

TRAIL BREAK

your report for silent snowsports

Volume 2011, Winter Issue



*The dogs are all going around,
and around,
and around.
Go around again!*

P.D. Eastman, Go, Dog. Go!

Another Round for Yellowstone Winter Use

In a public policy world that often feels like a merry-go-round where plans and processes repeat themselves over and over and final results seem always just out of reach, no issue is more vexed with the go-around-again syndrome than winter use in Yellowstone National Park.

In the last issue of Trail Break we urged Winter Wildlands Alliance supporters to take action one last time in the “final push to protect Yellowstone’s magical winter season.” After more than a decade of advocacy involving four major studies, \$10 million in taxpayer dollars, nearly a million public comments and seemingly endless political wrangling, all of us involved in Yellowstone winter use were thrilled to use the words final and Yellowstone in the same sentence. Not so fast on the final part, it turns out.

Despite the release of a Draft Winter Use Plan and Environmental Impact Statement last May and the scheduled release of a final plan before the upcoming winter season, Park officials announced last month that more analysis is needed before they can issue a “sustainable” rule. The National Park Service now intends to conduct a “Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement” to further analyze issues brought forth in public comment on the most recent EIS. The Supplemental EIS will be conducted in early 2012 with an

additional round of public comment to follow and the release of a new final (dare we use that word?) winter use plan prior to the 2012-13 winter season.

As eager as WWA and our members are to have this issue put to bed, we support the Park Service in their commitment to produce a sustainable plan that protects Yellowstone’s unique winter ecosystem and improves the visitor experience. WWA also supports the Park’s decision to continue under the interim plan, put in place two years ago as the result of legal action by WWA and four coalition partners, until a new long-term plan is produced. The interim plan allows up to 318 commercially guided, Best Available Technology snowmobiles and 78 snowcoaches per day.

We will continue to work with Park officials through this process to ensure that Yellowstone’s winter recovery continues and to safeguard against the return of over-snow vehicle traffic levels that disturbed wildlife, made noise and haze a constant companion and diminished the visitor experience. We can’t give up on our nation’s first national park and most iconic winter sanctuary.

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Protecting Winter Recreation Opportunities on National Forest Lands

The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

The Northern Cascades in Washington State is a popular destination for the oldest, most popular, and fastest growing form of winter recreation: human-powered snowsports. The region's abundant snowfall and diverse terrain inspires backcountry skiers, backcountry snowboarders, cross-country skiers, and snowshoers to get outdoors in the winter and enjoy their public lands. Four million acres of the Northern Cascades are within the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, which has begun the multi-year process of revising its Land and Resource Management Plan. Working closely with local and regional members of both the conservation and recreation community, Winter Wildlands Alliance is raising awareness of the need to protect areas for traditional winter recreation activities such as backcountry skiing, snowboarding and snowshoeing. The result has been multilateral support for addressing winter recreation during Forest Plan Revision.

The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Planning Team has proposed new wilderness recommendations as well as backcountry management areas. The proposal, unfortunately, leaves these areas open to winter motorized use and as a result traditional forms of quiet human-powered winter recreation would continue to be displaced. WWA is advocating for a revised plan that creates more opportunities for quality human-powered recreation by designating non-motorized winter recreation areas and trails; protects the wilderness character of recommended wilderness areas by prohibiting snowmobile use; and fully considers the environmental impact of motorized winter recreation to wildlife, water quality, air quality, soundscapes and the experience of other visitors.

White River National Forest's Peak 6

The growing popularity of human-powered winter recreation is also prevalent in Colorado's White River National Forest, the most visited National Forest in the United States. This trend is acknowledged in the White River's recent Travel Management Plan that states "cross-country skiing and snowshoeing is also growing faster than snowmobiling and much more so than downhill skiing." The undeveloped backcountry terrain on Peak 6 near Breckenridge is perfectly suited for this significant and growing demographic of winter recreationists. WWA has joined a coalition of Colorado groups working to protect this backcountry terrain

threatened by development on Peak 6 and to preserve opportunities to experience Colorado's legendary wild snow.

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Powderwhore Productions, "Breaking Trail"

Viva La Nina! Viva The Backcountry Film Festival!

Yes! It's back and bigger than ever. The Winter Wildlands Alliance Backcountry Film Festival made its world premiere 11-11-11 and the tour follows with more than 70 stops worldwide, including Kyrgyzstan and Antarctica. Whether you are a fan of the backcountry, sidecountry, the Nordic trails or simply hot chocolate by the fire, you won't want to miss this celebration of the winter experience.

The seventh annual Winter Wildlands Alliance Backcountry Film Festival highlights the beauty and fun of the winter backcountry experience. Funds raised stay in local communities to support local human-powered recreation efforts and to raise awareness of winter management issues, avalanche training/ safety and winter education programs.

This year's program includes nine different films including the following festival award winners.

- Best of Festival: "Solitaire" (festival cut) from Sweetgrass Productions. Two years in the making, this film from the wilderness of South America is worth the wait.
- The Best Short: "Chalk and Ski" produced by Chris Dicky and Purple Orange. It's a chalk-in-hand daydream about skiing and winter.

- Best of the Backcountry: “Breaking Trail” (festival cut) from Powderwhore Productions. Known for their amazing ability to capture deep powder and fresh lines, brothers Noah and Jonah Howell remind us why we venture into the backcountry.

For more information and tour dates go to

www.backcountryfilmfestival.org

SP

Trends in Winter Recreation

In recent years multiple studies and reports have documented the growing popularity and economic contribution of human-powered snowsports. The Outdoor Industry Foundation’s 2010 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report found that in 2009 national participation in snowshoeing increased by 17.4% and cross-country skiing by 8%. Of all forms of active outdoor recreation studied, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing had the second and third highest rates of growth. Furthermore, a 2010 Snowsports Participation Study commissioned by the Snowsports Industries of America found that 14% of alpine skiers and snowboarders, 33% of cross-country skiers, 32% of telemark skiers, and 56% of snowshoers seek out the backcountry for undeveloped snowsports experience.

FM

Keeping Winter Wildlands Alliance Strong

When you make a donation to Winter Wildlands Alliance, you help us increase awareness about issues impacting our winter wildlands, support our educational programs and keep our events and outreach to grassroots groups and partners strong. We are a small organization with a feisty presence that remains vital because of our commitment to protect the wintry places we play for today and future generations. Whether you are reading this newsletter as a long-time individual donor, or picking it up for the first time, please consider contributing to Winter Wildlands Alliance today.

To donate online, visit www.winterwildlands.org and click JOIN. For more information on our giving program, contact Lana Weber at (208)343-1630, lweber@winterwildlands.org.

Winter Wilderness Stewardship Project and CLIF Bar’s Day of Action: Protecting the Places We Play

In celebration of the Winter Wilderness Stewardship partnership between Winter Wildlands Alliance and the US Forest Service, Winter Wildlands hosted their first annual “Day of Action” project sponsored by CLIF Bar. WWA volunteers and Caribou Targhee National Forest staff marked wilderness boundaries and placed winter educational kiosk signs at trailheads to create a better backcountry experience for all winter travelers.

Winter Wildlands Alliance and the US Forest Service developed this unique program in order to educate and engage a local constituency in wilderness stewardship for Wyoming’s Jedediah Smith Wilderness and Winegar Hole Wilderness Areas. During Clif Bar’s Day of Action, 30 WWA volunteers installed 33 boundary markers, two winter education kiosks and one wilderness entry sign. The volunteers racked up a total of 216 hours dedicated to helping protect the places we play.

This project will be used as a template for similar projects across the country. We are look forward to developing additional projects within the Winter Wilderness Stewardship framework and to furthering our partnership with the US Forest Service.

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Corporate Partners



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