

**Montana Department  
of  
Fish, Wildlife & Parks**

1400 So. 19th  
Bozeman, MT 59715



December 2, 1996

TO: Governor's Office, Glenn Marx, Room 204, State Capitol, P.O. 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801  
Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620  
Dept. Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Director's Office  
Parks Division  
Fisheries Division  
Wildlife Division  
Lands Section  
Design & Construction Bureau  
Legal Unit  
FWP Commissioners  
MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, POB 201202 Helena, MT 59620-1202  
MT State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103  
MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., POB 201800, Helena, MT 59620  
James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, POB 1184, Helena, MT 59624  
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, POB 595, Helena, MT 59624  
George Ochenski, POB 689, Helena, MT 59624  
Beaverhead County Commissioners, Courthouse, Dillon, MT 59725  
Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771  
Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624  
Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923  
Glen Hockett, 745 Doane Road, Bozeman, MT 59715

Ladies and Gentlemen: The enclosed Environmental Assessment (EA) Summary has been prepared for the Big Hole Snowmobile Club's groomed snowmobile trails, and is submitted for your consideration. The full EA document can be obtained upon request. Questions and comments will be accepted from December 2 through 5 p.m., December 31, 1996. If you have questions, feel free to contact me at 994-4042. All comments should be sent to the FWP office at 1400 S. 19th Avenue, Bozeman, Montana 59715

Sincerely,

*Stephen L. Lewis*

Stephen L. Lewis  
Regional Supervisor

*Beaver head*

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW  
WISE RIVER JACKPINE SAVAGES SNOWMOBILE CLUB TRAILS

- The EA document will be submitted to the Environmental Quality Council upon signing of the Decision Notice, following the 30 day comment period.
- A description of the proposed action is provided in the EA document along with maps identifying location of the groomed trails.
- The benefits of the proposed action are to provide grooming for the sport of snowmobiling, as well as snowmobile safety, education, enforcement, reduced impacts on wintering wildlife species and the provision of positive economic benefits.
- All groomed trails are located on lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service. All clearances are provided and included with the EA document.
- Impacts are evaluated and mitigation identified in the Public Awareness Plan included with the EA document. The key issues evaluated are:
  1. **Administration** - all federal and state environmental analyses requirements are being met.
  2. **Air Quality** - no negative impacts.
  3. **Topography, Soils, Hydrology** - None of these trails are in areas of insufficient snow cover or summer wet meadows. Groomed trails are all on roads and previously existing trails.
  4. **Wildlife** - Wildlife clearance is provided. Ungulate wintering areas were identified in two areas of the Wise River system. As per advice from the wildlife biologist, signing will be placed in these areas warning snowmobilers and at appropriate trail-heads.
  5. **Vegetation** - All trails are on existing roads or trails, therefore, impact to vegetation will be at a minimum. The public awareness plan identifies a plan for the snowmobile club to work cooperatively with other agencies/groups in noxious weed reduction/prevention and monitoring.
  6. **Socioeconomic** - the club does not sponsor organized events at this time.
  7. **Cultural** - All groomed trails are located on existing roads or trails. There are no cultural impacts.

8. **Safety/Private Property** - Clubs signing strategies address safety concerns, hazards, private property and other pertinent concerns and issues. Further details are provided in the EA document.
9. **Wilderness Areas** - None of the Wise River Snowmobile Club groomed trails are near wilderness areas. However, approximately 20% of the groomed system is within the West Pioneers Wilderness Study Area. The land management agency responsible for this area, the U.S. Forest Service, allows grooming of such trails and has satisfied federal laws as currently interpreted by their legal staff.
10. **Law Enforcement** - The Forest Service and the FW&P game warden are not aware of any primary law enforcement problems. A law enforcement plan is a part of this packet.
11. **Changes in Aesthetic Values** - Clubs signing strategy includes "Pack-it-in Pack-it-out" signs. Litter remediation plan included with EA document.

■ Analysis of reasonable alternatives include:

Alternative 1 - No change - continue grooming as in the past with no changes.

Alternative 2 - Discontinue state funding for grooming. Snowmobiling would continue on ungroomed trails, no signing or safety program would be provided, nor would information be provided regarding ungulate winter ranges or other sensitive issues and economic benefit to the area would diminish.

Alternative 3 - Continue state funding for grooming program with modifications. Additional information and education will be provided to the public to minimize all impacts as much as possible, through enhanced signing and safety programs.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE: ALTERNATIVE 3

- The EA evaluates potential impacts, mitigation, and other control measures. Refer to the Public Awareness Plan for details.
- The cover letter lists distribution of document and notice of public comment period.

- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks contact person is:

Steve Lewis  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1400 South 19th  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
(406)994-4042

- This EA evaluation is the adequate level of analysis based on the findings of the Snowmobile Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement.