

**From:** Jazmyn McDonald <jamcdona@wyoming.com>  
**Subject:** Shoshone National Forest comments  
**Date:** November 25, 2012 10:12:44 AM MST  
**To:** Shoshone\_forestplan@fs.fed.us  
**Cc:** commissioners@fremontcountygovernment.org

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Joe Alexander  
Shoshone Natl Forest Supervisor  
Attn: FOREST PLAN COMMENTS  
808 Meadow Lane  
Cody, WY 82414

Dear Mr Alexander,

The below comments on the draft Shoshone NF plan are based on more than 30 years experience in and around the Shoshone National Forest as a resident, hunter, backpacker, hiker, skier, local guide, and wildlife census taker for the USGS.

First and foremost I urge you and your team to continue the tradition of preserving this outstanding recreational resource by upholding the current protections in place that have allowed the wildlife and the forest to flourish for more than 100 years. This in turn has nourished the communities of Dubois, Lander, Riverton, Meeteetse, Cody and Clark by providing summer and winter tourist traffic, motorized and non-motorized visitors, hunting opportunities unparalleled in the lower 48, and clear clean water for our ag industry.

As we all know, it takes only minutes to create a track or blast a pit or topple a tree that cannot be restored for decades, if ever. I hope the Forest Service goes carefully and cautiously in allowing any increased impacts to the Shoshone.

Specifically:

I encourage the Forest Service to **revisit and cancel the proposed expansion of motorized use on the Forest.**

It has been my observation on numerous visits up the Loop Road outside of Lander and in the drainages around Dubois that illegal off-road motorized vehicle traffic is increasingly degrading the open wet meadows and the (formerly live) forested slopes of these areas.

It should also be noted that on much of the Shoshone Forest, because of the topography, any vehicle can be heard for a great distance, whether traversing FS Road 277 up the East Fork, or in the timbered areas above Louis Lake or climbing up from the Wood River. There is no question that the levels of noise can be high enough to disturb and interfere with the hearing of human users of the forest. What has not yet been satisfactorily measured is the impact of the level & frequency vehicle noise disturbance on local breeding bird populations. Certainly noise from vehicles on the forest make it difficult to collect breeding bird population data (since that is mostly collected by listening to and tallying the heard birdsong); many times those of us collecting bird data must simply wait until the noise of vehicles has passed. I have measured the distance visually and then confirmed with my odometer that I must wait for the vehicle to get more than a mile distant before I am able to hear birds as close as 25 feet. There are numerous studies detailing the impact of off-road vehicles on other wildlife; but we could use much more research on bird behavior in response to the noise of motorized off-road travel during the nesting season. <http://www.livescience.com/4283-noise-pollution-threatens-birds.html>

The area from the Wiggins Fork through Bear Creek east the Wind River Indian Reservation boundary is the largest area where no further motorized use should be permitted. Other areas that also need continued protection from motorized access include the south fork of the Warm Springs Creek, the front west of Shoshone Lake, the Silas Lake Trail and access area; and the Little Popo Agie Canyon drainage.

To sum up, all we need to do is visit the Oregon Trail tracks to be reminded of the extraordinary staying power of human vehicular traffic, more than a century and a half later. Given that the Forest Service is underfunded and inadequately staffed to monitor and control vehicle use on the currently established trails; and that illegal off-trail travel and damage is an acknowledged problem, especially along the Loop Road in the Wind River District, it seems wise not to increase the burden on both the resource and the Department by **any** further development of motorized access at this time.

**Regarding future oil and gas development on the Shoshone: in all cases, the Forest Service should stipulate no surface occupancy.** Knowing that the Bureau of Land Management has already decided to disallow surface disturbance on lands adjacent to the Shoshone, it seems an oversight on the part of the Forest Service not to match this decision; and not to continue to

preserve the forest and watershed resource at its current quality level.

Furthermore, from what we know about the geology of this area and the likelihood of feasibly recoverable oil and gas reserves, I cannot believe that this topic is still under discussion. We are planning for the next twenty years. Should technology allow for no impact development in the future, fine. It can be permitted in the next plan. But for now, we know that any surface occupancy by oil and gas wells has irremediable impacts, so, why risk it? And we are increasingly learning that we face new challenges to the forest, its wildlife, their habitat and our timber resources given our changing climate, so why increase the known stresses on the Shoshone?

The last point I should like to make regarding this plan is that there are some **areas on the Shoshone that are so special we should protect them permanently**. Most urgently, the Dunoir Special Management Area & the Dunoir Inventoried Roadless Areas have outstanding wilderness characteristics and have been candidates for wilderness protection since 1972. With increased snowmobile, OHV and mountain bike use threatening the wild and untrammled nature of that area, it is vital that its wilderness value be upheld and designated. I would add Wood River, Franc's Peak and the Trout Creek to that category of areas of roadless backcountry expanse that require wilderness status as well.

As always, most appreciative of the hard work you do on our behalf!

Sincerely,

Jazmyn McDonald

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cc: Gov. Matt Mead  
Fremont County Commissioners