



File Code: 1950

Date: January 15, 2013

Dear Forest Planning Participant:

This letter is to update you on winter motorized use in the Mt. Jefferson area of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. Management direction for the Mt. Jefferson/ Hellroaring area was established in the 2009 Revised Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. Management direction established in the 2009 Revised Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, (Plan) for the Mt. Jefferson/Hellroaring area. The Plan provides winter motorized use in the southern part of the Mount Jefferson Management Area adjacent to Island Park trails, while providing a non-motorized opportunity in the Hellroaring Creek in the northern portion. The boundary between winter motorized and non-motorized areas is illustrated on page 146 of the Plan.

A wide range of alternatives were analyzed for the Mt. Jefferson area in the 2009 Corrected FEIS. This 4,500 acre area was the subject of the most comments involving any area on the BDNF. We analyzed alternatives to leave the entire area open to winter motorized use, close the area to summer motorized use, make the entire area recommended wilderness, and split the area between recommended wilderness and summer non-motorized/winter motorized.

Upon review of thousands of comments and the analysis disclosed in the Corrected FEIS, in the January 2009 Record of Decision (ROD 1) the Deciding Official selected the allocations analyzed and disclosed in Alternative 6, making the north half recommended wilderness, and the south half non-motorized in summer and motorized in winter. The Record of Decision Enacting Forest Plan Travel Management Direction for Certain Areas of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (ROD 2), including the Mt. Jefferson/Hellroaring area, was signed February 12, 2010 and the decision was affirmed May 13, 2010. On July 6, 2010, the Forest Supervisor signed a special order closing areas allocated to winter, non-motorized uses from December 2 through May 15 to motorized vehicles.

As the ROD 1 states on page 21, “the combination of uses allowed on Mt. Jefferson under the Revised Forest Plan represents a management challenge, because the boundary between the motorized and non-motorized use areas does not follow an effective topographical barrier to illegal motorized entry. The success of this compromise decision relies heavily on voluntary compliance with recommended wilderness boundaries by over-snow vehicle users. The Monitoring Plan spells out monitoring protocols that address compliance with restrictions on motorized use in high elevation wildlife habitat, including Mt. Jefferson. If monitoring reveals that non-compliance is an issue, the decision to allow snowmobiling on Mt. Jefferson will be reevaluated.”



The Monitoring Section of the Forest Plan (page 277) for Plan Component 14, goal for wildlife security states, “The Mt. Jefferson Recommended Wilderness boundary will be monitored for illegal snowmobile intrusions into the wolverine habitat closure. A reassessment of the decision to allow snowmobile use will be triggered if:

- 1) Illegal intrusions are documented throughout the closure period.
- 2) Illegal intrusions penetrated the closed area.
- 3) Illegal intrusions extend as far as the BLM Wilderness Study Area.”

Monitoring results from 2010¹, 2011, and 2012 have documented illegal intrusions into Hellroaring Creek area throughout the closure period. Despite clear boundary marking, intentional trespass is common, as evidenced by tracks, and direct observations of riders entering the closure in close proximity to signs.

It is uncommon to patrol the area and find no evidence of violation. During 2010, 2011 and 2012, Forest Service and BLM personnel conducted 16 days of on the ground monitoring in the Mount Jefferson area. During this period there were only 4 days when no violations were observed. Although the number of violators is an estimate, the fact remains; violations occurred and locations of those violations are certain. In addition, during this time period the ski hut operator, as well as skiers, reported numerous violations. Cameras placed inside the closed area also documented violations on several days during the 2011 and 2012 winter seasons.

Mt. Jefferson/Hellroaring monitoring results over the past several years have been fairly consistent. For more detailed monitoring information for the Mt. Jefferson area, please see the 2009 Forest Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Report: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5209573.pdf. The 2010 monitoring report will be published in the next few months.

We intend to continue with monitoring the area this year. Based on results of the monitoring, I will reevaluate the decision to allow snowmobiling on Mt. Jefferson in 2014.

Thank you for your continued interest in our planning process.

Sincerely,

/s/ David R Myers

DAVID R. MYERS
Forest Supervisor

¹ The Forest Supervisor signed a special order on July 6, 2010, closing areas allocated to winter, non-motorized uses; the 2010 monitoring was completed through flights and on-the-ground monitoring conducted in February and March, 2010, during which time the area was closed through Special Order No. 2009-D6-001.