



File Code: 1950-1

Date: February 21, 2006

Subject: South Fowl Snowmobile Access

To: Persons Interested in South Fowl Snowmobile Access

Enclosed is my decision on the South Fowl Lake Snowmobile Access. To many of you, this may seem like it has been a long time in coming, others may have only recently heard of it. While many, if not all of you, have opinions on what my decision should be, I'm hoping you will read the entire Decision Notice to fully understand it. I have put a lot of thought into this decision; however, I am not totally naïve. I understand many of you will be disappointed or maybe even angry.

Please know that I have read each comment letter, from those received in the summer of 2004, those voluntarily sent during the summer of 2005 and the over 540 received for the comment period from November to December, 2005. I also followed the letters written to the editor and published in the two local Cook County newspapers.

Having read each letter and article, I can say that this was not always a pleasant experience. I'm sure many of you had similar thoughts and experiences. It is clear we live in a country that provides and cherishes free speech. I do think it unfortunate how negatively some have chosen to treat each other because of this project. I also think it unfortunate that I was not able to bring folks together to discuss this project in a respectful manner and look for common ground. It seems we have chosen to take sides and found ways to disagree.

I do appreciate that not everyone acted that way. A moment I remember last November is when I was discussing the project with a woman who held strong opinions on what I should do. At one point I decided to ask what she would do if I selected the alternative she opposed. Her answer, "nothing, it's your decision and I support that." At that moment my heart was renewed. I must also say there were a few who wrote similar thoughts in their comment letters and I commend your spirit.

I have worked on this assessment over the past year and a half, and firmly believe that I have a grasp of what impact this decision will have, both on the resource and on the people. I also believe though I felt the negativity, my decision was not affected by it. As I prepared this Decision Notice, I pondered some of the events of this last year that helped me put this decision into perspective: a tsunami in the South Pacific that took over 300,000 lives and left over 1 millions homeless; the hurricanes in this country that took over 1,400 lives and destroyed thousands of homes; an earthquake in Pakistan killing over 30,000 and leaving over 4 million homeless; a hurricane that spawned torrential rains in Guatemala causing mudslides that buried thousands. Lives lost-- devastating, homes destroyed--unimaginable, cost to rebuild--unthinkable.



Our corner of the world is very important to all of us and I'm not trying to suggest anything to detract from that. This project will affect us all, however.....

Put into context, there will be no fatalities from this project, not in a flood, earthquake, or mudslide. No one's home will be taken from them. And no one will suffer financial ruin.

What will happen is a very few acres of our world will be changed and to some degree we will be affected. How we are affected and how we choose to react to this decision is up to each of us. As for me, I will look to the future and choose to build cooperation with all groups willing to participate. There will be many more projects as we move forward to implement our Forest Plan. My hope is that we look for common ground, recognize the good in each other and manage the Superior National Forest for multiple uses for all of us.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dennis D. Neitzke". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

DENNIS D. NEITZKE
District Ranger