

Resolution #12
Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs

SUPPORT REDUCING SNOWMOBILE USE IN YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

Submitted by: Winter Wildlands Alliance

Background: Over the past decade, the National Park Service has engaged in an extraordinary series of studies directed at the development of a sustainable winter use plan for Yellowstone National Park. After ten years and \$10 million of analysis, the agency has only affirmed (and repeatedly reaffirmed) what has long been emphasized by the vast majority of those commenting on the National Park Service's various winter use proposals: Yellowstone's air, quiet, and wildlife would be better protected by a plan eliminating the noise and pollution of snowmobiles in favor of access by best-available-technology snowcoaches.

The National Park Service's extensive monitoring efforts within Yellowstone have underscored these conclusions. In recent winter seasons, with snowmobile numbers averaging around 260 each day, the agency's own noise thresholds have been consistently violated. At Yellowstone's West Entrance, benzene and formaldehyde levels have approached and exceeded the thresholds used to assess health risks at hazardous waste sites. Finally, with respect to wildlife, the Park Service's own biologists have recommended that reduced oversnow vehicle numbers of recent winters be maintained, if not reduced, in order to minimize animal disturbance and thereby avoid adverse fitness effects during Yellowstone's harsh winter months.

The Obama Administration recently reopened public comment on a proposed two-year interim rule to reduce the number of snowmobiles in Yellowstone National Park. The interim rule is the first action taken by the new administration. The interim plan is a step in the right direction, but only a step. The temporary plan should go further in reducing snowmobile numbers and expedite the process of phasing out snowmobile use entirely in favor of snowcoaches, which offer a more environmentally-friendly way to access the park in winter. This administration should undertake a prompt and complete transition to snowcoach access within Yellowstone National Park. The Park Service's interim winter use plan should limit snowmobile use to the five-year average of 260 a day. Moreover, the interim plan should itself be limited to one year.

Resolution: Support the National Park Service Interim Plan to reduce snowmobile numbers in Yellowstone National Park and encourage the Park Service to take further measures to protect the natural sights and sounds of winter in our nation's first national park.

Contact: Mike Menlove, 910 Main St., Ste. 235, Boise, ID 83702, (208) 336-4203.
mmenlove@winterwildlands.org