

PRESS RELEASE FROM THE SYLVAN PASS STUDY GROUP

February 1, 2008

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The Sylvan Pass Study Group met Monday (January 28) and Tuesday (January 29) 2008, to explore reasonable avalanche and access mitigation safety measures and costs to determine how to provide continued snowmobile and snowcoach motorized oversnow access to Yellowstone National Park through the East Gate via Sylvan Pass in the winter uses seasons beyond 2007-2008.

The group reviewed the history of decisions and activities regarding winter use in Yellowstone National Park and heard presentations on the geography of Sylvan Pass, what the park does to inform visitation to the park, how the city of Cody encourages tourism to their community and how they view the impact on their economy due to winter use within the park, how the park conducts avalanche forecasting, and what are best approaches to avalanche safety mitigation.

Presenters included:

- Dale Reinhart, a landscape architect, and Craig Dewey, from the Federal Highway Administration, have done considerable work on the road through Sylvan Pass and spoke on the unique geography of the Pass;
- Maura Longden, a ranger in the park, spoke on how the park does avalanche forecasting and mitigation;
- John Lounsbury, a retired former employee from the park, spoke on the history and practices of avalanche safety mitigation in the park; and
- Don Bachman, Bob Comey, and Ted Wells – all people with extensive avalanche safety backgrounds – presented information regarding avalanche behavior and control measures. Don Bachman has spent most of the last 48 years as a snow safety specialist and has avalanche forecasting and control experience on several highway corridors. Bob Comey is Director of the Bridger-Teton National Forest Avalanche Center and lead forecaster at the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort. Ted Wells is an engineer with the Wyoming Department of Transportation and responsible for avalanche safety mitigation.

The Sylvan Pass Study group concluded that there was “significant learning as a result of high quality, informative presentations that reflected a range of opinions and experiences.”

The group will meet next on March 13, 2008.