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**2016 Patrol**

**X C**

**FLY RACING**

Snowbiking: An alternative way to enjoy the snow. Photo courtesy of Klim (Klim.com)
FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THIS IS THE SECOND of our themed issues of BlueRibbon Magazine – this one snow-themed. Along with the traditional content you’ll find, for your education, edification (and occasional amusement), several articles on enjoying public lands during the winter months. Based on the response to the last issue of BlueRibbon Magazine, you like the new format. We hope that you will continue to consider our magazine a valued feature of membership in our organization.

I was originally attracted to Sharetrails because of our legal program. Not only is our legal program fairly unique in land use advocacy, but it is, bar none, the best. One of my highest priorities as Executive Director is to make sure that we flex the muscle we’ve spent a lot of time and effort developing.

Not a day goes by that we fail to discover yet another access issue that could benefit from involvement by our legal team. Since we do not have unlimited resources we have to prioritize. When we evaluate an issue for potential litigation we look at several factors. The first factor that we weigh concerns the overall merit of the issue, i.e., is it an issue that substantially benefits you, our members. The second factor we evaluate is the likelihood of achieving a favorable outcome. Last, but certainly not least, we have to consider how to raise the money required to achieve a favorable outcome. That last part is really important. You tell me what you’d like to achieve in a legal process, and I’ll come up with a dollar figure needed to make it a possibility. All it takes is money.

If we are going to prove to the world of access advocacy that we are a force to be reckoned with we need to increase our resources. In a normal month our legal retainer bill, by itself, is a smidgen above $5K. When we are actively involved in litigation our bill can amount to many multiples of that. A significant
portion of our resources go toward supporting our legal program. That’s not a problem, that’s good - it’s what we do. The problem is finding ways to pay for it while simultaneously keeping the rent paid and the lights on.

We need your help. I’d really like to be involved in many more issues that we currently have the resources to address. I want our adversaries to feel us. We ask for your help all of the time and to your considerable credit you always respond. This time I’m asking for something a little different. Please consider encouraging people you do business with: retailers, suppliers, manufacturers, to support Sharetrails.org/BlueRibbon Coalition.

Environmental groups trumpet high levels of financial support from a variety of business entities. What doesn’t go into keeping you out of public lands often goes into film festivals and other superfluous activities. If we had just the film festival budget of a couple of these groups we could achieve significant gains. Businesses will listen to you. So please ask them to support Sharetrails/BRC. A single large donation from an OEM or major distributor will go a long way in allowing us to do more in terms of keeping public lands open.

Another way in which you may have a profound impact on preserving access is to help us grow. We really need to return Sharetrails/BRC to its peak levels of membership. The first question that I am invariably asked whenever I am conversing with potential corporate supporters has to do with membership. Our numbers, though growing, are not where they need to be.

Besides talking Sharetrails up to companies that you do business with, the next best thing that you could do would be to recruit your associates who are not currently Sharetrails members. To motivate yourself ponder this - you, as a paying member or supporter of Sharetrails, are carrying everyone else who enjoys the spoils of our labor without doing their share to make it happen. Get them involved. If nothing else recruit just one new member. If everyone in our organization brought in just one new member it’d be huge. An organization twice our current size would impress our friends and scare our foes. This is a completely attainable goal. Let’s make it happen.

6 Ways to Support BRC

1. Join and renew your membership
2. Sign up for alerts and use the info to contact the agency mentioned
3. Contact your representatives, let them know you support trails
4. Thank the National Forests and BLM agencies in your riding area for keeping trails open
5. Contact BRC if you find changes or closures on your favorite trails (see page 4 for contact information)
6. Add BRC as your charity of choice when shopping on Amazon.Com (see promotion on page 27)
AS I WRITE THIS, just after our BRC fall Board of Directors (BOD) and annual membership meeting, I am left wondering where the year went. While at the helm of BRC, we have had a successful year. We hired Martin Hackworth as our Executive Director and he has hit the ground running. He and I talk often on the plan moving forward for Sharetrails.org/BlueRibbon Coalition. We will be making changes to the logo and utilizing our web address as our primary identifier in the future. “Sharetrails.org” represents what we fight for on a daily basis. If you look at some of our early logos, they showed all forms of recreation on public lands and sharing of the trails and access for all.

As the President, I have attended a few events around California to represent BRC. I had the pleasure to sit on the selection committee for the Off-Road Motorsports Hall of Fame and work with BFGoodrich on the selection of their 2015 Outstanding Trails. These are always fun, and we use these opportunities to help spread the BRC message across other networks. BFGoodrich is a great partner for us to work with, as they continue to highlight the work that we, along with other organizations, are doing to protect access.

It was a tough summer in California with all the forest fires that we had. Cal4Wheel had to cancel their High Sierra Poker Run in the Sierra National Forest because of the Rough fire. We were slated to attend this event and had to make other plans to get away after the cancellation.

Where are we headed in the future? We are working on a program to help bring in more members and business partners. We want to get away from the old BRC handshake and let
business members know that we are there as partners for them and them for us. How this will fully look will be a process that we will work on. I do expect it will improve our financial position in the future and allow us to increase our exposure across the nation. I would expect us to help promote a business partner within our Land Use and Access circles to help them increase their profits. If you want more information on this program, please contact the office and talk to Martin.

The Board of Directors (BOD) remains engaged in how the organization is doing in the short and long term. We provide direction on where we think the organization should be going with input from Martin on if it is achievable.

The BOD discussed the magazine and the path forward with our printed information source. In 2016, you will see these in your mailbox on a quarterly basis now. They will be a little modality themed to help us get outside writers to make it more interesting and information driven. You will still have land use and access issues articles in the magazine and articles from the BODs. If you have an idea for an article, please send it to the office so we can help put something together with your idea.

I am looking forward to 2016 and our march forward in the work to keep access available for everyone. Happy New Year!
BRC Attends 30th Annual Rocky Mountain Snowmobile Expo

THIS YEAR THE Sharetrails.org/Blue-Ribbon Coalition (BRC) Booth at the Annual Rocky Mountain Snowmobile Expo (RMSE) featured updated information on the Yellowstone snowmobile access issue and a fundraiser for the Yellowstone Defense Fund.

The RMSE was held on October 10th and 11th at the National Western Complex in Denver, Colorado. This year’s Expo featured the new 2016 snowmobiles from the four manufacturers, Ski-Doo, Yamaha, Arctic Cat and Polaris. In addition, aftermarket products, resorts, lodges, trailers and destinations for snowmobilers were featured.

The booth was staffed by Board Member Jack Welch, along with BlueRibbon Coalition member Chuck Ramsey. Featured at the show was the latest information on the BlueRibbon Coalition membership and the Legal Action program. In addition, a presentation on the Yellowstone National Park and snowmobile access was given at the Colorado Snowmobile Association Board meeting on Sunday.

The attendees, numbering over 12,000, were very upbeat about 2015-2016 season and hoped it would snow very soon.
THE BLUERIBBON COALITION LEGAL

Program is designed to shape desirable agency conduct. We do this by helping defend good agency decisions and challenging bad ones. Where this involves litigation we have learned that there exists much uncertainty and confusion about the process, even with experienced enthusiast advocates.

For starters, public lands litigation is not glamorous. None of the participants will whisk in on private jets with a posse of professional staff and personal attendants. You will be disappointed in any hope for swashbuckling argument or savaging cross examination. Where information about the enjoyable activities and iconic sites at stake exists in a case, it is often overshadowed by technical argument and buried in the "administrative record" containing tens of thousands of page views. It is unlikely that one person has actually read the entire administrative record in any case.

Litigation, at least when we bring it, is about long term relationships and behavior, not specific outcomes. A respected adversary once described public lands litigation as "a fulcrum for change." This is not to say that re-opening your favorite trail cannot happen in the courtroom, but that result may not be our primary focus. Rather, we are trying to send strong and consistent messages to the agency and other interests. A primary goal—indeed the impetus for the Program—is to be clear that recreationists have a voice in BRC. Gone are the days when decisionmakers picked the green option to a recreation challenge only because they knew no one else would show up. Showing up is essential, but counterproductive if done for the wrong reasons attempting weak positions. We have established a demonstrated record of showing up, and of leaving the case with enhanced credibility and a better relationship with the agency, regardless of whether we are with them or against them in the particular case.

When these messages are received, they can have lasting impacts beyond any actual courtroom results. We have won cases that caused palpable change with local land managers, which did translate to on-the-ground change. Even where some formal component of a judgment expired or was
changed on appeal, we have seen the dividends of successful litigation compound over time.

These effects can be enhanced through effective messaging before and after any litigation. Some enthusiasts seem to believe that "the lawyers" only need to be involved in formal litigation. This is rarely true. We can only build a case in a direction tied to the administrative process and the protagonists' prior relationships. Similarly, "the lawyer" may develop important insight or credibility that is uniquely valuable outside the courtroom. Don't be afraid to ask questions or seek Legal Program input after a case has ended or is being applied in your Forest.

A final point, we do not litigate out of personal frustration, to prove "bias" against motorized users, or to seek vindication at singling out a bureaucratic "bad apple." If you are suing to right injustice, punish a myopic line officer, and obtain a written apology, you need that lawyer with the jet and the posse.

Compared to most, the recreation community is outmaneuvered and underfunded in the litigation arena. Only through wise strategy, solid implementation and efficiency can we build upon our past record of accomplishment. Let your awareness of the opportunities and limitations of legal action facilitate our success.

SUPPORT BRC LEGAL

Your support of BRC’s Legal Fund is invaluable. These days, all too many of our opponents would rather eliminate your recreational areas in court. BRC, along with its allies and member organizations, is all that stands in their way...

To make your donation right now, visit: http://bit.ly/brc-legal-fund
or call 208-237-1008 ext."0"

You can also send contributions by mail to:
BlueRibbon Coalition; 4555 Burley Drive, Suite A;
Pocatello, ID 83202 (be sure to note on your check that this donation is for the BRC Legal Fund).

DONATE TODAY and help us protect your recreational access!

All donations to the BRC Legal Fund are tax-deductible.
CRATER LAKE NATIONAL PARK is located in South-central Oregon, near the towns of Medford and Roseburg. Though snowmobile travel in Crater Lake National Park is limited in terms of mileage, on a clear day with snow on the ground and a blue sky, the experience is awe inspiring. One is quickly taken by the windswept evergreens coated by frozen snow and ice as you move closer to the rim of the caldera which contains the great Crater Lake.

Crater Lake was formed when a massive eruption of Mount Mazama 7700 years ago caused the mountain to collapse, leaving a steaming caldera. Centuries of rain and snow filled the caldera creating Crater Lake. The surface elevation of the lake is 6,178 feet.

Winters at Crater Lake can be long and snowy. Storms from the Pacific Ocean dump an average of 524 inches (13.3 meters) of snow at Park Headquarters.

During the winter, the north entrance is closed to automobiles but open to skiers and snowmobiles. Your snowmobile ride into the rim of Crater Lake will include only about 10 miles of trail inside the park and there is no off-trail riding allowed within the Park.
Most of your mileage will take place on Forest Service land to the north of the Park. The trails are well groomed and marked speed is limited by the park rules. The grooming is accomplished by nearby Diamond Lake resort. If you come for a visit you will be pleasantly surprised at the trail system maintained by several Oregon State Snowmobile Association clubs from the local area. The trail system crosses several National Forests and allows you to explore the Southern Oregon Cascades for literally hundreds of miles.

Many first time visitors make Diamond Lake Resort their jumping off place. Their website tells us:

"How to Get to Us: All highways leading to Diamond Lake are well plowed and sanded for winter travel. We are located just 5 miles north of Crater National Park on Highway 138, 79 miles east of Roseburg on highway 138; 85 miles north of Medford by highways 62 and 230; 85 miles north and west of Klamath Falls via highways 97 and 138 west; and 100 miles south of Bend using highway 97 south and 138 west."

**GPS Coordinates:**

43° 10'38.15" North
122° 08' 19.22" West

Call **800-733-7593** to make reservations.
SNOW BIKING
An AWESOME new way to enjoy the snow!

by Martin Hackworth
BRC Executive Director

WOW! THAT WAS THE MESSAGE
on the large bold neon
sign flashing on and off in my brain
a mere 10 seconds after throwing a
leg over my first snow bike (well,
more like 60 seconds after, since I fell
off on my first launch). This thing, I
thought to myself, freaking rocks.

For those of you who may have been
out of circulation for a while, a snow bike
is a dirt bike that’s been modified by
replacing the front wheel with a ski and
the rear wheel, swingarm (and
sometimes airbox) with a track. Kits from
a variety of vendors may be used to
transform any reasonably powerful dirt
bike (you’ll need some displacement to
keep that track spinning) to a narrow-
track snow machine that is
suspended, stable, turns more quickly
than you might think and an absolute gas
to ride. Conversion typically takes less
than three hours.

Despite my initial get-off, all
trepidation was forgotten as soon as I got
the snow bike up to speed for the first time. Snow biking is dirt-biking, skiing and snow-machining combined into a single package that is simply a hoot. You want one.

I come at snow biking from the perspectives of both a skier and a dirt biker. The thing I found most intriguing from my afternoon on a snow bike was that it turned like a ski. Early commitment, crossover, lean – all of the elements of a proper ski turn are there. Tip the bike early with a dollop of throttle and it’ll turn faster than you would think.

Sans front wheel, one can feel a slight lack of gyroscopic stability from the front, but as long as the front ski is on the ground it’s not an issue.

The snow bike that I rode displayed exceptional handling courtesy of first rate suspension bits, near perfect balance, tenacious track bite and excellent feedback from all of the controls and suspension. Side hills were a snap due to a relatively narrow track. The track brake was excellent and stopping, like turning, was less of a chore than I had imagined. I don’t have a lot of experience on sleds but I felt immediately at home tackling steeps and side hills on the bike (I had more difficulty in the same terrain when I switched to a sled).

Before my dirt bike days I spent a decade working as a certified ski instructor. During that time I skied well over 1000 days. My snow bike experience has really opened my eyes to some
possibilities for fun in the snow I had never before considered. For starters, backcountry skiers will find a snow bike to be a tool that is both enjoyable in its own right as well as effective for accessing remote stashes of backcountry powder. Crossover athletes will likely find that riding a snow bike is more similar to skiing than riding a snow machine. I think that erstwhile skiers - like me - could be a great potential market for snow bikes.

The best feature of snow biking is that snow bikes free the rider from the tyranny of the fall line – something that millions of vertical feet of gravity-powered downhill skiing had ingrained in me. Snow bikes allow one to ignore the fall line and ski uphill – completely unrestrained by gravity or brief spurts of momentum. It’s quite a treat to experience face shots moving uphill on what feels like a ski.
THE BLUERIBBON COALITION (BRC) represented managed OHV recreation interests recently at the Western Governors’ Association (WGA) Species Conservation and Endangered Species Act (ESA) Initiative workshop held on November 12-13 in Cody, Wyoming.

This event was the kickoff for a series of meetings for this initiative led by Wyoming Governor Matt Mead. Approximately 100 leaders from the energy sector, local/state government, conservation groups, environmental non-governmental organizations, ranchers, timber industry, and motorized and non-motorized recreation non-profit groups attended the workshop.

According to the WGA, the initiative will create a mechanism for states to share best practices in species management, promote and elevate the role of states in species conservation efforts, and explore ways to improve the efficacy of the Endangered Species Act.

"We need to get to a place where the Endangered Species Act can provide predictability for species, our citizens and for industry," said Governor Mead, who encouraged workshop participants to set an
Don Amador, who attended the meeting on behalf of BRC, states, “Having been part of several unsuccessful ‘ESA reform’ efforts over the last 25 years, I believe that Governor Mead and the WSA should be commended for creating this bi-partisan forum in an attempt to bring the 1970s-era ESA into the 21st Century.”

“Numerous concerns about the ESA were brought in the workshop. Those issues included judicial actions that move goalposts where success is never achieved, conflicting statutes that pit one species against another, and access restrictions,” Amador noted.

“I think this was a good start and is worthy of our support since ESA related management decisions are impacting both private and public lands on a national basis. Modernizing the ESA using tools such as adaptive management, incentive-based conservation programs on private lands, litigation reform and collaboration among diverse stakeholder groups are key concepts that we should embrace,” Amador concluded.

The locations of the next three workshops are as follows: Boise, Idaho, on Jan. 19; Oahu, Hawaii, on February 12, and Colorado at a date to be announced in March.
YOU GET THE NEWS via the newspaper or social media - one of your favorite riding areas is in dispute and could disappear. Everyone is wound up. Anger and confusion prevail. Someone’s going to get an earful.

Before you set out to kneecap those you perceive as responsible, it might be wise to take a deep breath and rational stock of the situation. The future, after all, is unwritten. What you do next could well be very important in determining what ultimately happens.

Something that seems to confuse people on all sides of debates about access is that their individual ownership stake in public land is about 1/319,000,000. No matter how much you or I or anyone else thinks that our vision ought to prevail, that’s just not always going to happen. Given that, your power as an individual is greatly leveraged by the power of persuasion.

As a person who has personally adjudicated land use issues I can assure you that well-reasoned arguments play a lot better than ones that are merely passionate. Sometimes all that it takes is a single well-written letter to the editor or one well-spoken individual at a public meeting to sway a decision. It’s not always numbers or who yells the loudest. You really can make a difference - as long as you use persuasion rather than anger as your tool.

Gather facts, challenge bad science or methodology and avoid name-calling or sarcasm. The idea is for your argument to be more appealing than your opposition’s. The key is to be calm and reasoned. Always be the adult in the room.

Nothing works every time. But given the choice between dealing with mature and immature behavior, most land managers are going to prefer option one. I’ll go with that every time.

Reprinted with permission from the Dirt Rider Magazine, November, 2015, issue. Readers should check out Dirt Rider for themselves, not just to find more outstanding articles on “all things dirt,” but because of their outstanding support of recreation access. For more information, visit them online (www.dirtrider.com)
I MET JIM MCIVER through our collaborative sessions for the Nez Perce-Clearwater Forest Plan Revision efforts. Jim wears many hats, but to relate to this story, he is President of the Lewis & Clark ATV Club and has held that title for 20 years. He is also a member of the Public Land Access Year-Round (PLAY) club and the Idaho Pathfinders OHV Club.

The Lewis & Clark ATV Club started in 1999 with about 20 members. They currently have about 200 members. The club works closely with local and state authorities to keep the trails and forest open for all to use. They help protect and ensure the public’s right to ride in this area of Idaho and Washington. They also want to help ensure that future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy recreating on public lands. They assist the US Forest Service, Idaho Department of Lands, Bureau of Land Management, Idaho Fish & Game and Washington Fish & Wildlife to maintain OHV trails.

Jim said, “As a club we appreciate our public lands, while promoting the fun and enjoyment that the OHV/ATV has to offer. We encourage safe riding and riding trails responsibly, and being respectful of our public lands. We sponsor the enactment of fair use laws and regulations pertaining to the operation of ATVs.”

He added, “We belong to the Idaho ATV Association (www.idahostateatv.org) and The BlueRibbon Coalition (www.sharetrails.org). Both are non-profit organizations dedicated to protecting responsible recreational access to public lands and waters. We want to keep public land open for use, whether you recreate on mountain bikes, snowmobiles, personal watercrafts, ATVs, four-wheel drive vehicles, on a horse or in your hiking boots.”

The club had 15 project days and maintained 103.6 trails this year. The projects included Gold Hill, Horse Camp, Musselshell, Moosehorn, Clark Mountain, and Orogrande trail systems. Usually at least 4 members were at each work day, but sometimes as many as 10 members helped out. The club opened trails by clearing downfalls, repairing water bars, and removing debris from the trail.

This piece is part of a series on local OHV groups and their contributions in maintaining the Off-Highway Vehicle trail system on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. The article in its original format is online: [http://bit.ly/NezPerce-CWater-0116](http://bit.ly/NezPerce-CWater-0116)
The group provides trail condition reports to the Ranger District as soon as the snow melts each year. Jim has worked with Tim Lewis, Trails Technician, on the North Fork Ranger District for 20 years and said he is a great guy to work with, really knows his area and has a heck of a work ethic.

The Lewis & Clark ATV Club attended a Chainsaw Class instructed by Shawn Dieterich on the Palouse Ranger District and Jim commended Sean on his teaching and safety skills.

“Fires didn't really affect our trail projects as we had trails cleaned before fire season began. I think there is going to be a lot of work in some areas next year where the fires have burned. Moosehorn in particular,” shared Jim.

When the group isn’t clearing trails, they take winter OHV road rides to communities like Ferdinand, Peck, Keuterville, Craigmont, Cottonwood, Troy and Winchester. They support these small towns by stopping for lunch or dinner, buying gas, and purchasing an occasional souvenir.

The club meets at 7:00 pm the third Tuesday of every month in the basement of the Lewiston Eagles, 1304 Main Street in Lewiston.

For more information on the Lewis & Clark ATV Club, visit them online:

http://www.lewisclarkatv.org/
WE ALL LOVE SNOW and not all of us have snowmobiles to go play in it. My family and I live close to the Sierras and can go play in the snow when we have it. The last couple of years the snow has been pretty sparse across our mountain range.

I thought I would write an article to remind the 4x4 folks of some of the things that they should include on any trip out onto the snowy trails of our great country.

✓ We should never go alone on a snow wheeling trip. The conditions can change quickly in the forest or your favorite snow wheeling location. Having friends ensures that you will make it home if you get your vehicle stuck and have to leave it behind. If you have a major mechanical failure, your friends might have the tools or parts to help get your vehicle moving or off the trail at the end of the day. I always find it a little more fun to have friends out playing in the snow with me also. If they have kids that they bring, watching them play in the snow making snowballs or sledding on some of the hills along the way can bring a smile to anyone’s face.

✓ Prior to leaving the house, make sure you have packed accordingly for the trip as the snow can be very unforgiving to our vehicles. Some things to remember:
✓ Blankets or sleeping bags to stay warm if you need to stop for an extended period of time for repairs or recovery.
✓ Food and water for everyone in the vehicle to include pets that will last at least two days.
✓ Recovery gear that will help you either self-recover or recover another vehicle.
✓ Spare parts for your vehicle. You should know what your vehicle’s weak points are and have the tools and parts to be able to make repairs if necessary.
✓ A way to start a fire if you need to spend the night on the trail with a broken vehicle or an injured person.
First aid kit to attend to an injured individual on the trail. The little plastic box ones are all right for home where a hospital or emergency room is usually not too far away. On the trail, some of the small trauma kits have the necessary equipment to care for a seriously injured individual. These cost a little more, but what is the price on someone’s life if we need these specific supplies?

A good CB or Ham radio to be able to talk to your fellow wheelers on the trail. Ham radios are becoming more popular, but do require an FCC license to use. These also have the ability to reach out to emergency help if needed.

A camera to record all the fun you will have while out on the trail in the snow.

As you can see in the above picture, we have a friend that goes snow wheeling with us that is an EMT. But not everyone has this resource available to them. Having some basic first aid training is also a good tool to have for any time that there is a potential for someone to get hurt. As Warn says, “Go Prepared.”

Wheeling in the snow is totally different than playing on or in the rocks. Airing down your tires is necessary and every vehicle is different. You will have to play with your air pressure to figure out what works for your vehicle. For me, about 5 psi works for most of the snow. I have had to go down to 3 psi to help break trail and vehicle recovery. Having beadlock wheels helps ensure that my tires stay on the rim in the snow.

Once all done and ready to head home after your day in the snow, you need a way to air up your tires. We should always have this ability, no matter when you go wheeling. I carry a CO2 tank and have an ARB compressor under the hood.

This list is primarily for 4x4s, and I am sure other users can modify this list as they see fit to fit their specific over the snow vehicle.

Last but certainly not least, have fun with your friends and family in the snow while playing on our public or private lands.
AFTER MORE THAN FIFTEEN YEARS of effort on the part of BlueRibbon Coalition, I wanted to experience the program that allows non-commercially guided snowmobile access to Yellowstone Park in winter. In March of last year I got that chance.

On Sunday, March 8, 2015, I had the opportunity to become a Non-Commercial Guide under the new Yellowstone Non-Commercially Guided Snowmobile Access Program. This program allows an individual to apply for a permit at the Recreation.gov website. Next, after making a successful application, I paid the use and reservation fee, for a total of $46.00. The next step is to take and pass the online "Yellowstone Snowmobile Education Course". This course is required for each operator of each BAT snowmobile. The website for the course is: http://provalenslearning.com/yellowstone-snowmobile-education-certificate (include all hyphens in URL).

Note: The required BAT snowmobiles can be rented at each gate from a concessionaire or you can provide your own. In the case of the South Gate, we rented from Scenic Safaris. They are located at the South Gate and can be reached at 307-734-8898.

The riders in my non-commercial group, which can total only five machines, were Janet Feigelson and Geoff Inglis from Steamboat Springs, CO, Chuck Ramsey, Wellington, CO, and Jeff Wiese from Colorado Springs, CO.

We started our day early with a drive from Alpine, Wyoming, to Flagg Ranch. At Flagg, we checked in with Scenic Safaris and got suited up for the adventure. Next
we had a short safety talk by the Scenic Safaris representative who covered the operation of the four stroke BAT 2015 Ski Doo machines. He reviewed the hand signals we would use as we toured the Park. Note, Scenic Safaris provided us with the Park Service’s recommended safety gear. (Note: for complete information about the Yellowstone Non-Commercially Guided Access Program visit the Park Service website (www.nps.gov/yell/management/ngsap.htm).

The first stop as we entered the Park on the way to Old Faithful was the South Entrance Ranger Station. At the station we received our formal permit from Ranger John McCudy who also gave us a final briefing on what to expect as we traveled to Old Faithful.

We left the Ranger Station ready for the adventure to begin. Before I start the account of the 110 mile round trip trek, it should be noted that, besides myself, Chuck was the only rider that had visited the Park before by snowmobile in the winter. The rest of the group was about to see first hand why the snowmobile as transportation to Old Faithful is a special experience. I have ridden the Park many times in the last 40 years and my knowledge would add to the adventure.

The weather was cool and crisp, the trail was, of course, the groomed summer highway and it was very smooth. However, we saw that snowcoaches can leave ruts and had to watch for them. As we headed for our next stop, the Lewis River Falls, the riders got their first taste of the beautiful scenic vistas of the Park as we traveled along the rim of the Lewis River.
overlook. During our stop at the overlook the group got to see their first snowcoach and asked about how it fit into the Yellowstone transportation system. I explained that it was another form of access to the Park. The folks from Steamboat commented they like the snowmobile better.

We continued on to Old Faithful. The timing was perfect. We arrived with just a few minutes before the Old Faithful Geyser went off. When the geyser finished it was lunch time. We went to the Geyser Grill for a quick lunch. During the lunch I was asked why anti groups want to eliminate access by snowmobile to Yellowstone. I explained the issues and how the snowmobile community had solved the many issues presented by the antis.

Time was growing late. However, I had planned a special longer stop at West Thumb to tour several thermal features on foot. We also had time to talk to the Ranger at the Warming Hut. After the tour we returned to our snowmobiles and started back to Flagg Ranch. The last stop before leaving Yellowstone Park is a very popular stop because of the large Yellowstone entrance sign, a great place for group pictures. After picture taking we kept pushing and arrived back at Flagg at 4:30 pm. After filling the Ski Doos with fuel we started the Suburban ride back to Jackson, WY.

The entire group, and especially the folks...
from Steamboat Springs, agreed that "closing snowmobile access to Yellowstone would just not be right because they felt that the snowmobile provided the best form of transportation to see the natural wonders of Yellowstone Park." They all agreed that snowmobiling to Old Faithful was something they will long remember, and going with a non-commercial guide who had ridden the Park many times was a very positive experience.

I have been riding in Yellowstone Park in winter since 1969, and have only missed one year. The trip covered in this article is the FIRST time I have traveled from the South Gate to Old Faithful and the only others we encountered were two Rangers on snowmobiles. What a special experience.

Please remember to visit us online at: www.saveyellowstonepark.com for the latest information on Yellowstone winter access.
AS I REVIEW the number of Recommended Wilderness Study Areas (RWAs) within Forest or Travel Plan revisions in Montana that are closing all motorized access, it makes me think of the age old axiom “doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different outcome is insanity,” ergo: 1) hope a Forest Plan revision will not take away our back country snowmobile areas, 2) sue, at great expense when it does, then 3) place our case at the mercy of a judge who—more often than not—is sympathetic to the closure advocates (read: discounts the science and interprets the law to suit personal ideology).

There has to be a better approach to keeping public lands open to the public. I don’t profess to have the “silver bullet” to fix the problem but I do have a few ideas.

While many (certainly not all) back country snowmobilers and wilderness advocates are aware of the implications of Forest and Travel Plan revisions, the general public simply is not aware or interested in the outcome(s). This translates into no pressure on our congressional leaders to push for any change in the process. National Protection Area or National Recreation Area designations are a viable alternative to a Wilderness designation. So first off we need to ensure those alternatives become part of the Forest Planning process. Talking about it amongst ourselves is akin to “preaching to the Choir” (like I’m doing right now). We need to make our representatives aware of our concerns and offer realistic solutions. This means taking the time to talk, write or email them. If they hear enough voices it becomes incumbent upon them to consider our concerns. They are elected to represent us!. If (when) we can get them to support our position it will become a “trickle down” message to the general public.

Personally I don’t think it is too much of a stretch to get the general public to understand that it makes sense to consider alternative designations to a wilderness designation that will keep primitive areas primitive yet allow motorized access that does not create any negative environmental impact. As I used to tell my sales force when I was in business “you can have the best gizmo in the world but if people don’t know about it they aren’t going to buy it.” This is our sales job: to reach the public with our message. So you say “I’m not a salesperson”… I say, “it took a sales job to convince your spouse you needed a new sled.” Yes, you can do it.

To bring a bit of perspective to my idea,
consider this: Congress has very little appetite for approving new wilderness areas because, you guessed it, the public is generally not supportive of new wilderness designations. The Forest Service knows this and has done an end run around Congress by managing RWAs in Region One as wilderness. This treatment is being currently being challenged in court but I suspect any victory will be met with another methodology to try continue another end run...unless there is political pressure to change.

The BSP had thought about hiring a nation-ally recognized pollster to conduct a poll in Montana to get a public reading on alternative designations to wilderness but found out it would cost about $30,000.00 so that didn’t fly. I’m open to ideas how we can get an unbiased gauge of public opinion to present to our Congressional delegation in order to get them to publicly support alternatives to wilderness. You can contact me at www.sledpatriots.com.

Unless we can get political pressure to enact change at the Washington, DC, level we are just going to continue an uphill battle. At the onset of a Forest or Travel Plan revision the Forest Supervisor might be onboard with a plan of compromise in the back country but he/she takes orders from the Region Supervisor who takes orders from the Chief Forester in Washington, DC. I have personal (unpleasant) experience in the “top down rules” overturning what the Forest Supervisor proposed. As the supervisor stated “their hair was on fire because they were so mad.”

In summation, contact your Congressional delegation. You can google their information. Write letters to the editor to reach people who have only heard the other side to managing our (public) back country.

Last, but not least, become engaged in Forest and Travel Plan revisions. This is a public process. It is appalling to me the low number of snowmobilers who actually participate in these exercises yet are the first to complain once an area is closed. The more participation, the harder it is for the “top down rule” to be justified.

These are not “end all” solutions but I do believe it is a better alternative to “doing the same thing over and over.”
WASHINGTON DC
TRAILS SUMMIT REPORT

by Paul Turcke
BRC Lead Counsel
BRC WAS FORTUNATE to participate in the Trails Summit held in Washington, DC, on November 19-20, 2015. The event was organized by the Forest Service and facilitated by the Integrated Resources Enterprise Team. Chief Tidwell gave an introductory presentation setting the tone for the event. There were roughly 50 attendees. The Regional Directors were present from nearly every region, as well as national recreation staff, and a smattering of trails program managers. There was a significant Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) presence, including nonmotorized advocates such as the Sierra Club, American Hiking Society and REI, and nonmotorized enthusiast groups including Backcountry Horsemen and IMBA. Lead Counsel Paul Turcke attended for BRC, alongside long-time motorized recreation partners Lori McCullough of TreadLightly!, Christine Jourdain of ACSA and Russ Ehnes of NOHVCC.

From the beginning there was a universal and energizing recognition that recreation is the dominant, yet still undervalued, use of the National Forest System. It appears a primary goal of the Summit was to craft a handful of action items for the Chief to consider for quick implementation. The Summit was timed to coincide with national “trails leadership” meetings which occurred in DC earlier in the week. This effort follows a concerted, roughly yearlong, strategic planning effort by the Forest Service, reflected in multiple events including Tails Connect, the National Trails Collaborative, Trails Think Tank and other regional learning sessions and focus groups. This effort is encouraging, but appears to have been a largely internal effort, with occasional NGO inclusion. Hopefully the greater partner and motorized recreation presence at the Trails Summit foreshadows a greater role in future discussions.

A list of nine “challenges” became the focus of the facilitated work we did during the bulk of the Summit. This list reflects substantial prior agency planning and forms the basis for future analysis/action. It may be worth outlining this list verbatim:

1. We are unable to manage the current trail system we have and the demand for more is increasing.
2. Unmanaged recreation is a hard truth.
3. The agency is not keeping pace with changing trends in user demand for new or different trail use.
4. The digital age we live in is complex and rapidly changing. Government agencies are not quick at adapting to changes.
5. Our processes and procedures often make it difficult to partner with us.
6. The agency’s approach to permitting and outfitted services, including capacity analysis and needs assessments, is hindering the ability to enhance guest services.

7. Our nation’s demographics have changed significantly and, to remain relevant, it’s paramount that we reach and reflect the society we serve.

8. There are significant opportunities to sustain trails through citizen stewardship, including expanded use of non-appropriated funds and increased use of volunteers and partnerships. The full potential, however, is not being realized and associated agency skills and capacity are limited.

9. Our training is inadequate for our trail maintenance workforce and we continue to lose essential skills.

Through facilitated discussion this list was refined and specific challenges selected. The overall group was motivated and talented, and the groups were constantly shuffled so there were very few “dead spots” in the effort. This distillation prioritized some of the original nine challenges and refined or added different challenges.

Day two started with a significant focus on “equity” starting with a presentation by Autumn Saxton-Ross, who is the Program Director for the National Collaborative for Health and Equity. In broad terms, this discussion starts from the foundation that there are significant correlations between health and outdoor activity and that outdoor activity is practiced disproportionately in our culture by certain populations. At least part of the explanation may be that we have created barriers for many segments of our culture to “get outdoors.” An equity focus would explore ways that we can remove these barriers and create literal and figurative pathways for these populations to find value in trail-based recreation. This discussion might seem tangential to
effective trail management, but the short and long term challenges facing the Forest Service may hinge on making recreation politically relevant. It is true that agency staff/budget allocations are insufficient and dwindling, but one cannot fault politicians for allowing this trend to develop and continue when our public lands recreation infrastructure caters to an increasingly marginalized population of our broader society. An “equity” or “diversity” campaign can also closely connect to a “health” campaign touting the benefits of outdoor recreation. There might be potential in such a broader agency/partner campaign to enhance the sociopolitical profile of, and thus support for, trails-based recreation.

The personal interactions are always an important benefit of an event like this and seemed particularly so here. Nearly all the participants made an effort to work the whole crowd. There were robust and genuine exchanges involving agency leadership, trail managers, corporate attendees, strange bedfellows and old friends. These discussions can form the catalyst for successful collaboration or strategy.

The “sustainability” model of the 2012 Planning Rule appears to be providing a significant foundation for current agency-think on recreation. The agency has created an image depicting these concepts. This is largely premised on a tripartite model of environmental, economic and social sustainability. According to the model, the target is the “star” in the middle where these three spheres overlap. BRC and grassroots recreationists should be aware of this model and its role shaping current agency analysis/policy.

The ultimate role of the Trails Summit and "swan song" of current leadership remains to be seen. BRC will continue these discussions, both of the formal work of the Summit, as well as the sidebars that developed with multiple attendees. It feels like current leadership is looking to do “something big” for recreation and trails in particular, and BRC will continue to play a role in that process.
WHILE THE HUNTING AND FISHING community often has different priorities than the off-road vehicle community, we share a common need: Men and women in our ranks depend on access to public lands.

We also agree on two ideals: America's 438 million public acres of National Forest and Bureau of Land Management lands should be managed for many different uses—including energy and fiber production, outdoor recreation, and habitat improvement—so as to best meet the needs of the American people. And these resources should only be taken from the land in a sustained-yield manner. It doesn’t matter if you are an off-road vehicle enthusiast from Idaho, a birdwatcher from Wyoming, or a rancher whose cattle graze public lands in Montana, the public lands system is intended to be managed for all of us.

You’ve probably heard talk about “transferring” millions of acres of federal public lands to individual states. Public land transfer advocates promise that under this system, we can rid our lives of the federal government and have state-managed lands with more wildlife, more recreational access, and fewer wildfires and rules.

While these claims sounds great, the promises will never be realized. Here’s why: All of the Western states are constitutionally required to manage state lands to maximize profit, not multiple-use of the land’s assets. Under this model, lands that can’t produce maximum income through natural resource production are sold off. Nevada, for example, was given 2.7 million acres when it became the 36th state in the union in 1864, and it has sold all but 3,000 of those acres. Utah has sold more than 50 percent of its original land grant. All across the West, the story remains the same: Western states have remained committed to selling off public lands.

And if those lands are sold to private interests, there is a good chance you will no longer be able to access them.

Compared to our federal lands managed for multiple use, state lands generally offer limited recreational opportunities. For example, hunting and fishing are prohibited on more than 80 percent of Colorado state lands. Dispersed camping is limited to two days in Montana, while camping and target shooting are prohibited in New Mexico. Overnight camping and open fires are prohibited on state lands in Wyoming.

And, as most of you are probably aware, off-road vehicle use is prohibited on state lands in all of the states I just mentioned.
The real outcome of state management of our federal lands would likely be less access, more fees, and fewer opportunities to provide input. Unfortunately, land transfer advocates are aggressively pursuing their agenda, and 37 bills were introduced in 11 states in 2015 to seize or otherwise undermine America’s public lands system. While only six of those bills passed in four states, this should be cause for alarm to those of us who depend on public lands for our recreation.

It is time for all of us to step up and tell our decision makers to reject the idea that our public lands should be handed over to the states. Instead, we should encourage them to address shortfalls in public lands management. If there is an access or management problem, let’s work to fix it—not throw away our birthright. To this end, the sportsmen’s community recently created a campaign called “Unlocking Sportsmen’s Access,” that is being led by 37 hunting and fishing organizations and businesses. Check it out at sportsmensaccess.org. We hope we can count on you, and the many other outdoor enthusiasts who depend on public lands, to stand with us.

Joel Webster is the Director of the Center for Western Lands with the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, an organization dedicated to guaranteeing Americans quality places to hunt and fish. He is an International Scout enthusiast and lives, works, and hunts public lands in Montana (learn more at trcp.org).
OUR ADVENTURE STARTED OUT with dinner at Connie's across the street from our lodging at Sawtell Mountain Resort at 7:00pm Saturday February 28th, 2015. We had 31 adventurers from three states and one Canadian Province. We had fun getting to know our new snowmobile friends in Island Park, West Yellowstone, and Alpine and our two new couples that joined us for the first time this year.

The bright blue skies and warm temperatures made the snow conditions the worst we have seen in a few years. On our first day of riding we broke up into three groups. One headed to Big Springs and the Black Canyon Trail. The second group went up on to the Two Tops Loop and found some areas to get off trail for some boondocking and views of Two Tops and other mountain ranges in the area. Our third group went up and found their way around some new areas up on Mount Jefferson. We all met back at Connie's for dinner and a night's sleep at Sawtell Mountain Resort.

Our second day of riding had us break up into four groups. One headed to the Two Tops loop while the second group headed for the Big Springs area and on to Black Canyon for some off trail riding with “go-anywhere” snow conditions. The third group met with our new friends from High Mountain Adventures for a friendship ride up to Mount Jefferson. The fourth group went out on their own to explore more new places on Mount Jefferson. All had a good day that ended with a short drive over to West Yellowstone and comfortable beds at the Three Bear Lodge.

Our third day riding had us break up into three groups for 100+ miles of riding in each group. The first group went to Mesa Falls, a gas stop in Island Park, and a trip back to West Yellowstone via Two Top Loop. The second group headed to Black Canyon for a day of riding deep in the woods where they
finally found some untouched snow. The third group started out at Black canyon but then ended up over in the Twin Creek area. We returned to Three Bear Lodge for food and a good night’s sleep.

Our fourth day we split into three groups. Group one rode at Two Tops and Twin Creek. The second group rode over to Twin Creek and on to the west side of Lyon Head for some boondocking. The third group trailered over to the east side of Lion Head where some good powder was found. They eventually ended up in the West Denny Creek draw with running water and fun with lots of creek crossings, with bridge building to stay dry and some problems with overheating.

They finally found their way out of the draw without having to turn around and go back the way they came. All made it back for dinner at the Three Bear Lodge and for some hard-earned sleep.

On our 5th day, we trailered up to what the locals call Cabin Creek. The S&W group knows it better as Carrot Basin. The three groups split up and had a great day of back country riding in the area. This is a great place for both scenery and challenging riding. There are lots of hills, mountains, drainages and draws to drop into for a fun day of riding. Three Bear Lodge was ready for our return with great food and comfortable rooms.

Day 6 started out with trailering to Alpine, Wyoming. We met at the Alpine Trail Head, where we split up into our three groups. The first group road up to Blind Bull via trail C while the other two groups went to the McCain Cabin area. We tried to stay separated but all ended
up boondocking in the same area trying to find a way up to Blind Bull. There was more overheating, so some had to turn back early while others continued on. All made it back to the Alpine trail head and on over to the Flying Saddle Resort for dinner drinks and a good night’s sleep.

Our seventh and last day of riding had us all at the Alpine Trail Head. Group one headed to Blind Bull and around to the Box Y and back to the Alpine trail head via trail C. The second group went to the Box Y area via trail C and on around to Blind Bull and back to the Alpine Trail Head via trail C. Group three went back to the McCain Cabin Area to continue the search for a way up to Blind Bull. All had a great day and made it back to the Flying Saddle Resort for food and the final night of camaraderie to end this year’s tour.

Sunday morning at breakfast was a time for parting words before heading home or to other great snowmobiling areas to continue the riding. A small group went to Flag Ranch for a self-guided trip into Yellowstone National Park which is talked about in another article.

The whole week was fun for all even though the snow conditions were not that great. We did find good snow off and on throughout the week. The friendships gained and advanced on our adventures are what really makes going worth the time. We met new snowmobilers who are excited about our sport and their area and are excited to show us around, so we thank all who helped out this year. Many thanks to all the wonderful businesses, clubs and new friends that took time to make this adventure a memorable one.
BIG HORN MOUNTAINS was the site for the 13th Annual Bear Lodge Resort Bad Boys Riding Club annual dinner party and season kick off, attended by Sharetrails/BlueRibbon Coalition (BRC) Vice President Jack Welch. At the event, the leaders of the riding club announced a $1,000 contribution to BRC for use in Snowmobile Winter Use Issues.

The Bear Lodge Bad Boys Riding Club was founded in 2002 by Tom Kostreba and Rick Young. The purpose of the Club is to promote year round awareness of the recreational riding areas in the Big Horn Mountains and the surrounding region open to those activities. The "Club" has only one activity each year and that is the $50,000 raffle/donation for which 500 tickets are sold for a $100 donation each.

BlueRibbon Coalition Board & staff would like to thank the Bear Lodge Resort Bad Boys Riding Club and all the snowmobilers that helped make the event a success and for their support of BRC. It is with help from excellent clubs like this that help keep BRC in the fight for YOUR access.

Robert Young, Tom Kostreba, Rick Young—The Founders of "Bad Boys Riding Club"—present BRC’s Jack Welch with a check for $1,000.
WINTER OR SUMMER
We Support Motorized Access to Public Lands.