

**Decision Notice &
Finding of No Significant Impact
Tony Grove - Franklin Basin Winter Recreation**

USDA Forest Service
Logan Ranger District, Wasatch-Cache National Forest
Cache County, Utah

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

This Decision Notice documents the Forest Service’s decision regarding management of motorized and non-motorized recreation use in the Tony Grove/Franklin Basin area of the Logan Ranger District of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest.

Utah boasts the “greatest snow on earth” and the Logan Canyon area showcases that snow. For decades local residents and visitors have ventured into the Tony Grove/Franklin Basin area to ski, snowmobile, and simply enjoy the beauty of the mountains.

Over time, conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreationists have developed. Generally speaking, from the motorized user’s perspective, their use is less affected by the presence of the non-motorized user. However, non-motorized users feel the quality of their experience is compromised by motorized use (e.g. sound, smell, and safety). Some feel that separating uses is the best way to address conflicts between users, while others feel this would only drive the polarized user groups further apart, diminishing the opportunity to resolve conflicts. Some motorized users feel separation of uses may result in higher densities of motorized users in the areas open to them. The Forest Service responded to these growing conflicts and concerns on the Logan Ranger District in the 2003 Revised Forest Plan and its accompanying environmental impact statement. Still the conflict continues.

The 2003 Revised Forest Plan Record of Decision separated motorized and non-motorized use in the Tony Grove area to the Franklin Basin road. Prior to the 2003 decision the entire area was open to motorized use and both motorized and non-motorized recreationists co-existed in the area. Both the motorized and non-motorized communities appealed the Forest Plan decision, each not satisfied with the outcome.

From the time of the decision revising the Forest Plan in March of 2003 through the summer of 2006, people who were interested in winter recreation in Logan Canyon

worked through several processes with the Forest Service to implement direction in the Revised Forest Plan. The Forest Plan generally depicted areas that were open and closed to winter motorized use in the Tony Grove/Franklin Basin area. The Forest Service met with the public to precisely define boundaries of these motorized and non-motorized winter areas and travel routes. However, the boundaries identified through this process were controversial because some people believed the final lines deviated too much from the areas depicted in the Revised Forest Plan, and therefore believed the boundaries were inconsistent with the Forest Plan.

Accordingly, the Forest Service agreed to complete an environmental analysis to evaluate the proposed boundaries for the areas depicted in the Revised Forest Plan, and determine if the Revised Forest Plan would need to be amended for the boundaries that were to be established. The proposed action therefore includes establishment of the boundaries for the winter motorized area designations with the proposal to construct an over-the-snow connector trail in the Tony Grove/Franklin Basin area.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Logan District Ranger mailed two scoping letters, the first on November 1, 2005 to 133 individuals and organizations and the second on April 14, 2006 to 227 individuals and organizations. The District received 96 responses to the first scoping letter and 170 responses to the second. A preliminary EA and accompanying maps were posted on the Wasatch-Cache National Forest website on September 29, 2006. Notification of the availability of the preliminary EA for review and comment was sent by mail/email to 349 individuals and organizations that same day. A Legal Notice was posted in the Salt Lake Tribune (newspaper of record) on September 30, 2006, beginning the 30-day comment period. Nine individuals requested hardcopies, either in person or by mail. The District received 582 letters commenting on the preliminary EA.

Separation of winter motorized and non-motorized use on the Logan Ranger District has proven to be a controversial proposal and a full range of public input was received as part of the current EA process. Many who commented simply expressed a preference or “vote” for a particular alternative presented in the preliminary EA. Others created alternatives to examine and provided suggestions for mixed use in the area. While others had concerns with resource issues; wildlife, water quality, and air quality. But the majority of comments related to the safety and social issues associated with snowmobiles and skiers using the same area. A detailed listing of public comments, along with an agency response is included in Appendix B of the Environmental Assessment. The “Decision and Rationale” section of this decision

notice addresses the issues that were central to the Forest Service decision regarding the current proposal.

DECISION AND RATIONALE

After considerable review, deliberation and discussion with Forest Service staff at various levels, my decision is to implement Alternative 1B with one addition. The addition (plus) is to include motorized access in the “big curve” area described in Alternative 1A. For purposes of the decision notice I have called the selected alternative 1B+. The map of Alternative 1B+ is attached. If any language in this decision notice or in the Environmental Assessment conflicts with the “Alternative Map 1B+”, the map takes precedence over the language.

I believe that Alternative 1B+ provides the best, overall recreational experience for both the winter motorized and non-motorized visitor. The decision strives to balance the winter recreation experience for all visitors and considers the important issues: available access, types of terrain, untracked powder, crowding, providing for safety, manageability of boundaries, and wildlife issues. I also considered all the work that both motorized and non-motorized leaders put forward to create the best solution for management on the ground.

Summary of the Decision Elements:

1. Two areas are closed to motorized use- the Bunchgrass and Hell’s Kitchen areas.
2. No snow trail is created through the Bunchgrass closure.
3. A snow trail is signed, north of the Bunchgrass closure, starting at White Pine Creek to the Franklin Basin parking area. This trail is not groomed
4. No change in grooming the Tony Grove Road and Franklin Basin Road.
5. Two corridors are identified for access from private land through the crucial moose winter habitat.
6. The “big curve” area is open to motorized use.
7. Mitigation, including signage for mixed use is included in this decision.

Alternative 1B+ creates two areas, Bunchgrass and Hell’s Kitchen, for non-motorized, backcountry skiing opportunities. There is no snow trail (groomed or ungroomed) in either one of the **closed** areas. The area to the north of the Bunchgrass closure and south of the Hell’s Kitchen closure would be open to motorized use.

Also, the area from Blind Hollow through the lower part of the Tony Grove drainage and the majority of the Bunchgrass drainage is closed to motorized use. This area was opened to motorized use under the Revised Forest Plan, 2003 decision. The groomed snow trail on Tony Grove Road remains open to motorized use to access the higher country at and above Tony Grove Lake, but travel off of the trail is not allowed until the first ridge before Tony Grove Creek crosses the road (approximately 2.5 miles, see map). I have included **additional mitigation**; this snow trail will be signed for mixed-use in order to make all visitors aware of potential machine and pedestrian traffic, as well as the Franklin Basin road, outside the parking area. For safety, the motorized shortcut along Tony Grove Creek and west of the road is still open for motorized travel as long as adequate snow cover is present. The area open to motorized use follows the ridgeline traveling almost due west along the ridge, just north of the junction of the Coldwater Lake and Bear Hollow trails. The boundary follows just below the meadow above Coldwater Spring, south of the large sinkhole and then due west below the 8950' contour to the eastern boundary of the Mount Naomi Wilderness. All of the large bowls above Tony Grove Lake (Cornice Ridge, Naomi Peak) White Pine Lake (Mount Gog, Mount Magog) and Steam Mill Lake remain open to motorized and non-motorized use.

Non-motorized winter recreation is also provided for in the Hell's Kitchen drainage. The area closed to motorized use extends east from the ridges formed by Steam Mill Peak and the three peaks to the north and terminates at the junction of two intermittent streams west of Franklin Basin Road and the beaver ponds. The remainder of this general area is still open to motorized use. This includes the Steam Mill drainage and the high country between Steam Mill and Steep Hollow. All of Steep Hollow and the areas to the north of Steep Hollow remain open to motorized and non-motorized use.

A signed, ungroomed trail would be identified north of the closed Bunchgrass area for directional access to the Franklin Basin parking area. Two access routes are available to private landowners east of this area. Both the Tony Grove Road and Franklin Basin Road will continue to be groomed snow roads.

Alternative 1B+ will provide access to a variety of terrain for all ability levels for motorized users. In Alternative 1 (the proposed action), a snow trail was proposed to serve as a connecting corridor between Tony Grove and Franklin Basin parking areas. In Alternative 1B+, the snow trail is not constructed; however an ungroomed signed trail allowing for egress north of White Pine is discussed later.

Not having the snow trail through the Bunch Grass area would still allow motorized users to move from Tony Grove into the White Pine, Steam Mill and Franklin Basin areas. A direct route would not be available back to the Tony Grove parking area, but I felt it was important to eliminate mixed use on a snow trail and reduce noise effects as much as possible in the Bunchgrass area. Alternative 1B was developed because we worked with the operator of the State groomer (under Alternative 1) and determined the topography was too steep to drive a 16-foot machine into the area. In order to alleviate the steep grades and drive a 16-foot wide groomer, a 20 foot-wide trail with grades not exceeding 15% and consisting of some switchbacks would have to have been constructed through the Bunchgrass area. Additional work and vegetative clearing would have been required for Alternative 1, as well. Once the trail (Alt.1) was in place, the area would prove challenging during the summer months to control off-road vehicles use in an area that is closed to summer motorized use.

I also considered the need for emergency egress from the Steam Mill, White Pine areas. If anyone from the motorized community had difficulties getting out of the area, they could travel through the White Pine- Steam Mill area to reach Franklin Basin Parking lot. Under Alternative 1B+ this route would be signed.

The closure for the Bunchgrass drainage incorporates the existing closure up Tony Grove Creek, through Lewis M Turner campground to the junction with the Tony Grove Road. Areas north and east of this, through the Bunchgrass drainage, are managed for non-motorized recreation. The Bunchgrass non-motorized area extends east from Chicken Hill and White Pine Knob following the ridges to the east.

There have been many arguments made, from both sides, describing how many acres each has “gained or lost”. Acres cannot describe what’s available for the recreationist to enjoy. The area analyzed is approximately 19 miles from the city of Logan, provides world-class powder to any winter sport enthusiast, and provides varied terrain, established parking, and beautiful scenery. The area extends to the Idaho border on the Logan Ranger District. So our analysis has focused on many other indicators, besides of the number of acres available for motorized/non-motorized.

Issues Considered:

- 1. Safety-** Safety encompasses both the motorized and non-motorized users, but in different ways. For the motorized recreationist, they need the flexibility to take alternative routes coming out of higher terrain so they can adjust to

changing weather, snow, or avalanche conditions and return to parking areas. They also are concerned about finding emergency egress out of the backcountry in case of medical emergencies or mechanical breakdowns.

I believe Alternative 1B+ provides adequate flexibility to move from higher-level terrain to lower level terrain where slopes are gentle and accommodate egress to the Franklin Basin parking area. This would provide egress for medical emergencies and mechanical breakdowns, as well.

The area from White Pine to Tony Grove is a difficult situation to manage. I believe we need to keep the integrity of the closed Bunchgrass area for safety and experiences (exhaust, noise) desired from the non-motorized community. The terrain from White Pine to Tony Grove parking is challenging to ride through. Over the past few years snowmobiles have been stuck in the lower White Pine area and it was difficult to haul the machine out. It would be difficult for a snowmobile, with a pull from behind groomer, to keep open a snow trail through this area, especially during heavy snowfall.

The Forest Service has contacted the landowner of the southern private property access route. He has granted emergency access out through the marked corridor to assist in an emergency situation. Should land ownership or this agreement change, the Logan Ranger District could sign an emergency exit route to Hwy 89 through the lower Bunchgrass area. Again, this route would not serve as a convenient route to the Tony Grove area; it would provide emergency egress only. The responsibility for each motorized individual requires him or her not to go into areas beyond their ability, as well as identify a plan to shuttle back from the Franklin Basin parking area if they need access to that area and they are parked in the Tony Grove area.

I believe this provides relative accommodations for emergency and mechanical egress for the motorized community.

Separating machines from pedestrians, to the extent possible, increase safety for the non-motorized visitor. We receive several complaints each year describing “near misses.” A near miss can be described as a fast-moving machine not seeing a pedestrian on the trail (and some times off the trail) and just avoiding contact. I believe keeping motorized use out of the two closure areas provides for non-motorized safety, to the best of our ability.

As mitigation, we will be signing the area for mixed use along the Tony Grove and Franklin Basin Roads. Alternative 1B+ does not provide as much

separation of use as Alternatives 1,3,5 or 6 but is equal to or greater than Alternatives 1A, 1C, or 7. However, taking into account all the issues, I believe this alternative provides an adequate amount of separation of use.

2. **Dispersal/Crowding**– For the motorized users, concerns were raised that if areas were closed to motorized use it would not allow visitors to disperse through the area, creating crowding in the remaining motorized area. Alternative 1B+ would not have as much open area as Alternative 7, however, large contiguous areas would be available to use.
3. **Access from Parking** – The relative accessibility to a variety of terrain from parking areas is important to users. For all visitors parking is available but may be crowded on certain weekend days from all three parking areas. Some parking occurs along Highway 89. Therefore, parking opportunities under Alternative 1B+ remain steady.

The selected alternative provides access for the motorized community to a variety of terrain. Easy access to high terrain exits from the Tony Grove and Franklin Basin parking areas. Access for the non-motorized visitor is relatively good and provides a variety of terrain (see write-up in EA).

4. **Non-motorized issues** – Air quality standards will be met for each alternative (see EA). Noise and the relative effect on the winter non-motorized experience will be less by not having a motorized trail through the two closed areas.

Untracked powder in the closed areas will be available to skiers.

5. **Manageability/Enforceability**- The boundaries for the closed areas will follow natural terrain features. Therefore, it will be easier to understand the closure area and non-intentional motorized use should be lowered. Also, without a groomed trail through the closed Bunchgrass area, motorized drift off the trail will not occur. (See write-up in EA.)

The easier it is to identify the boundary, the less enforcement will be needed. Monitoring of the area will continue through presence during the peak season of motorized and non-motorized use.

Implementation of any alternative allowing motorized use will follow 36 CFR 212.80 (the over-snow vehicle section of the Travel Management Rule,

Subpart 212.80) and an “over-snow” motor vehicle use map will be published.

6. **Wetlands, water quality, aquatic species, scenery management, roadless -** Forest Plan standards and guidelines will be met under this alternative (see EA).
7. **Wildlife-** This alternative would have lower effects to wildlife, in general (see EA).

ALTERNATIVES NOT SELECTED

Alternatives 1,1A, &1C – were not selected because of the need to construct a snow trail through the Bunchgrass area. Also, the State groomer would not be able to groom pitches above 15% (White Pine, Clarks Hollow, Bunchgrass) and a pull behind groomer (behind a snowmobile) would also prove to be ineffective to maintain a trail. A 20-foot trail would require the construction of two bridges, clearing of brush, and ground disturbance. It would require mixed use in the closed Bunchgrass area and adds additional safety concerns for non-motorized users. Also, the constructed trail would pose a challenge for managing off-highway vehicle use in the summer months. Mitigation is proposed in this alternative to close use to this trail. However, the best mitigation is not constructing this trail.

Alternatives 2, & 5 – were not selected because I felt they limited the recreation experience for both the winter motorized and non-motorized visitor. Under Alternative 2, tracking of snow during the motorized time period could pose safety concerns for the non-motorized visitor with tracks that would not be visible. Alternative 5 would not necessarily limit non-motorized visitors, however, it would somewhat limit opportunities available for all levels of motorized visitors.

Alternative 3 – is the prior Revised Forest Plan alternative and current management. Both the winter motorized and non-motorized groups did not want this alternative due to their opinion that the boundaries were unenforceable. This alternative was not selected because of limitations for winter motorized visitors (see EA), it does not allow for access from private property, it does not adequately address safety issues for motorized users, and would have a moderate to high effect on wildlife (compared to other alternatives, see EA). However, effects are within standards and guidelines established in the RFP.

Alternative 4 – was the no action alternative and used as a baseline for effects analysis.

Alternative 6 – was not selected because it provides no motorized access in the Steam Mill area, does not allow for access from private property, and the upper western boundary would be difficult to enforce (see Map for Alt 6). It would also have a moderate to high effect on wildlife due to motorized use in the Twin Creeks area, similar to Alternative 3.

Alternative 7- was not selected because it would not separate winter motorized and non-motorized visitors in the Tony Grove to Franklin Basin area, would not provide a quality winter non-motorized recreation experience and safety for the non-motorized user, and would have a large effect to wildlife (see EA).

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose and need from the EA reads: the Tony Grove/Franklin Basin area is a unique and popular winter recreation area for both motorized and non-motorized winter recreationists. There is a need to manage the mix of motorized and non-motorized uses in this area, so that both groups can use and enjoy the area. For non-motorized users, this includes reasonable access from plowed parking to ski-able terrain, and accessible terrain closed to motorized use so that noise, smell, and tracking of powder are reduced. For motorized users, this includes access to higher, unique terrain, and egress for emergency and mechanical breakdowns with access to parking areas. Area boundaries need to be easily understood to promote compliance. Big game winter habitat west of the Logan Canyon Highway needs to provide relatively less disturbance for wildlife using the area.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered 9 other alternatives. A comparison of these alternatives can be found in the EA on pages 2-12.

Alternative 1 (The Proposed Action)

The Proposed Action (Alternative 1) defines a combination of motorized and non-motorized areas in the Tony Grove-Franklin Basin area and addresses the creation of a groomed snow trail between the Tony Grove and Franklin Basin parking lots (see Alternative 1 map of the EA).

In the proposed action, the area from Blind Hollow through the lower part of the Tony Grove drainage and the majority of the Bunchgrass drainage is closed to

motorized use. Due to wildlife concerns, access out of the Tony Grove Winter parking lot is only permitted on designated trails until they are out of the crucial wildlife habitat. The groomed snow trail on Tony Grove Road remains open to motorized use to access the higher country at and above Tony Grove Lake, but travel off of the trail is not allowed until the first ridge before Tony Grove Creek crosses the road (approximately 2.5 miles). The shortcut up through Tony Grove Creek is still open for motorized travel. The area open to motorized use is shown on the map for Alternative 1 in the EA. All of the large bowls above Tony Grove Lake (Cornice Ridge, Naomi Peak) White Pine Lake (Mount Gog, Mount Magog) and Steam Mill Lake remain open to snowmobiling.

The Bunchgrass drainage is closed to motorized use. Areas north and east of this, through the Bunchgrass drainage, are managed for non-motorized recreation, with the lower portion, as defined by the snow trail, having limited access to protect crucial wildlife habitat. In this alternative, a route through Bunchgrass is considered necessary to allow snowmobilers to return to the Tony Grove winter parking lot when weather conditions suddenly turn bad or snow conditions don't allow them to climb the hill near the summer White Pine Lake Trail to return to the parking lot. This alternative provides a snow trail out of White Pine Canyon through the non-motorized area across Clark Hollow, and across the lower portion of the Bunchgrass drainage, returning to the Tony Grove parking lot.

Non-motorized winter recreation is also provided for in the Hell's Kitchen drainage. (See detailed description in the EA and alternative map 1. The proposed action includes a snow trail. The trail leaving from the Franklin Basin parking lot would be twenty feet wide and groomed by Utah State Parks. This trail would require some tree removal and all woody brush removed on slopes with steep grades. Some leveling of the ground would be required at the beginning of the trail through the initial section of trees. The **twenty** foot cleared section would terminate in a turn-around on the northern ridge of White Pine Canyon near the existing summer trail. From here the snow trail would be reduced to **eight** feet wide and be groomed by a snowmobile with a pull behind groomer. This grooming would be done under permit to the proponent. This trail crosses White Pine Canyon, and Clarks Hollow where it sidehills through the meadows above Red Banks Campground, down into Bunchgrass and across the Bunchgrass ski trail and Bunchgrass Creek to the eastern edge of the Tony Grove Winter Parking lot. Below or east of the trail would be closed to winter use except on designated trails all the way to the Highway 89 (Logan Canyon National Scenic Byway). Two trails have been proposed through this area to allow private landowners access to the snow trail and areas open to motorized use above the snow trail.

Alternative 1A

This new sub-alternative is in response to those comments concerned with safe and convenient travel along the snow trail and in the area southwest of the Tony Grove parking area. Alternative 1A includes the same provisions as in Alternative 1 (the Proposed Action) but would open the “Big Curve” area to motorized travel and the snow trail would be groomed **20 feet wide the entire length**. The area opened to motorized use in the “Big Curve” area would be the small triangular section directly southwest of the Tony Grove parking area (same triangular area open in Alternative 3). Respondents felt this area was needed to provide an alternative to riding on bare asphalt, as typically happens as snow melts from the roadway in this area. The respondents also suggested a 20-foot wide snow trail would be easier to groom and provide safer travel for skiers and snowmobilers. See Alternative 1A map in the EA.

Alternative 1B

This new sub-alternative is in response to concerns over resource effects associated with the groomed snow trail. Alternative 1B would include the same provisions as in Alternative 1, but would only provide a signed, unplowed trail from White Pine Creek back to the Franklin Basin parking area. This route would have no clearing of vegetation or ground disturbance. There would be no snow trail in the Bunchgrass closure area. See Alternative 1B map in the EA.

Alternative 1C

This new sub-alternative combines portions of Alternatives 1 and 3, and is in response to concerns about access to higher ground from the Tony Grove parking area and traveling on bare asphalt as snow melts back from south-facing areas. Alternative 1C includes the same provisions as in Alternative 1, but the southern boundary is extended to the Twin Creek Road and it includes the “Big Curve” area (same as Alternative 3). See Alternative 1C map in the EA.

Alternative 2 (Temporal Alternative)

As an alternative to geographic separation of uses, this alternative establishes a temporal separation of uses. Under this alternative, motorized and non-motorized communities would each have opportunities to use the entire area, exclusive of the other community, for alternating periods of time (every other two weeks.) The rationale for a two-week alternating period is generally: 1) it is “long enough” for a chance of a “fresh snowfall” over a two-week period (a greater chance than during a shorter period of time, such as one week or less); and, 2) it is “short enough” so you

don't have to wait very long to use the area (such as if out of town visitors happen to come during a time when the area is closed to their preferred method of use). A longer period, such as a month or more, would necessitate a longer wait between use opportunities.

Under the temporal alternative, the area is delineated on Alternative 2 map in the EA.

A calendar showing the alternating periods of use would be available well in advance of the winter recreation season and posted widely along the boundaries (Highway 89, Tony Grove and Franklin Basin parking, and the Cub River on the Idaho side) and would be circulated widely on the internet and through the tourist bureaus and the media.

This alternative includes no provision for a snow trail between Tony Grove and Franklin Basin parking areas. Every two weeks the entire area would be motorized and the next two weeks the entire area would be non-motorized.

Alternative 3 (Revised Forest Plan)

This alternative is the 2003 Revised Forest Plan decision, and is a No Action alternative, in that it represents no change from current management direction.

The decision included provisions for snowmobile access through closed areas. The boundaries for areas open and closed to motorized winter recreation for the no action alternative are as shown on the Winter Recreation Alternative 7 Map 1, which accompanied the 2003 Revised Forest Plan and Record of Decision, and is shown on Alternative 3 map in the EA.

Alternative 4 (No Winter Recreation Use)

This alternative closes the area in question to all recreation use during the winter season. This is a second No Action alternative, in that no action or activity will take place. It provides a baseline for estimating the effects of recreation activity and resource concerns in the area (see Alternative 4 map in the EA).

Forest Service policy allows for two distinct interpretations of the no action alternative in many cases (Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, 14.1). Although it is unusual to consider two different no action alternatives, here it will provide useful information on recreation effects.

Alternative 5 (Everyone Everywhere)

This alternative was submitted in response to the Preliminary EA and was referred to as the “Everyone Everywhere Alternative” by the proponents. They feel a temporal separation of uses is a reasonable thing to try. However, they believe a longer period would make it more functional. In contrast to the Temporal Alternative, which alternates use every two weeks over the entire Tony Grove - Franklin Basin area, Alternative 5 applies a season-long temporal separation to alternating halves of the area. The separation boundary for this alternative would be along the northern ridge of White Pine Canyon. There would be no over-the-snow connector trail in this alternative.

The northern and southern halves would be alternately open to motorized use every other year. Non-motorized use would be allowed at any time. In closed years, motorized access to the higher bowls from Tony Grove would be allowed after some date when non-motorized use declines dramatically (approximately April 15). See Alternative 5 Map in the EA for boundaries of the alternating north/south areas.

Under Alternative 5, the Franklin Basin Road (groomed by the State of Utah) would be open to motorized travel every year, but travel would be restricted to the road until north of the northern boundary as described above.

Tony Grove road would be non-motorized during the non-motorized years and motorized during the motorized year. It could be groomed (either State-groomed or pull-behind) every year, but only for the allowed use (motorized or non-motorized) each year.

Alternative 6 (Moving Forward)

This alternative is being analyzed in response to a request for consideration of an alternative that maximizes non-motorized use in the Franklin Basin area. The proponents refer to this alternative as the “Moving Forward Equitably Alternative”. In general, the non-motorized area in this proposal is similar to Alternative 3, except that it includes all of Steam Mill Canyon to the Wilderness boundary. The northern boundary of the non-motorized area follows ridges just south of the Steep Hollow Road and the southern boundary follows Alternative 3 until north of White Pine Canyon where it generally follows the double top summer trail (7173) in the north fork of White Pine Canyon, to the Wilderness boundary. This alternative also includes a provision for a motorized egress corridor in White Pine Canyon to the Tony Grove parking area, the lower portion of which would be groomed with a pull-behind groomer (see Alternative 6 Map in the EA).

Under Alternative 6, parking lots would provide separate parking. New motorized parking would be provided a short distance up the Tony Grove road and at the Twin Creeks road. The current Tony Grove winter parking lot would be for non-motorized parking.

A ski trail, where possible, would parallel the Franklin Basin groomed snowmobile trail. The snowmobile trail would have a proposed 20-mile per hour maximum speed limit where it parallels the ski trail. A footbridge across the Logan River west of the existing road bridge would be constructed.

This alternative also includes provision for a Nordic Center of groomed ski trails, a portion of which would be located on National Forest land and a portion on land administered by the State of Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA).

Under Alternative 6, the trail down White Pine Canyon would allow motorized use and is termed a “snowmobile convenience egress corridor”. It generally follows the White Pine-Bunchgrass summer trail down White Pine Canyon. At the bottom, where it turns to the south to the Tony Grove parking area, it would be the same as the Proposed Action “snow trail”, that is, a pull-behind, groomed trail about 8 feet wide.

Alternative 7 (Simplified Boundary Management)

This alternative is being considered in response to a request for consideration of an alternative that maximizes the area open to winter motorized use in the Franklin Basin area. Referred to by the proponents as the “Simplified Boundary Management Alternative”, under this alternative the southern boundary uses a ridgeline-based boundary rather than the Twin Creek boundary used in Alternative 3. The snow trail (as described in the Proposed Action) would serve as the eastern boundary until it intersects with the Franklin Basin Road, which would serve as the remainder of the eastern boundary. The western boundary would be the Wilderness boundary (see Alternative 7 Map in the EA).

The proponents of this alternative are concerned that closure areas under other alternatives create opportunities to be non-compliant, whether intentional or not. They feel while most recreationists want to be responsible and follow the rules, there can be incomplete, confusing, difficult to find, or non-existent information explaining what the restrictions are, where the boundaries are, and so forth. In

response to this concern, they would like to see non-motorized closure areas eliminated and have more simplified boundaries.

Under Alternative 7, the snow trail would be included as in Alternative 1, with a 20-foot wide groomed trail from Franklin Basin to White Pine and an 8-foot wide, pull-behind groomed trail to the Tony Grove parking area. The area to the east of the snow trail would be closed to motorized use. Everything north of the southern boundary would be open to motorized (and non-motorized) use all the ti

RECOMMENDED MITIGATION

Water Quality and Aquatics

None needed because the snow trail would not be constructed.

Recreation

Signing for mixed use will be posted along the Tony Grove and Franklin Basin Roads.

In order to reduce safety concerns and provide non-motorized users an alternative to the Franklin Basin State-groomed trail, a suggested single track ski route would be flagged from the Forest boundary (just across the first bridge) to the Hells Kitchen non-motorized use area.

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT SIGNIFICANCE EVALUATION

Alternatives in this analysis have been evaluated for forest plan consistency. Proposed forest plan amendments and evaluations of their significance are shown below. Alternatives 1, 1A, 1B, 1C, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 are not consistent with the winter recreation map for the Cache-Box Elder Management Area within the 2003 Revised Forest Plan. By selecting Alternative 1B+, I am making Amendment # 3 to the 2003 Revised Forest Plan by replacing the winter recreation map for Cache-Box Elder Management Area.

Timing

This change will take place following the disposition of any appeals of the decision. Implementation of the 2003 map began in the winter of 2003/2004. This change would be within the current planning period.

Location and Size

This amendment will apply only to the Tony Grove - Franklin Basin area of the Cache Box Elder Management Area. This represents less than 8% of the management area and less than 2% of the planning area.

Goals, Objectives, and Outputs

This amendment will not alter long-term relationships between the levels of goods and services projected by the Forest Plan. While areas managed as motorized or non-motorized would vary between the alternatives, the output level is within the levels evaluated during the planning process (See Table REC 12 of the Final Environmental Impact Statement accompanying the Revised Forest Plan, 2003).

Management Prescription

Replacing the winter recreation map of the Cache Box Elder Management Area does not change or affect the management prescription.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined that my decision will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared on this action. I base my finding on the following:

1. The beneficial effects of the action do not bias my finding of no significant environmental effects.
2. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety. Though in general it would be best to totally separate motorized and non-motorized uses this is not possible in this popular area but the decision I have made will provide motorized users adequate safety routes for escape from higher terrain, including for mechanical breakdowns and medical emergencies. Direct access will be provided to the Franklin Basin trailhead and relative access will

be provided to Tony Grove trailhead through private land for mechanical breakdowns and medical (this includes the inability to climb out of the White Pine Lake area) emergencies. (See EA, Section 3.2)

By providing separate areas for non-motorized recreational areas this decision will provide areas for skiers, snowshoers and others to participate in activities that will improve safety within these areas (see EA, Section 3.2)

3. There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area. This decision will not significantly affect cultural resources in the project area (see EA, Section 3.9.3). In addition, there are no parklands, prime farmlands, or wild and scenic rivers present.
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. While there is some degree of public concern over how uses should be regulated, there is no known scientific controversy over the impacts of the project (see EA, Chapter 3).
5. The environmental analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk (see EA, Section 3.2). The Wasatch-Cache National Forest manages other areas similar to the one in this analysis with no uncertain or unique risk.
6. This decision is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects.
7. The cumulative impacts are not significant (see EA, Chapter 3)
8. This decision will have no significant adverse effects on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historical Places. This action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources (see EA, Section 3.9.3)
9. This decision will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (see EA, Section 3.7, as well as the Biological Assessment and Biological Evaluation)
10. This decision will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Clean Water Act – The Clean Water Act requires each state to implement its own water quality standards. The State of Utah’s Water Quality Anti-degradation Policy requires maintenance of water quality to protect existing in stream Beneficial Uses on streams designated as Category 1 High Quality Water. All surface waters geographically located within the boundaries of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest whether on public or private lands are designated as Category 1 High Quality Water. This decision will maintain water at existing high quality.

Executive Order 11990 of May 1977 – This order requires the Forest Service to take action to minimize destruction, loss, or degradation of wetlands and to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands. In compliance with this order, Forest Service direction requires that analysis be completed to determine whether adverse impacts would result.

This decision will have no adverse effects to wetlands located within the project area and therefore is in compliance with EO 11990.

Executive Order 11988 of May 1977 – This order requires the Forest Service to provide leadership and take action to (1) minimize adverse impacts associated with occupancy and modification of floodplains and reduce risk to flood loss, (2) minimize impacts of floods on human safety, health and welfare, and (3) restore and preserve natural and beneficial values served by floodplains.

This decision will have no adverse effects to floodplains.

Endangered Species Act – This Act directs that all Federal departments and agencies shall seek to conserve endangered, and threatened (and proposed) species of fish, wildlife and plants. This obligation is further clarified in a National Interagency Memorandum of Agreement (dated August 30, 2000) that states our shared mission to “...enhance conservation of imperiled species while delivering appropriate goods and services provided by the lands and resources.”

Based on the information disclosed in the Biological Assessment it has been determined that this decision will have no adverse effects to populations of endangered, and threatened (and proposed) species of fish, wildlife and plants relative, such as the Bald Eagle, Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Maguire Primrose.

However, the Canada Lynx has a determination of May effect but not likely to adversely affect under this decision.

A concurrence letter on these determinations has been received from the Fish and Wildlife Service dated November 22, 2006.

Executive Order 13186 of January 10, 2001 – Based on the discussion in Chapter 3 of the EA and information in the project file concerning migratory birds, my decision is in compliance with this Executive Order for the Conservation of Migratory Birds.

Executive Order 13112 – Invasive Species – This Executive Order directs that Federal Agencies should not authorize any activities that would increase the spread of invasive species.

This decision will not increase the spread of invasive species (see EA.)

American Antiquities Act of 1906 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 – Based on the discussion in Chapter 3 concerning Heritage Resources and the project file documentation, it has been determined there would be no measurable effects to any historic properties relative to this decision.

Prime Farmland, Rangeland and Forest Land (Secretary of Agriculture Memorandum 1827) – This is no prime farmland within the project area. The decision does not make any changes to grazing allotments or forestlands found within the project area.

Civil Rights – Based on comments received during scoping and the comment period no conflicts have been identified with other Federal, State or local agencies or with Native Americans, other minorities, women, or civil rights of any United States citizen.

Executive Order 12898 of February 16, 1994 “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice on Minority Populations and Low-income Populations” – This order requires federal Agencies to the extent practicable and permitted by law to make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing as appropriate disproportionately high and adverse human health effects, of its programs and policies and activities on minorities and low-income populations in the United States and territorial possessions. In compliance with this Executive Order the Wasatch-Cache National Forest through intensive scoping and public involvement attempted to identify interested and affected parties, including

minorities and low-income populations for this project. A comment period was held for 30 days following the publication of the legal notice in the Salt Lake Tribune.

No minorities and low-income populations were identified during public involvement activities.

Violating Federal, State and local Laws – This decision does not violate any Federal, State or local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215. The appeal must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, or express delivery) with the Appeal Deciding Officer at *Appeal Deciding Officer, Jack Troyer, Regional Forester, 324 25th Street, Ogden, Utah 84401 fax 801-625-5277*. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered appeals are: 8:00 to 4:30, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic appeals must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Word (.doc) to appeals-intermtn-regional-office@fs.fed.us. In cases where no identifiable name is attached to an electronic message, a verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature is one way to provide verification.

Appeals, including attachments, must be filed within 45 days from the publication date of this notice in the Salt Lake Tribune, the newspaper of record. Attachments received after the 45-day appeal period will not be considered. The publication date in the Salt Lake Tribune, newspaper of record, is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Individuals or organizations that submitted substantive comments during the comment period specified at 215.6 may appeal this decision. The notice of appeal must meet the appeal content requirements at 36 CFR 215.14.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

Contact

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Robert Cruz, Logan Ranger District, 1500E, Hwy 89, Logan, UT, 84321, phone 435-755-3620.

/s/ Faye L. Krueger

Dec. 22, 2006

FAYE L. KRUEGER
Forest Supervisor

Date

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