commentors add that they wish to incorporate by reference their comments on various earlier planning documents, in light of the fact that NPS states that the EA tiers from these documents.	8
6.3	Stakeholder Preference: Commentors state that the American public overwhelmingly objects to snowmobile access to the parks as evidenced by past public comment opportunities.	260

6.3.1	Commentors state that NPS and/or the Bush administration has ignored public preferences about winter use of the parks as expressed in many other comment opportunities. Some commentors add that NPS and/or the Bush administration * Is undemocratic because it is ignoring overwhelming public preferences. * Seems to think it is not accountable to the American people for its actions. * Has not used the content of public comment accurately to frame the debate about winter use.	7,187
6.4	Commentors state that the American public overwhelmingly objects to a ban on snowmobiles in the parts, but that they are too busy to submit public comments.	8
6.5	Commentors state that NPS needs to do a better job of publicizing opportunities for public comment, especially on the NPS website, and to enable comment through interest group websites.	1
<b>7</b>	<b>OTHER ISSUES</b> <b>Commentors identify other issues and/or concerns related to the EA, proposed actions, and/or alternatives.</b>	
7.1	Commentors question the value of the EA for one or more of the following reasons: · The EA is unnecessary; NPS does not need more data to document the impacts of snowmobile/snowcoach travel on the parks. · It is a waste of government funds · The short time frame compromised the quality of the study · NPS is going to disregard public opinion and the results of this study anyway like it has all the others. · Data and analyses in the EA do not support selection of Alternative 4 as the preferred alternative. · The EA provides no new data that can justify snowmobile use as compatible with the Organic Act; previous studies concluded that it was not compatible.	30
7.2	Commentors object to undue influence from various individuals or organizations.	28
7.2.1	Powerful politicians and/or corporations, because they put their own interests ahead of those of the parks and/or protection of the environment. Some commentors add that · Bush administration policies do not sufficiently protect the environment. · Park employees do not support the administration's policies but are afraid to speak out. · This choice is either being forced on NPS from a political level or represents a tragic failure of agency leadership. · Politicians are benefiting a special interest at the public's expense.	72,713
7.2.2	Interest groups (because they want to force their personal values on others and/or put forth bad data to support their points of view).	96
7.2.3	Nonlocals (because local populations must experience most of the impacts of park policies).	2
7.2.4	Those interested primarily in snowmobiling and/or local residents (because the parks belong to all Americans, not just communities and constituencies with narrow agendas).	78,444
7.3	Commentors state that Yellowstone/Grand Teton are unique; snowmobiles can be used many other places.	454
7.4	Commentors make statements about the kinds of activities that are suited for winter use in the parks.	7
7.4.1	Commentors support activities such as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in the park. Some commentors add that · Nonmotorized activities are more responsible forms of recreation and preserve park resources. · These activities have positive rather than negative health impacts.	117
7.4.2	Commentors favor snowmobiling as a park activity for various reasons including: * It supports family values. * The positives outweigh the negatives. * It is an important social activity for many people.	13
7.4.3	Commentors state that the fun of winter snowmobiling in Yellowstone is outweighed by the damage it causes to the parks and other visitors.	5

7.5	Commentors make statement about park fees or funding. Some commentors add that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· NPS does not receive sufficient funding from Congress or the administration to operate the parks.</li> <li>· The government should increase park fees and/or funding. Some commentors add that this is needed to cover increased winter use activities.</li> <li>· NPS should use high entrance fees (such as \$100 per machine) to limit snowmobile entries.</li> <li>· NPS should enforce stiff fines on snowmobile violators (up to \$10,000 or suspension of snowmobiling privileges).</li> <li>· The government should fund research into technologies that reduce snowmobile emissions.</li> </ul>	20
7.6	Commentors state that visitors with special needs require snowmobiles to access the park.	6
7.7	Commentors state that NPS does not have the resources to enforce winter use activities.	9
7.8	Commentors state that snowmobiling wastes energy resources.	18
7.9	Commentors state that, in choosing continued snowmobile use, NPS is ignoring its own scientific studies showing negative environmental impacts from snowmobile operations in the parks.	8,289
7.10	One commentor, representing the State of Wyoming, requests that NPS recognize in the parks a Wyoming requirement that all snowmobiles operating in the state display a use-fee sticker.	1
<b>8</b>	<b>OFF-SCOPE ISSUES</b> <b>Commentors make statements about issues that the EA identifies as outside its scope.</b>	
8.1	Privatization of park facilities	1
8.2	Wildlife carrying capacities	2
8.3	Multiple uses of national park lands	2
8.4	Economic effects on park concessions. Some commentors add that the EA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Fails to consider the economic viability or sustainability of concessioners.</li> </ul>	258
8.5	NEPA procedures. Some commentors specify that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· NPS has never completed appropriate NEPA documentation to authorize road grooming in the parks.</li> <li>· The EA is invalid and illegal because it fails to evaluate the environmental impacts of road packing on bison and other wildlife.</li> </ul>	124
8.6	NPS policies (including off-road vehicle use in general). Some commentors add that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· NPS should manage the parks through restoration of natural conditions and natural regulation--as mandated by federal law and NPS policies.</li> </ul>	856
8.7	Snowplanes on Jackson Lake	395
8.8	Bison use of groomed roads. Some commentors add that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Failure to address the impacts of road grooming is a violation of federal law.</li> <li>· NPS has avoided engaging in any substantive analysis of or making any final decision on the impacts of road grooming.</li> <li>· Road grooming has adverse impacts on park ecosystems, as demonstrated by scientific data.</li> <li>· NPS has based actions on flawed data provided by a scientist with a clear conflict-of-interest.</li> <li>· Snowmobile and snowcoach use in the parks must be prohibited because they both require groomed trails.</li> <li>· NPS should cease grooming pending a comprehensive review of environmental impacts.</li> <li>* A ban on road grooming is inappropriate.</li> </ul>	1,233
8.9	Summer impacts, which, some commentors state, are much worse than the impacts of winter use.	70
8.10	Impacts unrelated to oversnow motorized use (e.g., wheeled vehicles, plowed roads, and nonmotorized recreation).	4
8.11	Issues related to RS 2477 or road jurisdiction.	1
8.12	Fuel availability in the parks during the winter season.	1
<b>9</b>	<b>ACCURACY OF INFORMATION IN THE EA</b> <b>Commentors question the accuracy of Information presented in the EA.</b>	



9.1	Commentors state various concerns about the adequacy of data relating to sound and/or emissions impacts including: · The accuracy of data regarding impacts from snowmobiles and snowcoaches as well as BAT snowmobiles and snowcoaches. · Lack of quantitative data about soundscape impacts.	5
9.2	Commentors question the data related to impacts of snowmobiles on wildlife. Some commentors add that · Scientific evidence shows that foot and ski traffic are more harmful to animals. · The data in the EA is insufficient to differentiate the impacts of Alternative 5. · The EA lacks data regarding the impacts of severe winters.	46
9.3	Commentors question the validity of data relating to the impacts of guided access.	1
9.4	Commentors question the lack of data relating to environmental justice.	2
9.5	Commentors state that data incorporated by reference into the EA from earlier EISs is flawed and/or invalid and should not be the basis for decisions.	3
<b>10</b>	<b>ADEQUACY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS</b> <b>Commentors question the adequacy of environmental analysis in the EA.</b>	
10.1	Commentors question the adequacy of the socioeconomic analysis presented in the EA. Some commentors specify that: · It is not supported by some associated data, such as projections of future visitation and/or employment levels. · Local impacts may have been marginalized by diluting them within a regional analysis. · Assumptions relating to analysis of displacement impacts on surrounding lands may be flawed.	2
10.2	Commentors state that the EA may promote even more controversy because the analyses are unclear and/or subjective.	2
10.3	Commentors state that the analysis in the EA relating to impacts of guides is inadequate and biased.	2
10.4	Commentors question the analysis of data related to impacts on soundscapes. Some commentors add that the questionable analysis may reflect an NPS bias toward commercially guided access.	3
10.5	Commentors question the adequacy of analyses of air impacts in the EA, including visibility, effects from inversions, and cumulative impacts. Some commentors add that the analyses appear to be based on faulty assumptions related to the number of daily snowcoach entries.	4
10.6	Commentors question the adequacy of the analysis of socioeconomic and/or cumulative socioeconomic impacts. Some commentors add that:  * The analysis is skewed to provide support for the preferred alternative. * The analysis is flawed because it is based on surveys directed to the wrong audience and omits new data about the growth in nonsnowmobile visitation. * NPS should provide evidence of compliance with the Regulatory Flexibility Act.	252
10.7	Commentors state that the EA fails to analyze the elevated risk that individuals susceptible to health and safety impacts would face under Alternative 4 as well as elevated risks to all visitors from cumulative impacts, or to mention any plans to advise the public about exposure to these risks.	2
10.8	A commentor (the State of Montana) adds that it has concerns about NPS tiering from earlier NEPA documents because the State's position is that these documents were promulgated in violation of NEPA and the Administrative Procedures Act.	1
10.9	A commentor states that the No Action alternative is incorrect. The EA should be modified to identify management under the duly promulgated 1983 regulations as the No Action alternative.	1
<b>11</b>	<b>NEW INFORMATION</b> <b>Commentors provide information that could cause changes or revisions in the proposed action.</b>	
11.1	Commentors (State of Idaho representatives) provide information about snowmobile registration data in eastern Idaho that the EA should consider.	1

<b>12</b>	<b>EDITORIAL COMMENTS</b> <b>Commentors suggest editorial changes in the EA.</b>	
12.1	Commentors recommend that NPS revise various tables including: * Tables 22-25 so that the data is arranged in a consistent chronological order. * Table 1, to provide a better comparison of alternatives in terms of total access to the parks.	2
12.2	The State of Montana requests a number of corrections and editorial revisions to the EA.	1
12.3	The State of Idaho requests a number of corrections and editorial revisions to the EA.	1
12.4	The commentor (US EPA Region 8) requests a number of corrections and editorial revisions to the EA.	1
<b>13</b>	<b>FONSI</b> <b>Commentors make statements about the Finding of No Significant Impact (Appendix D).</b>	
13.1	Commentors object to the Finding of No Significant Impact. Some commentors add that · The FONSI is economically or politically motivated. · The FONSI is invalid because the EA identifies adverse impacts to park resources and values (air and noise pollution that exceed protective thresholds and threaten visitor and employee health are inherently significant impacts).	20
<b>14</b>	<b>PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS</b> <b>Commentors cite personal observations as part of their comment letter.</b>	
14.1	Commentors make observations based on personal experiences in the national parks and/or out of doors.	958
14.2	Commentors state that the outcome of the snowmobile use issue will affect their decision to visit the parks in the future.	103
14.3	Commentors commend NPS for various actions including: · The quality of the EA. Some commentors state that the EA provides new and valuable information to support the decision-making process · Efforts to protect the national parks · Improving mass transit access to national parks.	6,721
<b>Total Number of Comments Generated from Distinct Commentors:</b>		<b>1,054,070</b>

## Number of Commentors from "Gateway Communities"

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State	City	Number of Commentors	Number of Letters
ID	Ashton	1	1
ID	Island Park	5	6
MT	Big Sky	3	3
MT	Cooke City	0	0
MT	Gardiner	4	6
MT	West Yellowstone	253	262
WY	Cody	20	20
WY	Jackson	109	119
WY	Moran	8	8
WY	Pahaska Tepee	0	0
<b>Totals</b>		<b>403</b>	<b>425</b>

## Number of Form Letter and Non-Form Letter Commentors

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<b>Letter Type</b>	<b>Number of Commentors</b>
Form Letters	76,648
Non-Form Letters	6,555
<b>Totals</b>	<b>83,203</b>

Note:

- \* Some commentors sent more than one kind of form letter as well as one or more non-form letters, so count will not match count of form letters by state.

## Number of Commentors for Each Type of Form Letter

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Letter Type	Number of Commentors
Non-Form Letter	6,555
FL-1 (950 Snowmobiles)	25
FL-2 (Treasures 1)	6,480
FL-3 (Treasures 2)	43
FL-4 (Treasures Short)	5
FL-5 (Treasures/You)	4
FL-6 (Do Not Weaken Restrictions)	71
FL-7 (Temporary/Long-term)	348
FL-8 (Dangerous Precedent 1)	22
FL-9 (Dangerous Precedent 2)	9
FL-10 (Do Not Allow Snowmobiles)	1,313
FL-11 (Herd of Buffalo)	1
FL-12 (Fund for Animals/Grooming 1)	647
FL-13 (Fund for Animals/Grooming 2)	19
FL-14 (Takeover)	1
FL-15 (Unguided Access)	9
FL-16 (NRDC 1)	8,794
FL-17 (NRDC 2)	65,111
FL-18 (Bluewater/Mass Transit)	775
FL-19 (Bluewater/Mass Transit 2)	15
FL-20 (Fund for Animals/Grooming 3)	29
FL-21 (Fund for Animals/Grooming 4)	24
FL-22 (West Yellowstone Businesses)	194
<b>Total:</b>	<b>90,494</b>

Note:

- \* Some commentors sent more than one kind of form letter as well as one or more non-form letters, so count will not match count of form letters by state.
- \* FL-11 and FL-14 each had multiple letters, but from only one commentor.

**Number of Commentors That Responded via the Web or US Mail, for Form Letters and Non-Form Letters \***

<b>Letter Type</b>	<b>US Mail</b>	<b>Web</b>	<b>Number of Commentors</b>
non-Form Letter	388	6,185	6,573
FL-1 (950 Snowmobiles)	14	11	25
FL-2 (Treasures 1)	12	6,470	6,482
FL-3 (Treasures 2)	0	43	43
FL-4 (Treasures Short)	0	5	5
FL-5 (Treasures/You)	0	4	4
FL-6 (Do Not Weaken Restrictions)	68	3	71
FL-7 (Temporary/Long-term)	342	6	348
FL-8 (Dangerous Precedent 1)	20	2	22
FL-9 (Dangerous Precedent 2)	3	6	9
FL-10 (Do Not Allow Snowmobiles)	0	1,313	1,313
FL-11 (Herd of Buffalo)	0	1	1
FL-12 (Fund for Animals/Grooming 1)	3	644	647
FL-13 (Fund for Animals/Grooming 2)	0	19	19
FL-14 (Takeover)	0	1	1
FL-15 (Unguided Access)	0	9	9
FL-16 (NRDC 1)	0	8,794	8,794
FL-17 (NRDC 2)	0	65,111	65,111
FL-18 (Bluewater/Mass Transit)	0	775	775
FL-19 (Bluewater/Mass Transit 2)	0	15	15
FL-20 (Fund for Animals/Grooming 3)	29	0	29
FL-21 (Fund for Animals/Grooming 4)	24	0	24
FL-22 (West Yellowstone Businesses)	194	0	194
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,097</b>	<b>89,417</b>	<b>90,514</b>

Note:

- \* Some commentors sent in a hardcopy letter AND submitted a web letter. Therefore, they would get counted twice in this report.
- \* FL-11 and FL-14 each had multiple letters, but from only one commentor.