



Cooke City Snow Plowing Summit
May 20, 2011

Working Document
Updated 7/14/2011
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Snow Plowing Meeting
May 20, 2011
Cooke City, Montana Visitor Center
10:30 am - 2:30 pm

Meeting Agenda

Meeting Goal: To gather accurate information regarding the potential for maintaining the Beartooth Highway year-round in order to provide rubber-tire vehicle access to Cooke City and Sliver Gate, MT and Yellowstone National Park

Meeting Opening / Announcements	10:30 - 10:35
Review of Proposed Agenda	10:35 - 10:40
Introductions	10:40 - 11:00
Comments from Park County MT & WY Commissioners	11:00 - 11:15
Review of materials received to date	11:15 - 11:20
Question & Answer Time for County Commissioners	11:20 - 12:00
Lunch Break	12:00 - 12:30
Sandwiches, chips, brownies will be provided	
Question & Answer Time for all	12:30 - 2:15
Wrap up	2:15 - 2:30

Panelists at May 20th
"Cooke City Snowing Plow Summit" meeting

Marty Malone - Meeting Organizer
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Park County, Wyoming Commissioners

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Wyoming DOT

Ronald R. Huff

District Maintenance Engineer

Basin, WY

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Meeting Minutes
Submitted by Suzy Hahn & Bev Chatelain
Cooke City Community Council

Snow Plowing Meeting May 20, 2011

Cooke City, Montana Visitor's Center

Meeting goal: To gather accurate information regarding the potential for maintaining the Beartooth Highway year-round in order to provide rubber-tire vehicle access to Cooke City and Silver Gate, MT and Yellowstone National Park.

Meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m. by Kim Capron. Introductions made by Kim Capron and she stated that the meeting was made possible by a coordination with she & Marty Malone, Park County Commissioner.

Panel:

Terry Root: Shoshone National Forest District Ranger

Loren Grosskopf: Park County Wyoming Commissioner

Bucky Hall: Park County Wyoming Commissioner

Marty Malone: Park County Montana Commissioner

Mary Maj: Gallatin National Forest District Ranger

Steve lobst: Yellowstone National Park Deputy Superintendent, Chief of Maintenance

John Swartz: Montana DOT Maintenance Administrator

Ron Huff: Wyoming DOT district 5 maintenance engineer

Joe Tilden: Park County Wyoming Commissioner

Tim French: Park County Wyoming Commissioner

Kim's opening comments, she had "what I know for sure" (WIKFS): people have a passion for the BAAR, people have opinions to the 10th degree and there is limited time for the meeting and made a request that folks be respectable of time. The focus of the meeting is for information and not a chance to testify.

In attendance: (see sign in sheet)

There was also provided a sign-up sheet available at the building entrance for those who chose to ask questions during the afternoon Q&A session.

Review of the proposed agenda: There were no comments from the floor or panel therefore the agenda was adopted.

Marty Malone made opening comments and praised the Cooke City Community for the new facility, Visitor Center. He thanked all for attending and gave a warm welcome.

Review of materials available that were presents to the panel with- in the deadline of three days prior to the meeting.

New materials were presented the day of the meeting and will be attached to these minutes as well.

Kim gave a chance for the panel to meet and ask questions of one another.

- 1) Malone to lobst: Q: What is the responsibility to the NPS? A: The NPS has the authority to maintain the Beartooth Highway from the NE Entrance to the MT/WY state line at mile post 43.1 . They have had this responsibility since the construction of the road. Until 1965 they were responsible to mile post 60. This includes the plowing, maintenance and spring opening. They must provide access thru YNP for the residents of Colter Pass, Cooke City & Silver Gate to the North Entrance year around. The objective is to keep the road open and safe even thru the winter to the east edge of Cooke City. There was comment that the road was closed more than usual this winter due to harsh weather. Steve agreed that in Mid-December thru the end of January the road was closed due to drifting conditions. The NPS did have to extend plowing hours on occasion.
- 2) Hall to lobst: Q: If the road was plowed from Cooke City to Pilot Creek, would the Park lose the enthusiasm to plow the road from the N Entrance to the NE Entrance: A: lobst responded that the NPS would NOT lose the enthusiasm to plow this section of road.
- 3) Malone to Maj: What authority do they have on the management of the Highway? A: Maj responded that the USFS has no authority on the management of the actual highway but they are responsible for the public land adjacent to the highway. There would be consideration given to how it would affect other resources if the road were plowed. For example, there would be the consideration of parking and re-routing the trail.
- 4) Terry Root: Commented on the possibility of re-routing the trail and that they may be able to work around the lynx issue. The Shoshone would request a cost recovery from the entity who desired the trail re-route.

The USFS would not be responsible for seeking the funding for the requirement of a NEPA, EIS etc. They would only have involvement only in something “off” the road surface, such as parking. The study would not guarantee the road plowing or trail re-route would be approved after the study.

- 5) Grosskopf to lobst: Q What conditions are placed on the NPS for requirements of how often to plow? A: There are no written guideline, policies or procedures. By law they are responsible according the National Park Approach Roads Act. This is a Federal Highway and by law they have to take responsibility for the road until such time that the state takes over. Therefore the NPS will continue with the responsibility to plow.
- 6) Grosskopf to Root: Q: How would they determine the alignment of the alternate trail from Pilot to Cooke City? A: Many items would need to be considered such as the slope, vegetation, clearing, soil type, water flow, species, impact of land traversed. It would be a similar to building a road. This would be an extensive process and at least 8-9 miles. The USFS would not address the issue of private property nor the expense. The expense would be the responsibility of the entity who took the lead for the alternate trail. They could consider the “old county road”. To begin the NEPA process would take at least one year. If approved the project would then have to be placed on the SOPA schedule. The USFS would be responsible for the timber sales and permitting. Mary Maj interjected that it would be quite a bit further than 8-9 miles in order to do a new route from Cooke City to the Beartooths considering the total trail system. Maj- also mentioned that the issue at hand is not the alternate trail but whether or not to plow the highway. Bert Miller(WSSA) commented that the issues go hand in hand.
- 7) French to lobst: Q: Who would the actual request come from in order to be considered, would this come from Park County Montana or Wyoming ? A: I am not sure. There would have to be an analysis of impact, both positive and negative. Such as, the staffing of the NE Entrance year around and longer distance of road plowing. They would expect increase in visitation to YNP. lobst stated that (no matter what entity requested the plowing) the NPS does not want to step into controversy beyond the Park boundaries. They would need assurance that the variety of questions were addressed and at least funding. Evaluation prior to plowing would have to be done for them being the maintenance agent. See unanswered question list.
- 8) Grosskopf to panel: Q: Which entity has the interest and is going to step up and take responsibility for the funding of the plowing? A: Swartz MTDOT is currently required to maintain from Red Lodge to the State line when the road is open and the spring plowing of this section. Their interest would begin only with direction from the Governor or legislation involvement. A: Huff WYDOT does not want the involvement or responsibility. US 212 is not part of the system that they maintain, they do no desire to expand, they are at a max. The maintenance funds are being decreased. The WY roads are deteriorating and the costs are increasing to maintain. A change in this position would come from the WY highway commission.
- 9) Malone addressed public health and safety and called Jan Gaertner, EMS/SAR representative & local business owner, to the mic. Malone stated that in Park County all subdivisions must have two exits and Cooke City has only one exit in the winter. Jan stated that she is a volunteer and each call takes 2-4 hours that she is away from her business and the majority of the calls are transported to Cody. She stated approximately 100 calls per year. People are taken from the toboggan to the orion to the parking lot. She originally stated they the local EMS fields 100 transports, Joe Tilden asked for a correction that this is the number of actual “calls” NOT transports. Jan agreed.
- 10) Malone to lobst: Q: What happens in the event of an emergency when the Park road is closed? A: When the road is closed, there is NO vehicular travel.
- 11) Malone to Swartz: Q: If there are federal highway funds for this highway, why is it plowed by the NPS ? A: This goes back to the National Park Approach Roads Act. Swartz added that MTDOT would assist NPS with emergency.
- 12) Hall to EMS: Q: How many actual winter transports are there to Park County Wyoming ? A: there are approximately 3-4 transports to WY each winter.
- 13) Malone to Maj: Q: How could the USFS alleviate the parking concern: Parking is available on Republic Road, Pilot Creek and if the decision is made to plow than the FS would assist with seeking parking options. Maj was asked it if was possible to expand the parking area on Republic Street. Maj A: There is currently a lot on the site but she could walk around to investigate. JoeTilden: Q: Is there parking at the McClaren site, (at the east end of town). Tilden also commented that often times at Pilot Creek, there are @100 vehicles with trailers. There is currently NO capacity for this volume of parking in the town of Cooke City. Mary A: It is State-DEQ property presently. Tim French: Commented that adequate parking and plowing have to go

hand in hand, the parking & trail re-route would need to be in place with the plowing. Maj agreed that this parking situation would need to be solidified. Root went over some of the NEPA process and the NEPA public appeal. There would be no way to commit to a change until the process is complete.

- 14) Grosskopf commented to the panel that the recreational ability in this area would be severed and lost if the road were to be plowed. He stated this is the best snowmobiling in the world and does not want to see this jeopardized. Priorities need to be in place.
- 15) Malone noted that Daisy & Lulu roads are County Roads.
- 16) Kim to Panel: Q: Has any specific entity requested this road to be plowed year round? A: lobst said in the 1980's the Park County Wyoming made a request and it was denied by Shoshone National Forest. Tim French said he was unaware of any request by Park County Wyoming at this time. lobst stated that the request would need to be from a government entity.

Meeting was called for a lunch break until 12:15 p.m.

Question & Answer session to panel from audience:

- 1) Bert Miller (WSSA): Q: Is there any agency here to take responsibility for opening of the road? A: no answer. Bert provided exhibits and handouts of the trail systems being linked, He asked a question to Root. Q: What is the timeframe for the process EIS or NEPA to go thru the entire analysis ? A: Root responded 3-5 years to complete. He provided a second exhibit, a photo of rigs parked at the junction where there was at least 150 rigs. Miller asked Park County Montana to consider helping to fund the expense of the Pilot creek Parking area. A: Malone was unable to provide a definite answer. Miller wanted to make a public thank you to Park County Wyoming for keeping the parking lot open. Miller stated that the snowmobilers do NOT want the road open, they prefer it to be a destination and not a "pass thru". Malone mentioned that MT now offers a permanent registration.
- 2) Susan Jack, Cooke City Exxon. She presented an exhibit of the MT and WY revenue generated from recreational stickers sold only from the Cooke City Exxon (see attached). She commented that this year the snowmobiling registration funds increased from last year and not a decline. She also commented to Malone in regards to two viable exits out of a subdivision did not apply to Cooke City as we are not a subdivision.
- 3) Kim Capron made a note that to date, there is not actual data to show if the majority prefers the road to be plowed year around or remain as is.
- 4) Rick Hoeninghausen, marketing director for Xanterra, gave a thanks to all entities for attending the meeting. Also a member of Park County Travel Council Board. Q: If the road was plowed year round would it offset the cost to keep the road open with the spring plowing? A: "No", there are no cost figures.
- 5) Malone made a request for revenue info from the Wyoming dealers in Cody in order to accompany the data provided from the Cooke City Exxon. Jenny, Rogers Sports Center in Cody spoke up that they do \$17-20,000 per year for MT&WY registration.
- 6) Robin Berry, owner and operator of B&B in Cody. She has attempted wolf watching tours in Lamar. She questioned the need for a Economic Study in regards to economic expansion study for opening A: NO, there has not been one conducted in the area. A: Phillip Fletcher from Park County said they are in the process of acquiring a \$100,000 grant of economic development in Park County Montana. It was made clear that she was requesting this study in Wyoming, not Montana. Berry asked why the roads were not groomed for dual use. A: Miller provided a copy of the Wyoming State Regulations Title 31 Chapter 5, Article 8 that prohibits the use of snowmobilers on main traveled roadways. See list of unanswered question.
- 7) Mike Kelley (WSSA district 5): He is an EMT in the Cody area, he questioned whether by law the West Park Hospital can bring an ambulance over the state line into Cooke City. Where does the legal jurisdiction lie ? Kelley stated that as an EMT, his license is only valid in the state of WY. Q: Does NPS consult with DOT's on when plowing ceases on the road between Cooke City & Pilot Creek A: No a date decided by NPS.
- 8) Scott & Vickie Dennistion: Stated that they preferred the road to be open year around. Q: If the road is open, will it bring more traffic ? A: Malone replied there is no data available on economic increase.
- 9) WIKFS: Kim added to her list: there is an economic study underway thru Park County Montana.
- 10) Malone to lobst: Q: Who decides the date they cease plowing on the road in question. A: it is a consolidated decision but it is rarely beyond Columbus Day Weekend. lobst stated the NPS would NOT consider extending the current plowing season.
- 11) Finkbinder: not present

- 12) Jan Gaertner: Not present
- 13) Victor Jackson: He stated he owns a business on Colter Pass where the snowmobilers ride into the Lodge. He has not seen a decrease in business in the last two years, in fact he has seen an increase. The Lodge approximately ¼ mile from the highway and it would not be cost effective to plow this portion of driveway for only 6 rental units. Q: Could the road be opened to West Yellowstone for an alternative to increase business ? A: lobst said that it could be plowed but not until the current EAS is complete. It is an alternative that is being considered. lobst stated that the NPS would NOT close the N to NE roads even if the “plug” was plowed open year around. The plug at that point would be an addition to the park roads, NOT an alternate. Q: Would the Pass be closed if unpassable if it was plowed year round? A: Yes, it would be closed. Q: Is there enough right of way in MT in WY for an alternate trail along the Highway? A: John, MT DOT “I don’t know”. Ron, WY DOT, “No, it wouldn’t be safe”.
- 14) Robert Weinstein to Jon, MT DOT Q: Is a federally funded highway legally to be kept open? For example as the closing of 191 and the lawsuit over closing during construction. A: John was not aware of any laws stating that a federally funded road must remain open. He stated that 191 was re-opened once the construction was complete, not before. lobst stated that this is a complex question as many types of roads receive federal funding whether County, State or Federal. NPS does close federally or state funded roads without jurisdiction. Robert to Root: Q: Is it not looking possible now that the alternate trail be possible even with the consideration of the Canadian lynx. A: There is no guarantee that any trail system can be built until the NEPA process is complete. This NEPA process would not just pertain to WY BUT would be coordinated with both forests in one document on a federal basis. The EA (environmental analysis) of the forest would look around at alternatives.
- 15) Ford: not present
- 16) Brian Boyle: Stated that he enjoys riding snowmobiles in the area. Q: How the snowmobile registration revenues are distributed and does a portion of these funds remain in the community. A: Bert Miller (WSSA) explained that the monies return to the general state fund and sent out from there. The dealers keep \$1/permit sold. A: Root explained that the funds from state stickers fund things thru the USFS such as snow/atv rangers, equipment, field time for wilderness patrol. He noted that the USFS purchases machines (atv/snowmobiles) locally for their use. Shoshone rec’d approximately \$48,000 this year to this project. Q: When this issue holds so much meaning, do folks exaggerate their point in order to gain support.
- 17) Bill Whittle: claims his questions were answered.
- 18) Kay Whittle: Business owner, member EMS/SAR. Kay claims that Cooke City currently has a great response system in place. Q to Malone: If the road is opened would Park County provide year round law enforcement due to the increase in visitation? A: Per 1000 visitors, they are required to provide law enforcement. But at this point they “cannot afford” a year round officer but this is something that could possibly be funded thru the resort tax. Kay Q: How many actual transports are done to Pilot Creek when the road is no longer plowed? A: The numbers can be obtained thru the Parks’ emergency system.
- 19) Raz, Matthew Schneider: Notes that this should not be all about snowmobiling. Q: Are there records available from N Gate as to how much of traffic is snowmobile as opposed to non-snowmobile. A: lobst responded that guests are counted as entries and not by class. Q: Are sticker volume sales tracked monthly ? A: Mark, WY State trails association, they have an independent consultant working and the data is not yet complete but information should be available by the summer. Q to NPS: Would they be willing to open the road by march 15th A: lobst probably not, they have a strict plowing schedule and their priority is the 200+ miles of interior roads. Q: Could a private entity bid to open the road earlier ? A: NPS would consider however the funds would not come from the government.
- 20) Chris Warren Q to panel? Are all agencies tax payer funded ? Was the recent construction project funded by tax payers? Hall answers that all agencies operate finite budgets and must allocate and prioritize. Q to panel: Why are you willing to spend the funds on the reconstruction of the road but not on the plowing of the road ? Why would you allow only a small portion of taxpayers to utilize the highway ? A: Swartz: NPS is responsible for a portion of the road, MT is responsible for a portion of the road. MT is NOT prepared to take responsibility for more of the Beartooth Highway.
- 21) Mary Maj commented that the Gallatin Forest also has access to monies from the sticker sales proceeds. They also funds snow/atv rangers etc but receive no set amounts. They apply for these funds thru a grant process

- 22) Kim Capron to panel: Q: Do entities have monies available for economic studies ? A: Miller says the WSSA has it "on their plate" to seek grants and possibly use the universities for studies.
- 23) Cody Beers: WYDOT noted they do have planning travel grants available.
- 24) Fletcher: There are several sources of funding available such as MT Dept of Commerce, Economic Development. Locally & Technically Park County can do what we need here, there is no reason to walk out of here saying there is no money available for studies.
- 25) Mary Sue from West Yellowstone noted the RAC funds that are available, projects can be submitted. Mary Maj noted that the RAC funds must be allocated by this fall and would not be viable for this project.
- 26) Karen McCreery, US Senator Enzi field rep. is willing to look for grant monies thru her office. As did a rep from Senator Testers office.
- 27) Kim FBAAR, as an example there are economic studies currently underway on the scenic byways that study where folks are from, how long they are in the area, how many people in the group, are they dining out, which route they take?
- Meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.
- Any new information submitted at the meeting, notes/comments from the meeting will be distributed via the email data base, or contact Kim.

Questions Identified for further research

1) How & when did it happen that Park County, Wyoming started plowing from the Junction of 296 & 212 for 5 miles to Pilot Creek Parking lot?

Answers from? Park County WY Commissioners

To Date: Assistance requested from Park County Commissioners via e-mail

August 9, 2011 - The following information was provided by the Park County, Wyoming Commissioners office.

From: Brenda Bangert
Sent: Tuesday, August 09, 2011 11:20 AM
To: 'info@beartoothhighway.com'; Commissioners
Cc: Greg Meinecke; Mike Collier; Peggy Ruble

Subject: Park County Snowplowing from Junction 296 & 212 to Pilot Creek

Good Morning Kim,

This note is in response to your question dated July 14, "How & when did it happen that Park County, Wyoming started plowing from the Junction of 296 & 212 for 5 miles to Pilot Creek Parking lot?" Peggy had me do some research on this question and I have attached the most recent MOU from 2008-2013 signed with details of what Park County is to do regarding the plowing. In response to the "how & when did it happen", it appears Park County started plowing for the snowmobiling season of 1983-1984 in response to the Environmental Assessment finished in 1982 for the Clarks Fork Snowmobile Trail.

You are welcome to come and look at the research we did, as well as copying anything else you may need.

Hope this helps and please call if our office if you have any questions.

Brenda Bangert, Secretary
Park County Commissioners
1002 Sheridan Avenue | Cody, Wyoming 82414
307-527-8510

12/11/08

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
between
PARK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
and
USDA FOREST SERVICE, SHOSHONE NATIONAL FOREST
and
STATE OF WYOMING,
DEPARTMENT OF STATE PARKS AND CULTURAL RESOURCES
STATE TRAILS PROGRAM

12/12/08
2 MINUTES
ATTACHED
+ NEWSPAPER
ARTICLE

This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING is hereby made and entered into by and between the Board of County Commissioners, Park County, Wyoming, hereinafter referred to as Park County, the State of Wyoming, Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources, State Trails hereinafter referred to as State Trails, and United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Shoshone National Forest, hereinafter referred to as the Forest Service.

A. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this agreement is to provide a framework for cooperation between the Forest Service, Wyoming State Trails, and Park County, Wyoming for snowmobile trail management in the area extending from the Wyoming – Montana state line north of the Pilot Creek Trailhead to Long Lake on the Beartooth Plateau. The managed season of use will be from November 30th through April 30th.

B. STATEMENT OF MUTUAL BENEFIT AND INTERESTS:

The FOREST SERVICE is a natural resource agency dedicated to the sustained management of the Nation's natural resources, service to people, and by Federal law and regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture, has responsibility for managing and enhancing, where possible, recreational opportunities for winter use on National Forest lands.

PARK COUNTY serves the interests of the citizens and visitors to Park County, Wyoming.

WYOMING STATE TRAILS strives to implement the State of Wyoming Snowmobile Trail Program and manage snowmobile use on public lands within Wyoming, while maintaining the quantity and quality of natural resources that draw the citizens and visitors to Wyoming for meaningful recreational experiences.


Therefore, it is of mutual benefit and interest to all parties to work together to provide access to the Pilot Creek parking area, groomed trails and facilities to promote snowmobiling in Park County.

C. FOREST SERVICE SHALL:

Provide support to the snowmobile trail program as identified under agreement 06-CS-11021400-002 with State Trails and specified in more detail for this project area as follows:

1. In cooperation with State Trails, install informational, wilderness and directional signs along trails and the Beartooth Highway (before season opens). Remove and store signs at end of season.
2. Maintain seasonal closure of the snowmobile bridge.
3. Install and maintain a toilet at Pilot Creek Trailhead.
4. Install road closure signs on Highway 212 between Pilot Creek Trailhead and the state line.

D. PARK COUNTY SHALL:

- 
1. Plow the Beartooth Highway including emergency pullouts from the WY 296 - US 212 junction to the Pilot Creek Trailhead from October 1 through April 15 to provide for wheeled motor vehicle access.
 2. Plow parking and snowmobile unloading area at the Pilot Creek Trailhead from October 1 through April 15 to accommodate up to 100 vehicles and snowmobile trailers.
 3. Plow road and shoulder on WY 296 at US 212 junction to the east turnaround to provide parking.

E. STATE TRAILS SHALL:

Provide support to the snowmobile trail program as identified under agreement 06-CS-11021400-002 with the Forest Service and specified in more detail for this project area as follows:

1. Groom trails to ensure safe operating conditions on all sections of the trail system and perform trail safety inspections at least every two weeks.
2. Based on inspections, erect and maintain trail delineation and obstacle markers required for safe travel by snowmobiles. Markers will contain reflective materials that are effective at night.
3. Assist the Forest Service in installation and removal of signs and toilets.

4. Furnish informational and directional trail signs that meet state specifications, and "You Are Here" maps on trail as needed.

5. Install a fuel tank for grooming equipment at the Pilot Creek Trailhead that meets Wyoming State safety requirements.

F. IT IS MUTUALLY UNDERSTOOD AND AGREED BY AND BETWEEN THE PARTIES THAT:

1. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA). Any information furnished to the Forest Service under this instrument is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552).

2. PARTICIPATION IN SIMILAR ACTIVITIES. This instrument in no way restricts any of the parties from participating in similar activities with other public or private agencies, organizations, and individuals.

3. COMMENCEMENT/EXPIRATION/TERMINATION. This MOU takes effect upon the signature of the Forest Service, State Trails and Park County and shall remain in effect for 5 years from the date of execution. This MOU may be extended or amended upon written request by the Forest Service, State Trails or Park County and the subsequent written concurrence of the other(s). Any of the parties may terminate this MOU with a 60-day written notice to the other(s).

4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTIES. The Forest Service, State Trails and Park County and their respective agencies and offices will handle their own activities and utilize their own resources, including the expenditure of their own funds, in pursuing these objectives. Each party will carry out its separate activities in a coordinated and mutually beneficial manner.

5. PRINCIPAL CONTACTS. The principal contacts for this instrument are:

Forest Service Project Contact
Terry Root
North Zone District Ranger
Shoshone National Forest
203A Yellowstone Ave
Cody, WY 82414
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FAX: 307-527-7158
E-Mail: troot@fs.fed.us

State Trails Project Contact
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Program Manager
Wyoming State Trails Program
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Cheyenne, WY 82002
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FAX: 307-777-6472
E-Mail: bhill@state.wy.us

FS Agreement No.
Cooperator Agreement No.

09-MU-11021400-0006

12/11/08

THE PARTIES HERETO have executed this instrument.

BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS
PARK COUNTY, WYOMING*Tim A French*
VICE CHAIRMAN*12-12-08*
TIM A. FRENCH DATE
ChairpersonUSDA FOREST SERVICE
SHOSHONE NATIONAL FOREST*Rebecca Aus* *12.11.08*
REBECCA AUS DATE
Forest SupervisorSTATE OF WYOMING,
DEPARTMENT OF STATE PARKS
AND CULTURAL RESOURCES,
STATE TRAILS PROGRAM*Brad Hill* *12/11/08*
BRAD HILL DATE
Program ManagerThe authority and format of this instrument
have been reviewed and approved for
signature.*Margi Brayton Gray* *12/10/08*
Margi Brayton Gray DATE
Forest Service Agreements Specialist

**Park County Board of County Commissioners
Special Meeting – Snowmobile Trail Management
December 12, 2008**

Proceedings of a special meeting of the Board of County Commissioners of Park County, Wyoming, held in Cody, Wyoming Friday, December 12, 2008. Present were Vice Chairman Bill Brewer and Commissioners Jill Shockley Siggins and Bucky Hall and County Clerk Kelly Jensen.

Memorandum of Understanding - USFS

Commissioner Hall made a motion, seconded by Siggins, to approve and allow the Vice Chairman to sign on behalf of the Chairman the Memorandum of Understanding between the Park County Board of County Commissioners and USDA Forest Service, Shoshone National Forest and State of Wyoming, Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources, State Trails Program regarding snowmobile trail management in the area extending from the Wyoming-Montana state line north of the Pilot Creek Trailhead to Long Lake on the Beartooth Plateau (the intersection of Highway #296 and #212 to Pilot Creek). Motion carried.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, Commissioner Hall made a motion, seconded by Siggins, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Tim A. French, Chairman
Park County Commissioners

Bill Brewer, Vice Chairman

Marie Fontaine, Commissioner

Jill Shockley Siggins, Commissioner

Bucky Hall, Commissioner

Seal:
Attest:

Kelly Jensen, County Clerk

CODY ENTERPRISE 12/15/08

Snowmobilers urge agreement as seasonal weather approaches

By CAROLE CLOUDWALKER
Staff writer

Pressure from a local snowmobilers' group prompted the county commissioners to hurry in signing a memorandum of understanding concerning plowing in the Crandall area.

Conducting a special meeting Friday, commissioners Bucky Hall, Jill Shockley Siggins and Bill Brewer approved the MOU, which also was signed by representatives of the Shoshone Forest and the state of Wyoming's Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources' State Trails Program.

Brewer, commission vice chairman, signed the MOU on behalf of Park County Commission chairman Tim French.

French and Commissioner Marie Fontaine were in Rock Springs attending a Wyoming County Commissioners Association meeting.

Brewer said he had received several telephone calls late last week from snowmobilers who were anxious to have the roads in question plowed by the weekend, when a snowstorm was predicted.

They were concerned, Brewer said, because no agreement had been signed to clear the road leading to a parking area off the Beartooth Highway (US 212) where snowmobilers leave vehicles and trailers while snowmobiling in the vicinity of Cooke City, Mont.

The parking area is accessed from Cody via WYO 286.

About 100 vehicles can park in the lot, which receives heavy use in winter.

Park County Engineer Dave Kieper said the MOU "recognizes that we were in violation" by plowing without an official agreement since 2004.

The agreement has been "in limbo" since then, but he and the other involved parties began working on a resolution several months ago, Kieper said.

The Beartooth Highway has been called an "orphaned highway" because nobody wants to take responsibility for its winter maintenance, Kieper said.

The situation was so confusing there were questions about such basic things as who should even legally enter into an agreement, the engineer added.

"Finally, we got a decision

“
*Finally, we got
a decision that
we can legally
remove the snow.*

Dave Kieper
Park County engineer

”

that we can legally remove the snow," Kieper said.

And just in time, as a storm moved in Saturday, and the Cody Country Snowmobile Association - with about 120 members and a mailing list of about 300 - is revving up for the season, president Bert Miller said.

Kieper said though the county had been plowing in the Crandall area since 2004 without an official agreement, which expired in that year, the MOU is a formal way of granting plowing permission.

He said the document was approved by County Attorney Bryan Skoric.

Hall praised the engineer and others for the work they put into the MOU, and Miller thanked the county for its part.

"You responded quickly" when it counted, as the weather looked favorable for a snowmobile outing, Miller said.

2) Is Park County MT willing to assist Park County WY with cost of keep Pilot Creek Parking Lot open/maintained?

Answers from? Park County MT Commissioners

3) What is the history of how many snowmobile stickers are sold in ALL of the Cooke City and Cody businesses that sell the recreational stickers (MT & WY, resident and non-resident)?

Answers from? FBAAR & State FWP's

4) Would the cost of plowing the road (plug) year round be offset by the cost of the spring plowing/opening cost?

Answers from? Steve lobst, YNP

To Date: Steve lobst answered this question at the meeting with a "No", but offered to gather information that could provide cost estimates for comparison purposes.

5) Has there been an Economic Impact Study done for CC and SG?

Answers from? FBAAR, Park County Phillip Fletcher, Economic Development

To date: At the time of the meeting an Economic Impact Study had not been conducted for Cooke City/Silver Gate, or the Beartooth Highway. FBAAR is currently working on development of an Economic Impact Study of the Beartooth Highway that will include Economic Impact data for all three of the Beartooth Highway's gateway communities of Cooke City/Silver Gate and Red Lodge, Montana and Cody, Wyoming.

6) Can an amendment be done to Highway State Statute for Dual Use Highways, Statute 31-5-801)

Answers from? Individual State Legislators

To date: It was pointed out at the meeting that State Statutes can be changed at any time by State Legislators. If there are people who are interested in these types of changes to State Statutes they need to make contact with their legislators to discuss options and begin the process of making changes.

7) Is it legal for WPH ambulances (WY) to provide service to Cooke City, MT?

Answers from? West Park Hospital

8) If the road was plowed year round and not a dead end, would it bring in more business to Cooke City?

Answers from? Park County Economic Development; through development of a Beartooth Highway Economic Impact Study.

9) If the road was plowed year round for more access to YNP for the increased number of wolf watchers would this help the economy decrease from snowmobiling and if so, could they mix?

Answers from? Park County Economic Development, through development of a Beartooth Highway Economic Impact Study.

10) Could the right of way on the Highway (MT & WY) be used for a groomed trail instead of the highway?

Answers from? MT DOT will look into it. At meeting time WY DOT said “no, it isn’t safe”

11) Isn’t there a law that a federally funded Highway has to be kept open, specific to Highway 212?

Answers from? MTDOT & WYDOT

12) Would Park County MT provide full time law enforcement if the road was plowed year round and increased visitors ?

Answers from? Park County MT commission

13) During the time that the road isn’t plowed how many emergency transports have to go over snow to meet the ambulance?

Answers from? YNP/Command Center

14) Is there a count on how many snowmobilers go through the North Entrance versus non-snowmobile traffic? Would it be possible for YNP to begin tracking these numbers?

Answers from? Yellowstone National Park Service

Yellowstone National Park

Year-Round Wheeled Vehicle Access of the Beartooth Highway

Background and Interests | May, 2011

Submitted for consideration by:

Steve Iobst, Acting Deputy Superintendent (307) 344-2003 steve_iobst@nps.gov

Topic: Year-round wheeled vehicle access along the Beartooth Highway (Hwy 212) from east of Cooke City, MT, eight miles to Pilot Creek in Wyoming. This road section is currently open from late May to mid-October and closed throughout the winter.

Background: Beartooth Highway construction was completed in 1934 under the Park Approach Act. Funds authorized by the Park Approach Act, Forest Highway, and Federal Aid programs were used to construct different sections of the Beartooth Hwy. The Bureau of Public Roads maintained the Beartooth Hwy using National Park Service (NPS) funds from 1935-1945. Since 1945, the NPS has maintained the Beartooth Hwy with the exception of the Federal Aid section south of Red Lodge at Mile Post (MP) 68.7 to the Wyoming/Montana state line at MP 43.1. The National Park Service has maintenance and plowing responsibilities from MP 0.0 (Northeast Entrance) to MP 43.1 (Montana/Wyoming Line).

The Beartooth Hwy is maintained as a seasonal road that opens around Memorial Day and closes by mid-October depending on snow conditions, with the following exceptions. Yellowstone National Park plows the first 4 miles of the Beartooth Hwy year-round between the Park's Northeast Entrance and Cooke City, MT to accommodate residents living in Cooke City. State of Montana Department of Transportation (MT DOT) maintains year-round access along the Beartooth Hwy along the first 8 miles south of Red Lodge, MT. Wyoming Department of Transportation (WY DOT) plows Chief Joseph Scenic Byway (WY Hwy 296), from Cody to its junction with the Beartooth Highway at MP 17.4 and WY DOT contracts the snow plowing of the next 4.9 miles along the Beartooth Highway to the Pilot Creek Trailhead (MP 12.6), providing access to the B-4 Ranch and to snowmobile access areas winter-long. The Beartooth Highway, from MP 43.1 (the eastern Wyoming/Montana state line), south and west to MP 17.4, at the junction with the Chief Joseph Scenic Byway (WY Hwy 296) is not plowed year round. Nor is the 8-mile Hwy stretch from Cooke City, MT to the Pilot Creek Trailhead at MP 12.6 in Wyoming.

Since at least 1974, a proposal to provide year-round wheeled vehicle access across the Beartooth Hwy from Cody, WY to Yellowstone National Park has been discussed (FHWA-Wyo.-EIS-72-06-F). In order to provide such access snowplowing would be required from Cooke City, east 8 miles along the Beartooth Hwy to Pilot Creek (MP 12.6).

From the National Park Service's perspective the following should be considered:

Maintenance/Logistical support (law enforcement, emergency support, facilities) – most of these actions require additional state and federal agency funding, staff and expertise

- ❖ Capital investment in equipment (sander, rotary plow), facility (sand storage building) and personnel to maintain open-road status year-round along the Beartooth Hwy.
- ❖ Annual road maintenance and reconstruction services and costs associated with increased year-round traffic, daily snow plowing, salting, and the effects of freezing and thawing along Beartooth Hwy from Cooke City to Cody.

- ❖ Addressing public safety incidents, local and state law enforcement, emergency medical responses, traffic and speed limit control, and parking in the communities of Silver Gate, Cooke City and along the Beartooth Hwy.
- ❖ Management of traffic volume, public safety incidents and federal law enforcement and emergency medical response needs in Yellowstone National Park.
- ❖ Winter entrance station traffic and corresponding visitor services needs in Yellowstone National Park.
- ❖ Adequate facilities for travelers (turn-outs, parking lots, restrooms, signing) along Beartooth Hwy from Cooke City to Cody, WY.

Natural and Cultural Resources

- ❖ Increased need for food storage and waste management in Cooke City and all Beartooth Hwy visitor facilities (vehicle turn-outs, parking lots and restrooms).
- ❖ Animals could be constrained to travel along the plowed road if snow-berms become too high to navigate and exit. This can result in vehicle/wildlife accidents and increased energy expenditure by wildlife required to navigate long, high snow berms.
- ❖ Potential for increased human access, which could lead to increased wildlife poaching with an entrance and exit route through the area.
- ❖ Potential for impacts to cultural and historic resources from snow plowing machinery, salting and exposure to climate/weather associated with additional snow plowing.

Communities and Private Lands:

- ❖ Economic and social costs and benefits to Cody, WY and Gardiner, MT from the increased draw of year-round access for visitors to Yellowstone National Park.
- ❖ Economic and social costs and benefits to Silver Gate and Cooke City as these communities change from destination locations to drive-through communities.
- ❖ Year-round access for Cooke City citizens to a larger city center like Cody, WY, which can provide additional goods and services.
- ❖ Increased demand for water in Cooke City, whose water demands are already straining the Montana Water Compact and affecting water flow and hydrothermal connections in Yellowstone National Park.
- ❖ Increased need and opportunity to accommodate public services (restrooms, sewage and garbage, food and lodging) in Silver Gate and Cooke City.

General Visitor

- ❖ Increased access to Yellowstone National Park, particularly in the winter and spring, resulting in an increased appreciation for these lands.
- ❖ Deeply incised and narrow plowed roads are difficult to travel and can create driving hazards and increased emergency needs of travelers.
- ❖ Potential for increased safety issues and traffic accidents with multiple all-season use activities (snowmobiles, wheeled vehicles, bicycling) along the Beartooth Hwy.
- ❖ Change in wildlife viewing experience in the Lamar Valley of Yellowstone, which since the time of wolf reintroduction receives 50-60 visitors per day from mid-Nov to late March. An individual's experiences may change as visitor numbers and traffic increase, such changes are never all positive or negative but are dependent upon the individual's values, expectations and experiences.

Agency authorities, decision makers, decision framework, legal compliance necessary and required for a decision on year-round access along the Beartooth Hwy. A decision regarding year-round wheeled vehicle access from Cody, WY to Cooke City, MT along the Beartooth Hwy would be the responsibility of the United

States Forest Service and involve the Federal Highways Administration, National Park Service, and the State of Montana and Wyoming Departments of Transportation. Each of these agencies has lands, highway and resource management responsibilities and work programs that could be affected by a change in year-round access along the Beartooth Hwy. This topic has resurfaced due to the current Winter Use Planning effort for Yellowstone National Park. This planning effort includes uses, modes of travel, travel routes, and the analysis of various alternatives within the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park. Consideration of the Beartooth Highway being an all-season road is NOT within the scope of the Winter Use Plan for Yellowstone

Contact:

- ❖ Steve Iobst, Acting Deputy Superintendent (307) 344-2003 steve_iobst@nps.gov

Submitted for consideration by:

Bert Miller, WSSA Vice President, CCSA Board of Director

Shoshone National Forest is at a no net gain for motorized trails. By plowing HWY 212 then we are trading one motorized use for another, that fragile link (snowmobile accessibility) will be gone. Is there a guarantee in the future if it is not deemed economically feasible to continue plowing the road will the snowmobile trail be re-instated or lost forever?

The following question is meant for the following people, Mr Steve lobst (Yellowstone National Park), Terry Root (Shoshone National Forest), Mary Maj (Gallatin National Forest), Jim Lynch (Montana DOT), Ron Huff (WyDOT), Park County Wyoming Commissioners, and Park County Montana Commissioners. Two states are involved with an orphaned US highway, which of you plans to will pay for the plowing?

There will need to be an EIS study for a parking area and trail in Cooke. An EIS study is at least a seven year process. What entity will fund this?

The parking capacity at Pilot Creek is around 150 units. To mirror the parking that is available at Pilot Creek then Cooke City and/or vicinity will need roughly 15 acres of plowed parking. Where in Cooke City or vicinity is there a parcel big enough or a number of smaller ones to replace the Pilot Creek parking area? Who would build and maintain this (these) new parking areas?

There is a problem in Cooke with snow storage already. Where will the snow be stored when a new parking area is designated?

Will the road be kept open 24/7 for emergency purposes or for the need to evacuate Cooke City? Who will pay for any emergency services? Wyoming?

Chief Joseph Highway is a "Class B" highway, no plowing after 5:00 p.m. will this be addressed? Will Wyoming be forced to plow Chief Joseph Highway to Hwy212 junction then to Pilot Creek more often due to Cooke City's demand for daily services?

How will the avalanche danger from Cooke City to the Montana/Wyoming state line along 212 be mitigated?

Year round travel through Cooke City to other destinations will have an impact on wintering herds. With a substantial increase in vehicle traffic, what will be the long term impact on the already devastated elk, deer and moose herds that winter in the Crandall and Sunlight Basin areas?

Who will build, fund, and maintain new trail from Pilot Creek to Cooke City so that both of the existing trail systems can remain intact?

If Hwy 212 is plowed, why would Park County Wyoming continue to plow from the junction to the parking lot and/or maintain the parking lot?

If Hwy 212 is there a guarantee that Yellowstone will continue plowing from Mammoth?

For the past decade, Park County Wyoming has been paying the bill for plowing Hwy 212 to Pilot Creek and maintaining this parking area. Is it in the foreseeable future that Park County Montana and/or Cooke City will help share in this expense of these services? Does Cooke City recognize the great asset that Park County Wyoming has been providing for them?

Submitted for consideration by:

Rick Hoeninghausen, Director, Sales and Marketing, Xanterra Parks & Resorts

I offer the following questions for the meeting. Also, I am providing some details on our position with regard to the road and ongoing process.

Questions.

- 1) Is it possible to plow the road in such a way that a snowmobile lane would still be available to access trails?
- 2) Is funding available to do an economic impact study related to the business generated by a plowed road? Or has a study already been done?
- 3) Can a task force be formed to investigate all options for a solution that would accommodate the snowmobilers and plowed road interests?
- 4) If the road was plowed throughout the winter, would it eliminate the time and cost related to the big spring plowing effort? Would the savings realized by not having to remove a full winter's quantity of snow and ice in the spring offset the cost of plowing all winter?

Comments:

We encourage and support an approach that would provide for continued trail access for snowmobiles AND park access for rubber-tire traffic.

If the road could be plowed in a way that would maintain trail access by snowmobilers and park access by rubber-tire travelers, more winter experiences would be available to the traveling public. These experiences will translate to new and increased winter business for the gateway communities of Cody, Cooke City and Gardiner. Being part of the only year-round open road to and through Yellowstone Park would be a significant strategic advantage for the gateway communities. In addition to snowmobiling, marketable winter experiences include wildlife watching, photography, park sightseeing, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. The northeast entrance would quickly represent a gateway that provides access to a greater variety and more affordable winter experiences than any other entrance because visitors could drive their own vehicles into the park. Also, the Yellowstone Regional Airport in Cody becomes another valid option for flying into the area to access Yellowstone.

An inclusive solution also opens up opportunities for new strategic marketing partnerships. The potential marketing partnerships represent a significant pool of talent and financial resources that would allow this area and its many winter experiences to be promoted on larger scale. While no discussions or plans have occurred, potential partners could include Xanterra Parks & Resorts; lodging tax boards in Park County, Wyoming and Yellowstone Country, Montana; Chambers of Commerce in Cody, Cooke City and Gardiner, State tourism offices in Montana and Wyoming, and possibly airlines and car rental companies that serve the Yellowstone Regional Airport.

Thanks for your time and efforts! I look forward to seeing you on Friday!

Rick Hoeninghausen, Director, Sales and Marketing
Xanterra Parks & Resorts
PO Box 165 Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190
Office: 307-344-5265 | Fax: 307-344-7456 | www.YellowstoneNationalParkLodges.com

May 21, 2011



To Whom It May Concern:

Promoting People, Jobs, and Progress

First, I offer my apologies for not being able to attend the meeting this morning. This is obviously an important issue to many people and an emotional one as well.

Forward Cody, the economic development organization serving the community of Cody, has discussed this issue. It is easy to see the economic benefit of the snowmobile activity to the Cooke City community. In Cody, it is somewhat more difficult. While instinctively we know that the Beartooth Plateau and the Cooke City area boost the Cody winter economy, it is about as hard to track as the impact of the Beartooth Highway to the Cody community. What we do believe is that the impact to Cody's winter tourism will likely be the same, either way.

A number of questions emerged in our discussion about the topic. Primarily, we are interested to find out who is advocating the "plowing the plug"? What government agency, group or organization is offering this proposal? What is their rationale and where is data to support that case? We have seen nothing on this front.

Second, the community who stands to gain or lose in this discussion is Cooke City. We believe the people and businesses of Cooke City should be the primary deciding factor in this discussion.

Third, who will "win" the responsibility of plowing the highway in the winter? This could become an extremely expensive proposition in years of good snowpack like this year has been. How do participating agencies feel about this change?

There has been much stated regarding the permanent loss of the "trail" if plowed. This is a topic that needs verification by the Forest Service. If this is correct, then what do proponents offer as an alternative to address this concern? If the "no net gain" of trails applies, then a "no net loss" provision should also exist. We all need to be cognizant to the dangers of going backwards.

At this time, we see ***no compelling evidence to change the current mode of operation***. The questions posed in this letter provide our rationale to take this stance. ***We will support the decision of the Cooke City Chamber of Commerce and their businesses who are more directly affected by this action.***

Forward Cody is pleased that this issue has been brought forth for this initial discussion. Because of the complexity of the issue, much more discussion is likely in the future. We wish to be apprised of these meetings as well.

Best of luck in your gathering

Sincerely,


James Klessens, CEO/President



PO Box 983 • Red Lodge, MT 59068 • www.beartoothhighway.com

Cooke City, Montana • Red Lodge, Montana • Cody, Wyoming

July 2010

To Whom it May Concern:

The Board of Directors of Friends of the Beartooth All-American Road (FBAAR) has watched with interest and with concern the developing conversations surrounding the possibility of wintertime plowing of the ten-mile section of US Highway 212 from the Pilot Creek parking lot in Wyoming to the community of Cooke City, MT.

As one of the Beartooth All-American Road Steering Committee members working to implement the Beartooth All-American Road Corridor Management Plan, Friends of the Beartooth All-American Road (FBAAR) is a cohesive, grass roots organization with representation from all three of the Road's gateway communities (Cody, WY, Cooke City, MT and Red Lodge, MT).

Since its inception in 2004, FBAAR has focused on maintaining involvement and open communication among all stakeholders. In light of the varied goals, needs, wants, priorities, and funding challenges of the large number of people and agencies affected by the decisions made on behalf of the Beartooth All-American Road, this has been no small task! We find that it is best to encourage disclosure of the full spectrum of opinions and considerate thought necessary to arrive at quality decision making.

The FBAAR Board of Directors supports engagement of all community organizations, leaders and interested and affected individuals who will be directly impacted by future Beartooth All-American Road winter access, maintenance and care decisions.

We encourage all of those concerned with the well being of the Beartooth All-American Road to focus on the Road, and what is best for its community as a whole. Everyone should take the time to discuss all options openly and in an environment where people feel safe to share thoughts and ideas. While this type of discussion takes time and effort up front, it can often prevent long term disputes that come from people feeling left out of the decision making process.

As always, FBAAR stands ready to assist in making these types of discussions available and beneficial to all concerned.

Sincerely,
S/Kim Capron (acting)
Glory Mahan
Chair | Friends of the Beartooth All-American Road

Comments Received from Interested Individuals

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Concerned about the possibility of plowing HWY 212 into Cooke City in the Winter

From: Brenda Miller <bnbnkids@hotmail.com>

Date: Tue, May 10, 2011 9:03 pm

To:

Hello, I am writing to you in regard to the possibility of plowing HWY 212 from Pilot Creek parking lot into Cooke City in the winter time. I am very much against this for a few reasons.

The main reason of course is that this would sever the snowmobile trail that connects the trail system in Cooke City Montana to the trail system in the Beartooth Mountains of Wyoming. In order to replace the 8 miles of trail that is currently the highway itself you would need to work with the Shoshone Forest to do a NEPA to create a new trail which will take many years and could prove impossible due to the fact that parts of the Wilderness come almost to the highway not to mention the terrain on both sides of the highway between Pilot Creek and Cooke City. If this trail is severed then revenue to the state of Wyoming will be lost because the trails will no longer connect so people from out of state will decide that they no longer need to buy snowmobile stickers for both the State of Wyoming and the State of Montana because they can't easily ride both trail systems without having to load their snowmobiles up to trailer to the other trail system. Therefore without the revenue for the trail system in the Beartooth Mountains from the sticker sales then there won't be the funds to have a groomer for the trail system in the Beartooth Mountains.

A couple of other things to consider...people may think that plowing the road will allow the residents of Cooke City to come to Cody, Wyoming to do their shopping. I can almost guarantee they will beeline to Billings Montana so that they can go to Costco and not have to pay sales tax. Cooke City doesn't have the infrastructure to handle any more traffic than they currently get in the winter. Where will they park the 60-70 foot rigs (trucks with trailers) that can add up to 100-150 especially on holiday weekend? Cooke City can't even handle a motorcycle rally in the summer time without having to put porta potties along the street to handle one day of extra traffic. Actually I believe that the porta potties are on the streets of Cooke City all summer long to handle the summer traffic.

Please take all of this information into consideration before you decide to support this goofy idea of plowing HWY 212 from Pilot Creek to Cooke City in the winter.

Thank you for your time.

Brenda Miller
Cody Wyoming resident

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Plowing road to Cooke City

From: Janet Stambaugh <majoranch@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, May 11, 2011 10:18 am

To: pctc@codychamber.org, childers@wyoming.com, skrone@wyoming.com, hcoe@wyoming.com, yell_superintendent@nps.gov, commissioners@parkcounty.org, robbie@avid-products.com, scott@glacierstateelectric.com, info@cookecitychamber.org, jalexander@fs.fed.us, bruce@codyenterprise.com,

mayornancy@cityofcody.com, cody.beers@dot.state.wy.us, leeh@bbhc.org,
info@visitwyo.gov, bhall@parkcounty.us, jtilden@parkcounty.us,
lfrench@parkcounty.us, lgrosskopf@parkcounty.us, dburke@parkcounty.us,
bhill@state.wy.us, troot@fs.fed.us, b.miller1962@hotmail.com

Hello.

I am writing in regard to plowing the road to Cooke City, MT. I think this would have a negative impact on the town for winter use. Even if some of the Cooke City citizens would like to see the road plowed for convenience in reaching Cody during the winter months, I think they would need to consider the impact of losing hundreds of visitors throughout the winter season. Motels, cafes, and gas stations would take a real "hit" to their economy.

Also, highway maintenance would be a huge cost factor. The road would probably be closed more than it would be open due to inclement weather. Perhaps the funds are available now, but what about down the road. Why open a road to begin with if funding will become an issue at a later date?

Historically, Cooke City has been the hub of the snowmobile winter use in Montana with visitors from Montana and Wyoming for winter recreational use, much like West Yellowstone is to the West Entrance of Yellowstone Park. Please don't make any rash decisions until the issue is studied. We would support "not plowing" the road!

Thank you for your efforts.
Janet and Grant Stambaugh

----- Original Message -----

Subject: cooke city

From: Todd Anderson <toddsledhead@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, May 11, 2011 7:49 am

To: pctc@codychamber.org, childers@wyoming.com, skrone@wyoming.com,
hcoe@wyoming.com, yell_superintendent@nps.gov,
commissioners@parkcounty.org, robbie@avid-products.com,
scott@glacierstateelectric.com, info@cookecitychamber.org,
jalexander@fs.fed.us, bruce@codyenterprise.com,
mayornancy@cityofcody.com, cody.beers@dot.state.wy.us, leeh@bbhc.org,
info@visitwyo.gov, bhall@parkcounty.us, jtilden@parkcounty.us,
lfrench@parkcounty.us, lgrosskopf@parkcounty.us, dburke@parkcounty.us,
bhill@state.wy.us, troot@fs.fed.us, b.miller1962@hotmail.com

Do not plow this road. Just the expense alone is enough not to plow. Also it will take away the novelty of riding into a town to ride sleds.

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Plowing HWY 212 bad idea

From: "BRENDA MILLER" <bnbnkids@bresnan.net>

Date: Tue, May 10, 2011 10:08 pm

To:

Hello, I am writing to you in regard to the possibility of plowing HWY 212 from Pilot Creek parking lot into Cooke City in the winter time. I am very much against this for a few reasons.

The main reason of course is that this would sever the snowmobile trail that connects the trail system in Cooke City Montana to the trail system in the Beartooth Mountains of Wyoming. This makes absolutely no sense.

People may think that plowing the road will allow the residents of Cooke City to come to Cody, Wyoming to do their shopping. Why would they do that when they can beeline to Billings Montana go to Costco and not have to pay sales

tax.

Cooke City doesn't have the sewer system or a reliable water system to handle any more traffic than they currently get in the winter. Where will all of the trucks & trailers park? Especially on a holiday weekend? Are the residents and business of Cooke City going to have porta potties scattered about the town in the winter time like they do in the summer?

Again I think that plowing HWY 212 from Pilot Creek into Cooke City in the winter time is a bad idea!

Thank you for your time.

Jeremy Miller

Snowmobiler who uses both trail systems

----- Original Message -----

Subject: RE: HWY 212

From: Z-man hanson <live4snowmobiling@hotmail.com>

Date: Tue, May 10, 2011 3:56 pm

To: <childers@wyoming.com>, <bhall@parkcounty.us>, <jtilden@parkcounty.us>, <dburke@parkcounty.us>, <bhill@state.wy.us>, <jklessens@forwardcody.com>, <pctc@codychamber.org>, <tfrench@parkcounty.us>, <lgrosskopf@parkcounty.us>, <skrone@wyoming.com>, <hcoe@wyoming.com>, <yell_superintendent@nps.gov>, <commissioners@parkcounty.org>, <robbie@avid-products.com>, <scott@glacierstateelectric.com>, <info@cookecitychamber.org>, <jalexander@fs.fed.us>, <troot@fs.fed.us>, <bruce@codyenterprise.com>, <mayornancy@cityofcody.com>, <cody.beers@dot.state.wy.us>;

I support this letter they sent to all you guys. How can you take millions of dollars out of the pocket of the people who have worked hard to get this town to where it is with welcoming the snowmobiling community. I feel you will be doing an injustice to myself, all snowmobilers who ride in Cooke City and the people of Cooke City. I just hope you guys understand and will not allow this to happen.

Thanks Zach Hanson, Fargo ND

12 UPPER YELLOWSTONE SNOWMOBILE CLUB PO BOX 1111 COOKE CITY, MT 59020 3 July, 2010

To: All Concerned Parties Re:

Hwy 212 from Cooke City, MT to Pilot Creek Parking Lot, WY Due to the "buzz" from outlying communities, organizations and within the Cooke City area concerning the potential of plowing Hwy 212 from Cooke City, MT to the Pilot Creek Parking Lot in WY we find it necessary to state our position. We find it perplexing that organizations are conducting meetings concerning this "plowing issue" yet Cooke City residents, business owners and organizations are not being notified or invited although this issue would affect Cooke City more than any other community.

The purpose of the Snowmobile Club is to promote the sport of snowmobiling for families and individuals alike and to provide groomed and ungroomed trails for the enjoyment of all. Since the early 1980's there has been a concentrated effort to promote the Cooke City area as a snowmobile destination area. Advertising the Cooke City trail system as it connects to the Beartooth area trail system allows us to provide 125 miles of world class trails for all levels of riding ability. This trail system is not exceptionally long but due to the diversity of what is available it provides riding to thousands of people from all over the country every year.

The parking lot at Pilot Creek is vital to the people arriving from the east as it allows them a large, clean area to park without having to drive all the way through Livingston, MT and Yellowstone National Park. The nine miles from the parking lot is groomed by Wyoming to the state line and then by our club groomer into Cooke City. One by one the small number of snowmobiling areas in the west are being

closed, thus causing more concentrated use in smaller areas.

The Upper Yellowstone Snowmobile Club does not support the plowing of Hwy 212 from Cooke City, MT to the Pilot Creek parking lot in Wyoming. Plowing that section of road will completely disrupt the snowmobiling connection between the Cooke City area and the Beartooth area; a connection that has taken years to establish. Because of the connection of the two current trail systems millions of dollars of revenue are brought into both states every year. We do not want to lose any trail, we do not want Hwy 212 plowed. Anxiously awaiting a reply, Dale Dempsey, President Representing the UYSC Membership

----- Original Message -----

Subject: HWY 212

From: Z-man hanson <live4snowmobiling@hotmail.com>

Date: Tue, May 10, 2011 3:03 pm

To: <childers@wyoming.com>, <bhall@parkcounty.us>, <jtilden@parkcounty.us>, <dburke@parkcounty.us>, <bhill@state.wy.us>, <jklessens@forwardcody.com>, <pctc@codychamber.org>, <tfrench@parkcounty.us>, <lgrosskopf@parkcounty.us>, <skrone@wyoming.com>, <hcoe@wyoming.com>, <yell_superintendent@nps.gov>, <commissioners@parkcounty.org>, <robbie@avid-products.com>, <scott@glacierstateelectric.com>, <info@cokecitychamber.org>, <jalexander@fs.fed.us>, <troot@fs.fed.us>, <bruce@codyenterprise.com>, <mayornancy@cityofcody.com>, <cody.beers@dot.state.wy.us>;

To Whom it may concern:

I didn't know who to email but got your email addresses on a snowmobiling website snowest.com; I have read that they are thinking of plowing HWY 212 outside of Cooke City. You need to help us snowmobilers fight this. As an avid backcountry rider, I enjoy my trips I take to Cooke City every year with good friends. We travel from North Dakota and Minnesota. I have noticed when I am there a lot of people travel from California, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, Washington, and Colorado to ride in Cooke City. I think it would be detrimental to this town if you opened that road to be plowed. There are a lot of hot spots that last stretch of road from the parking lot into Cooke City that can be accessed by trails that are along that road. We need your help in fighting this issue. Cooke City is one of those towns that you travel to year after year to ride and become good friends with the locals who eventually call you by your name. I have rode in many other areas in Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Colorado, and Utah that you don't get that kind of service like you do in Cooke City. Please stand up for our rights and fight this, and help us keep HWY 212 closed during the winter.

Thank You Zach Hanson Fargo ND

Subject: Plowing Cooke Pass

From: Jim Garry <jbgarry@earthlink.net>

Date: Mon, May 16, 2011 8:55 pm

To: Kim Capron <info@beartoothhighway.com>

Cc: Leo & Jan Gaertner <lonenknife@aol.com>

To Whom It May Concern:

I live in the Painter Estates and teach & do research in Yellowstone Park. The drive from my house to the Buffalo Ranch, where I teach, is 42 miles in the summer and 308 in the winter. It would certainly make my life easier and, with gas prices as high as they've been this winter, considerably cheaper if I could drive to the Park via Cooke City during the five or six months a year the road is currently closed.

I also feel that the residents and businesses of Cooke City would benefit from being able to have more than a single road as a means of access to their community during those five or six months of each year.

Hoping a solution can be found that meets the needs of the majority of users, I remain

Y'r af't & ob't ser't,

Jim Garry
47 Van Dyke Road (Painter Estates)
P.O. Box 2165
Cody, Wy 82414

Subject: Road to Cooke City
From: K Cogswell <kcogs@yahoo.com> (Add as Preferred Sender)
Date: Tue, May 17, 2011 12:19 pm
To: info@beartoothhighway.com

Dear Friends,

My husband and I live in Sheridan, Wyoming, but we come up there frequently in the summer, as I have been doing for the past 30 years. We love Cooke City, and totally respect the community and all the great people there.

We had snowmobiles for ten years, specifically so we could come to Cooke. We finally determined that they were too costly and cumbersome to maintain, load, insure, license, and transport, not to mention that we had to have a fairly formidable vehicle (and gas) to haul them. We finally sold them for those reasons. Now we basically only come in the summer due to the road being closed, and the Gardiner road taking so much longer.

Having been on both sides of the matter, we would like to see a resolution that works for all, as difficult as that generally is. We are in support of plowing the road. We'd love to come there, year-round. Currently, in the winter Cooke is pretty much only open to snowmobiles, and the rest of us wait til late May or early June. When we come, we buy gas, eat out, and shop (where we can!).

It would be nice to try it for a year, and see.

Thank you.

Kristen Cogswell
P.O. Box 96
Sheridan, WY 82801
307.752.9011

Suzy Hahn
P.O. Box 1184
Cooke City, MT 59020

May 17, 2011

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in opposition to the opening of Highway 212 over Colter Pass year round. As a resident of Cooke City for 17 years, a former restaurant and lodging owner, former Chamber of Commerce President, Former Community Council Chair, I have several reasons why I oppose this change.

The first reason is the loss of snowmobile trail. This trail and link to the Wyoming Beartooths is not replaceable and is a huge asset to the snowmobiling industry. With regards to the trail, the Pilot Creek Parking area is a huge asset to the community. There would be no place to park the trucks and trailers of the folks recreating in the area in the township of Cooke City. This parking area enables more visitors to the area.

The second reason is that I moved to Cooke City 17 years ago because it was the "end of the road". This feature makes Cooke City unique and sets it apart from other tourism destinations. I have had many years to ponder the possible reasons for opening the road; still I remain opposed to this change. I do see as a possible compromise maintaining the plowing later in the fall and resume earlier in the spring.

I thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to express my opinions on this matter.

Sincerely,

Suzy Hahn

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Plowing Issue

From: Rick <cookecityexxon@earthlink.net>

Date: Wed, May 18, 2011 11:47 am

To: commissioners@parkcounty.org

Cc: robbie@avid-products.com, scott@glacierstateelectric.com,

info@cookecitychamber.org, jalexander@fs.fed.us,

bruce@codyenterprise.com, mayornancy@cityofcody.com,

cody.beers@dot.state.wy.us, dbonner@wyoming.com, leeh@bbhc.org,

snowrace@wildblue.net, info@beartoothhighway.com, bhall@parkcounty.us,

jtilden@parkcounty.us, dburke@parkcounty.us, lgrosskopf@parkcounty.us,

tfrench@parkcounty.us, pctc@codychamber.org, jklessens@forwardcody.com,

b.miller1962@hotmail.com, bhill@state.wy.us, childers@wyoming.com,

skrone@wyoming.com, hcoe@wyoming.com, yell_superintendent@nps.gov

Park County Montana Commissioners:

This volatile issue of the potential plowing of what you term "the plug" in Hwy 212 from Cooke City, MT to the Pilot Creek Parking Lot in Wyoming is one that raises many issues. The issue is an emotional one but there are facts that need to be discussed during this information gathering process.

My family has been in Cooke City since the 1940's, I have lived here for 44 years and I have owned a business here for 25 years. I have watched business growth as well as a slight decline with the drop in the economy which should have been expected by everyone. I know what to expect in terms of my business ~ I don't want to see a change in our area as we cannot honestly foresee what will truly happen if the road is plowed in the future. Cooke City has been hailed as a premium snowmobile destination for many years, we have advertised as the "end of the road" destination and have catered to the snowmobilers as they provide a solid income base. The groomed trail from Cooke City to Pilot Creek provides a link to the Wyoming Beartooth's which benefits all who visit here as well as the states of both Montana and Wyoming in revenues from snowmobile licenses. At the meeting on Friday I will be able to present the numbers for the licenses we have sold here for both states, this is income that cannot be replaced by other means.

This winter in Cooke City we were down to one lane of traffic on Main Street because of the lack of monies for snow removal from the street. Plowing and removing snow is expensive, who puts up the money for the actual plowing of the road? Route 296 from the Cody area is not patrolled and would have to be patrolled on a nightly basis for safety reasons. I believe Route 296 is a Class B road and that there is no

maintenance on that road in the evenings or nights, that would have to change.

Building a parking lot, plowing a parking lot, removing snow, keeping the streets of Cooke City open with two full lanes of traffic - where does this money come from?

The building of an alternate trail for access to the Wyoming Trail system (if, in fact, there would still even be a trail system on the Beartooth's) would be impossible; 1) must cross a multitude of private land; 2) Forest Service NEPA process, 7 years and very expensive; and 3) a trail cannot be parallel to the highway because it will be damaged by snowplowing of the highway. How would all of this be dealt with?

As for the idea that it should be opened for safety issues ~ where does this come from? Is there really an issue here? Cooke City has had access to what it needs via YNP for years. Choosing to live in Cooke is a decision based on what this area is and that is a decision that is made personally by people who move here; I don't believe the potential opening of this road has anything to do with "safety".

There are those who want this plug opened, who want to make a potentially devastating change on the winter economy of this town but those same people have their businesses up for sale ~ they hope to not be here to deal with whatever mess this plowing could cause; I question their motives.

I don't believe the road can be kept open for the following reasons:

- 1) every gust of wind will blow it shut, it will probably be closed more than it is open
- 2) after every snow it will take two snowblowers half a day just to reopen it
- 3) tourists in their summertime cars are going to be stuck, spun out, scattered everywhere (this would be good for my towing business)
- 4) I believe it would take a full time crew to keep it open and maintain it for safe usage.

There are many other issues as well, but this is the start of my questions.

Rick D. Sommers
Owner
Cooke City Exxon, Polaris & Ski-Doo

----- Original Message -----

Subject: [SPAM] Against Hwy 212 Plowing Proposal
From: "Jason Sholley" <jason.sholley@180com.net>;
Date: Wed, May 11, 2011 12:54 pm
To: <info@cokecitychamber.org>
Cc: <jalexander@fs.fed.us>, <bruce@codyenterprise.com>, <troot@fs.fed.us>, <Cody.Beers@dot.state.wy.us>;, <commissioners@parkcounty.org>, <bhill@state.wy.us>, <pctc@codychamber.org>, <lgrosskopf@parkcounty.us>, <dburke@parkcounty.us>, <jtilden@parkcounty.us>, <bhall@parkcounty.us>

Concerning the plowing of Highway 212 between Pilot Creek and Cooke City, I ask all of you to oppose this proposal at this time. During the winter, I make several trips to Cooke City from Billings via this route. Pilot Creek's parking lot offers more than adequate space for everyone since it was updated. Based on what I have read, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to build a suitable snowmobile trail adjacent to Hwy 212 in that area. That may be where the focus needs to be currently. Recreation as well as economic opportunities will be adversely affected with the plowing of the road. Until such time that a replacement snowmobile trail is built connecting Cooke City to the Beartooth trail system and a parking lot added at the east end of town, Hwy 212 should **not** be plowed. Thank you for your time.

Jason Sholley

----- Original Message -----

Subject: [SPAM] Road Closure of 212

From: "Kyle Pierce" <indy@spacestar.net>

Date: Thu, May 12, 2011 11:49 am

To: <bhall@parkcounty.us>, <jtilden@parkcounty.us>, <dburke@parkcounty.us>, <lgrosskopf@parkcounty.us>, <tfrench@parkcounty.us>, <pctc@codychamber.org>, <jklessens@forwardcody.com>, <b.miller1962@hotmail.com>; <bhill@state.wy.us>, <childers@wyoming.com>, <skrone@wyoming.com>, <hcoe@wyoming.com>, <yell_superintendent@nps.gov>, <commissioners@parkcounty.org>, <robbie@avid-products.com>, <scott@glacierstateelectric.com>, <info@cokecitychamber.org>, <jalexander@fs.fed.us>, <troot@fs.fed.us>, <bruce@codyenterprise.com>, <mayornancy@cityofcody.com>, <Cody.Beers@dot.state.wy.us>;

Cc: "Jeff & Jean Pierce" <ctn49609@centurytel.net>

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing you to express my concerns with road closure of 212. I have been going to Cooke City since the year 2000 to enjoy some of the greatest snowmobiling that our Country has to offer. Since then my family and I have purchase a cabin in Cooke City and enjoy the remote and extreme environment. We do feel strongly that plowing 212 year round would pose several problems for our sport and for the value of our property in Cooke City, MT.

We need to preserve the all of the existing trail that we use year and year.

Sincerely,

Kyle Pierce

Broker Associate

Cell: (715)416-2900

Toll Free: (866)312-8847

www.masterjohn.com

----- Original Message -----

Subject: [SPAM] Plowing of 212- Cooke City to Jct.212 and Chief Joseph Highway.

From: "Tony and Sandy Simek" <snowrace@wildblue.net>

Date: Thu, May 12, 2011 7:30 pm

To: <bhall@parkcounty.us>, <jtilden@parkcounty.us>, <dburke@parkcounty.us>, <lgrosskopf@parkcounty.us>, <tfrench@parkcounty.us>, <pctc@codychamber.org>, <jklessens@forwardcody.com>, "Bert Miller" <b.miller1962@hotmail.com>; "Brad Hill" <bhill@state.wy.us>, <childers@wyoming.com>, <skrone@wyoming.com>, <hcoe@wyoming.com>, <yell_superintendent@nps.gov>, <commissioners@parkcounty.org>, <robbie@avid-products.com>

Cc: <scott@glacierstateelectric.com>, <info@cokecitychamber.org>, <jalexander@fs.fed.us>, <troot@fs.fed.us>, <bruce@codyenterprise.com>, <mayornancy@cityofcody.com>, <Cody.Beers@dot.state.wy.us>;

Hello All,

Please bear with me for I have many unanswered questions as you should, in regards to plowing US 212.

If the road is plowed the trail system as we know it today will cease. Because of the Canadian Lynx problem there is a no net gain of motorized trails on National Forest Lands. At the Park County Commissioner meeting regarding the plowing, Terry Root (Shoshone Forest) commented we are trading one motorized use for another, snowmobiles for vehicles. That fragile link to Cooke City will be gone if plowed. In the future if it is not deemed economically feasible to continue plowing the road, the trail will not be reinstated.

What entity will pay for the plowing? Two states are involved with an orphaned US highway.

There will need to be an EIS study for a parking area and trail in Cooke. What entity will fund this? I hear an EIS is at least a seven year adventure. The parking capacity at Pilot Parking area is around 150 units. Where in Cooke City or vicinity is there a parcel big enough or a number of smaller ones to replace the Pilot parking area? There is a problem in Cooke with snow storage already. This past winter was evident of this challenge. Most of the year there was basically room for one lane of traffic. To mirror what is available at Pilot you will need roughly fifteen acres of plowed parking. Where will the snow be stored? If small parking areas are sought then a major trail system will need to be built to access downtown Business's.

Will the road be kept open 24/7 for emergency purposes or for the need to evacuate Cooke City? How will the avalanche danger from Cooke City to the Montana/Wyoming State line along US 212 be mitigated? The Chief Joseph Highway I am told is a Class B Highway, no plowing after 5:00 pm, will this be addressed? Who will be responsible for emergency issues that will arise in regards to proposed tour bus traffic in adverse winter conditions? Will Cooke or Cody have the equipment, personnel or training to handle a large scale, remote, extreme winter weather emergency? Who will fund it?

With year round travel, short cut if you may, through Cooke City to other destinations we will have an impact on wintering herds. With a substantial increase in vehicle traffic what will be the long term impact on our already devastated elk, deer and moose herds that winter in the Crandall, Sunlight Basin area.

With the loss of the trail on US 212 to Cooke the Wyoming State Trails will stop grooming the Beartooth trail system. No trail no funding. Over half of the Wyoming registration sales are sold in Cooke City. This is what funds our grooming. A few years ago we had a situation near Bearhooth Lake that almost closed our trail system. In the canyon, west of the lake, there was what was considered a public safety issue. We met on site with Forest Service Officials, Wyoming Trails Personnel to review the slide area. It was concluded that with continued and timely grooming the travel corridor would stay wide enough for safe passage. If the grooming is halted the canyon will be impassable. Will the trail be deemed unsafe and closed? We have been informed if the road to Cooke is plowed it is probable the Forest Service will not renew our permit.

I have been very instrumental in developing the Trail System on the Beartooths. In the summer months this special place is only accessible by only the most fit of individuals. Motorized use is not allowed on most of the National Forest. In the winter this all changes from the seat of a snowmobile. Families, our aged population, people with disabilities, from all walks of life, from around the world can experience the Beartooth Mountain Range in all its grandeur. It is a world class trail system that everyone for generations to come should be able to witness, with breathtaking views, endless powder, meadows that seem to never end. Families will take home lasting memories.

I have been awarded two National Awards for my involvement in building and maintaining the Beartooth Trail System. In the early '90's the Forest Service was having safety concerns with the Beartooth trail grooming. This prompted the Cody Country Snowmobile Assoc. to purchase a groomer and contract with the Wyoming State Trails program to groom this area. Club Members donated their nights to groom the trail system and keep it open for all to enjoy. There were more issues popping up in the late '90's, I personally purchased grooming equipment and contracted with Wyoming State Trails to groom the trail system. I would hate to see this disappear.

Sincerely, Tony R. Simek, Cody, Wy

----- Original Message -----

Subject: [SPAM] 212 highway plowing

From: cuds-skidawg@charter.net

Date: Thu, May 12, 2011 9:59 pm

To: info@cookecitychamber.org

Myself and alot of my friends ride cooke city. Let me know what we can do to support your cause, concerning this topic.

Jim Kasieta
cuds-skidawg@charter.net
715-571-9884

----- Original Message -----

Subject: [SPAM] Highway 212 Plowing - Cooke City

From: Kirk Hogan <kirkhogan@gmail.com>

Date: Tue, May 17, 2011 12:04 pm

To: bhall@parkcounty.us, jtilden@parkcounty.us, dburke@parkcounty.us,
lgrosskopf@parkcounty.us, tfrench@parkcounty.us, pctc@codychamber.org,
jkllessens@forwardcody.com, b.miller1962@hotmail.com, bhill@state.wy.us,
childers@wyoming.com, skrone@wyoming.com, hcoe@wyoming.com,
yell_superintendent@nps.gov, commissioners@parkcounty.org,
robbie@avid-products.com, scott@glacierstateelectric.com,
info@cookecitychamber.org, jalexander@fs.fed.us, troot@fs.fed.us,
bruce@codyenterprise.com, mayornancy@cityofcody.com,
cody.beers@dot.state.wy.us, info@beartoothhighway.com

Cc: "Fust, Ted" <tfust@rightnow.com>, cookecityexxon@earthlink.net,
cookecityantlers@msn.com, Jerett Miller <jerett@teamrubberhead.com>,
kerry@balancedused.org, lindstrm@harrispublishing.com,
snowrace@wildblue.net

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing you all to express my concerns as a Cooke City property owner for 20 years. Please, do not keep on Highway 212 open (plowing of "the plug") year round, rather, leave it under the current configuration. I would like to bring to your attention some issues that I think need to be resolved prior to any decision: who is going plow; who is going to pay for the plowing; who is going to plow/provide parking and pay for it in Cooke City; what over the snow access will be provide to such places as Daisy turnoff, Lulu/Abundance turnof and the Beartooth'sf; what access will be provide to locals living along this section of the plug; current sewage issues in Cooke City.

1.) Who is going to plow this? 4 miles are in Wyoming (I think the closest shop is south of Clark - 30+ miles away) and 5 miles are in Montana (I think the closest shop is Carbella 80+ miles away) neither have a rotary plow.

2.) Since this obviously is going to have to be done with a rotary plow, not traditional plows. Will Wyoming and Montana both be providing one? Fuel consumption of a traditional plow is about 75 gallons over a 10 hour period. The rotary for that same time is around 200 gallons. Maintenance costs on rotary vs traditional is 7:1. Where will there be a shop for these plows? Currently there is an agreement that the NPS plows the "plug" and the switchbacks. Are we taking for granted that they will be willing to state highways now? Either way, who is ultimately going to pay for this plowing?

3.) At any given time there is 50-150 rigs with trailers parked in the Pilot Creek parking lot. Where will they be parked in Cooke City - parking lots? Where will the parking lots be? Who will pay for parking lots to be plowed? Who is going to plow them?

4.) What access will be given to residents living in the "plug" area. They are not complaining about access currently. Will whoever is plowing the road going to be plowing their lanes or a pull off for them to to park a vehicle so they can get on sleds to access their property?

5.) What access will be provide to the Daisy trail, Lulu/Abundance trail, and the Beartooth's. Will a seperate trail be provided? If so, has an EIS been done on it? How will the construction of the trail be funded? Will the access trail behind the B4 be abandoned or will it be maintained? Can the trail be kept open or is the required to be abandoned due to the Canandian Lynx issue?

6.) Will access still be provide to the Beartooth's or will this access be lost?

7.) Last, nNobody has addressed the current sewage issues in Cooke City nor has sewage district been voted in yet by the residents in the "commercial use district". Not having a sewage district means that Cooke City DOES NOT qualify for government programs to assist with the costs. **Current systems are failing under the current volumes and several are in violation**. This should be addressed prior to adding additional traffic (sewage volume) to the area.

This movement has been started by, as near as I can tell, three business owners. Three business owners who want to grow their profit margins at any expense to the land, recreation, etc. I have been going to Cooke City since 1976, a property owner since 1991, and have lived on both sides of the mountain. The decision you make will be monumental to this area. It will effect the lives and business of far more than the three pushing for this.

Decisions for the area should not be based on peoples desire for profits rather what is best for the community as a whole. I am sure we all understand the effects of the current financial climate our country is enduring. Many people are not receiving raises and some wage cuts. It is no different in Cooke City, However, some business owners want the tax payers to plow this road for their short term financial gain, and destroy what Cooke City stands for.

Please do not make this decision on a knee jerk reaction, rather thoroughly examine, who, why, and what affects this have on the community and surrounding areas. It is easy to get a petition started and have hundreds of people from the midwest who have no skin in the game to sign it. Talk is cheap and once your decision is made there will be no going back with current environmental regulations.

I lived in the Red Lodge area for 25 years prior to moving to Bozeman. It never affected my access to Cooke City or our property. Please make sure that all opinions are reviewed and most importantly those by the tax payers that will bear the burden for 3 business owners. Access is still provided and maintained over snow or by vehicle via Gardiner for those who wish to drive in.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kirk Hogan
664 Terrance Loop
Bozeman, MT 59718
406-600-4040
kirkhogan@gmail.com

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Cooke Pass road plowing

From: "Ed Livingston" <ed@edlivingston.com>

Date: Tue, May 17, 2011 3:12 pm

To: <scott@glacierstateelectric.com>, <info@cokecitychamber.org>, <jalexander@fs.fed.us>, <troot@fs.fed.us>, <bruce@codyenterprise.com>, <mayornancy@cityofcody.com>, <Cody.Beers@dot.state.wy.us>;, <leeh@bbhc.org>, <info@visitwyo.gov>

I strongly disagree with the proposal to plow the road from Pilot Creek to Cooke City. Lets leave it as it is for those who enjoy this form of recreation and contribute to the economy of our area. Cooke City's exit to the world has always been through the corner of the Park and out to Gardiner etc. It has worked well all these years for the school children and emergency vehicles so lets not exchange tourism income for more expense in keeping this road open in the dead of winter. We need to keep in mind that our great country is teetering on the brink of financial ruin and every dollar saved is important.

Thank you for listening,
Ed Livingston

**Additional Comments from the
Cooke City Chamber of Commerce and Friends of the
Beartooth All-American Road Board of Directors**

1) Business is down.

2) Snowmobile business in town is down either due to economy, cost of sport or lack of advertising or ?. Some do not want to "put all their eggs in one basket" and concentrate solely on snowmobiling anymore.

3) Trend tends to be that there is more cross country skiing, snowboarding and animal watching tourists coming in.

4) Businesses want to capture the need/want of tourists/travelers going from Gardiner/ Livingston/ Bozeman to Cody and visa versa.

5) Concern of health and safety - emergency services are only from one way. Park's trend in the last few years is that they close a portion of the roads to plow (which shouldn't effect emergency vehicles). The park only plows from 8 to 4 therefore if the weather is bad the roads will be impassable to get out for emergencies outside of those hours or becomes quite dangerous to drive. Though I believe Chief Joseph is not plowed during the night but they do get less snow.

6) Colter Pass is higher in elevation and receives a lot more snow earlier and longer then Cooke City/Silver Gate. Concerns are the safety for people/vehicles during late evening being stuck after plowing times and in freezing temperatures. (remembering there is no cell service at this time nor police patrolling)

7) At this time there are 2 businesses operating and about 5 households that live in Colter Pass. When plowing the concern is what the plows would do with the snow to not block the 2 businesses driveways. Would these two businesses close and they would lose income where the town people would receive more? What about the residences getting in and out and snow blocking their access. (it isn't like the city where the plow goes through and you have to plow a few inches to a foot this would be several feet if not more at a time)

8) There would need to be a alternative trail system 1) to the Gallatin Nat'l forest trails and 2) to the Beartooth

9) Parking - Cooke City can not handle even a small amount of trailers that we already get. If WY travelers came there is no additional parking available. There would need to be additional parking made at either Lula (which would be forest service land) or ?

10) There have been other comments that have to do with that the essence or the aura of driving to and from your hotel room would be lost if road is opened.

11) If road is open it will encourage environmentalists to come and close down snowmobiling because of the fragile environment seeing marks in the snow and the loud noise machines.

12) Concern of changing culture, way of life.

Snowmobiling and the Gateway Communities

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April 12, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Wyoming State Snowmobile Association (WSSA) and the Cody Country Snowmobile Association (CCSA) regarding our opposition to proposals to plow Highway 212 between the Pilot Creek Parking Area and Cooke City, MT. An issue paper prepared by WSSA's consultant, Kim Raap, is attached which details our concerns.

The Cooke City and Beartooth Mountains areas provide extremely important snowmobiling opportunities and these opportunities would be harmed if this roadway were to be plowed during the winter season. This 'World Class' snowmobiling area's trail networks have been built by over 30 years of efforts by grassroots snowmobile clubs and local volunteers. *SnoWest Magazine* has ranked this collective area as high as #4 in its annual "Best of the West" picks for snowmobiling, and it is consistently ranked as a 'Top-Ten' destination for snowmobilers.

This snowmobiling area which straddles the Montana/Wyoming border provides significant economic activity to what would otherwise be a dormant winter economy. We know from the *2000-2001 Wyoming Snowmobile Survey* (McManus, Coupal and Taylor – University of Wyoming Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, October 2001) that for the Beartooths area (Park County, WY), daily trip expenditures by snowmobilers were estimated to total over \$3.8 million per year; and when including annual equipment expenditures within Wyoming, total direct annual snowmobiling spending was almost \$5.8 million for the Beartooths/Park County, Wyoming area. That is significant, and we're certain the economic impacts from snowmobiling in Park County, Montana are likely even greater since Cooke City businesses are closer to the action and thrive on snowmobiling during the winter season.

The WSSA and CCSA are adamantly opposed to what some have called "plowing the plug" on Highway 212 east of Cooke City. While some view this situation as a 'plug' (block) to their desired objectives, we view it as a critical 'connection' (link) to important services in Cooke City as well as to snowmobiling opportunities to the north of Cooke City.

Some proponents of road plowing have suggested that an elevated snowmobile trail could be created on one shoulder of Highway 212 to accommodate the existing snowmobile activity along this section of the roadway. That is simply an unsafe and unacceptable proposal. Such proposals disregard the fact there is a

considerable amount of snowmobile traffic along this corridor. The groomed snowmobile trail surface needs to be a minimum of 10-feet to 12-feet wide to accommodate two-way snowmobile traffic and trail grooming equipment; several feet of space is also required on each side of the groomed trail for snow storage (the outside berm, just as on a plowed roadway). The topography along several sections of this roadway is simply too narrow to safely accommodate two-way motor vehicle traffic on a plowed roadway, plus space for an adjoining snowmobile trail.

It has also been suggested that a new snowmobile trail could be constructed to replace the existing highway route. Unfortunately a new trail route across National Forest lands is not as easy or as simple as what some seem to believe. The surrounding terrain is quite rugged with numerous steep cliffs and drop-offs; it is also squeezed by Congressionally-designated Wilderness area to the north where motorized travel is prohibited. An expansion of snowmobile trails on National Forest lands cannot be done due to the 'no net gain' premise which governs lynx management concerns in this area.

A safe and viable over-snow trail connection to Cooke City, and the services provided there to snowmobilers, is critical to the long-term viability of the overall Beartooths snowmobile trail system on the Wyoming side of the border. The elimination of this linkage currently provided by the Highway 212 snowmobile trail route would adversely affect the financial viability of continued operation of this Wyoming trail system since half or more of existing revenue would be lost, particularly since Cooke City provides the only on-trail outlets for the sale of Wyoming snowmobile permits (and the next nearest permit selling agent is in Cody – 60 miles away).

We urge you to not support winter road plowing operations on Highway 212 between Pilot Creek and Cooke City. Please feel free to contact me if you desire additional information or would like to further discuss this issue.

Sincerely,

Bert Miller

Bert Miller
Vice President – Wyoming State Snowmobile Association
Director – Cody Country Snowmobile Association
4330 Pat O'Hara Mountain Drive
Cody, WY 82414
(307) 899-3419 b.miller1962@hotmail.com

Attachment: Trails Work Consulting issue paper

TRAILS WORK CONSULTING

KIM RAAP – OWNER

4015 S. BRADY COURT, SIOUX FALLS, SD 57103

605-371-9799 TRAILSWORK@AOL.COM

Issue Paper prepared on behalf of the Wyoming State Snowmobile Association (WSSA) For the Beartooths Snowmobile Trail System – Park County, Wyoming March 31, 2011

Background and Setting

The Beartooths Snowmobile Trail System consists of 32 miles of groomed trails and 34 miles of ungroomed trails. The groomed trails are primarily located on U.S. Highway 212, which is not plowed during the winter season. The exception to this is the portion between the Pilot Creek Trailhead and the junction of Wyoming Highway 296 (Chief Joseph Highway), which is off-highway. The ungroomed trails are loops that connect with off-trail riding areas north and south of Highway 212, and are located in an area east of the Top of the World Store and west of Beartooth Pass.

This trail system is popular with both resident and non-resident snowmobilers and provides an important link to Cooke City, Montana and snowmobile trails maintained by Montana around Cooke City. Complete facilities and services for riders are available in Cody and Powell, WY; however on-trail services are available only in Cooke City. Snowmobile rentals are available in Cody and Cooke City.

Issue of Concern: Proposal to Plow Highway 212 to Cooke City

A proposal to plow Highway 212 between the Pilot Creek Trailhead and Cooke City, Montana would eliminate the snowmobile trail connection between the Beartooths and important services in Cooke City, as well as the connection to other riding areas beyond Cooke City. Snowmobile trail system funding in Wyoming is based upon the sale of snowmobile registrations and user fees (resident, non-resident, and commercial categories). In any given year, 49% to 58% of all Beartooths area permits are actually sold in Cooke City (see Table 1 below). Additionally, 80% to 85% of all non-resident snowmobile user fees for the Beartooths area are sold in Cooke City.

Therefore the elimination of this linkage would adversely affect the financial viability of continued operation of this trail system since half or more of existing revenue would be lost, particularly since Cooke City provides the only on-trail outlets for the sale of Wyoming snowmobile permits (and the next nearest permit selling agent is in Cody – 60 miles away).

Table 1: Beartooths Area Snowmobile Permit Sales and Revenue

Winter Season	Permit Sales Area	Total Permit Sales All Categories	Total Permit Revenue All Categories
2005/2006	Park County, WY – All Permit Vendors:	837	\$20,649 (51.4%)
	Cooke City:	794	\$19,566 (48.6%)
	Total Beartooths Area:	1,631	\$40,215
2006/2007	Park County, WY – All Permit Vendors:	870	\$21,441 (50.9%)
	Cooke City:	861	\$20,664 (49.1%)
	Total Beartooths Area:	1,731	\$42,105
2007/2008	Park County – All Permit Vendors:	903	\$22,182 (42.3%)
	Cooke City:	1,140	\$29,808 (57.7%)
	Total Beartooths Area:	2,043	\$51,990

2008/2009	Park County, WY – All Permit Vendors:	842	\$20,820 (49.5%)
	Cooke City:	866	\$21,243 (50.5%)
	Total Beartooths Area:	1,708	\$42,063
2009/2010	Park County – All Permit Vendors:	727	\$18,060 (50.7%)
	Cooke City:	682	\$17,541 (49.3%)
	Total Beartooths Area:	1,409	\$35,601

Economic Impact of the Beartooths Snowmobile Trail System

The 2000-2001 Wyoming Snowmobile Survey (McManus, Coupal and Taylor – University of Wyoming Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, October 2001; the five sections of this report can be reviewed at <http://wyotrails.state.wy.us/Research/index.asp>) estimated that the economic impact of snowmobiling in Wyoming is over \$234 million annually. For the Beartooths area (Park County, WY), daily trip expenditures by snowmobilers were estimated to total over \$3.8 million per year; and when including annual equipment expenditures within Wyoming, total direct annual snowmobiling spending was almost \$5.8 million for the Beartooths/Park County area. See Table 2 below for a breakdown by visitor category.

Table 2: Annual Snowmobile Visitor Spending – Beartooths/Park County (Source: 2000-2001 Wyoming Snowmobile Survey)

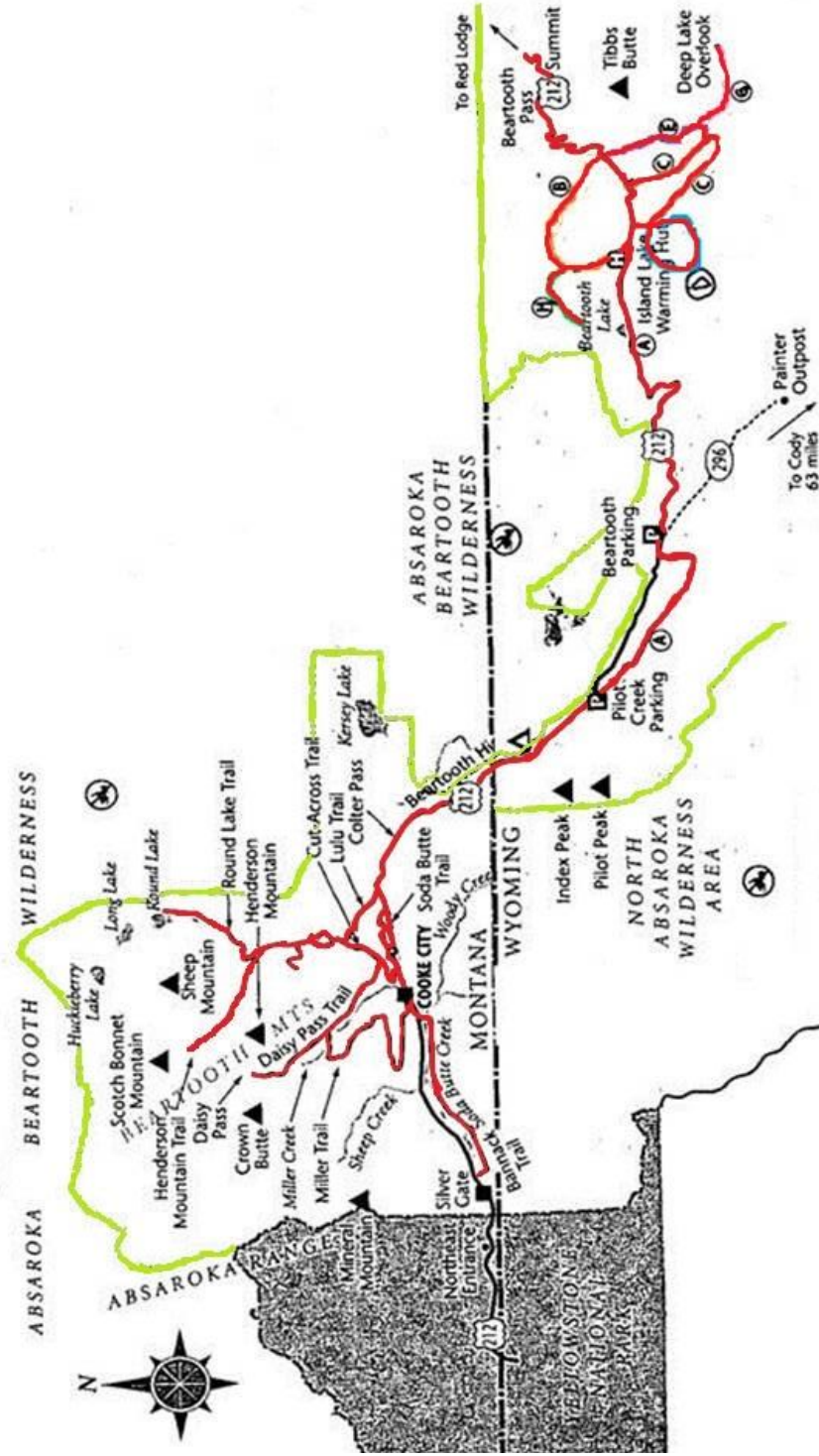
Visitor Category	Total Visitor Days	Average Daily Trip Expenditure	Beartooths – Total Annual Trip Expenditures	Average Total Expenditure per Visitor Day (including equipment)	Beartooths – Total Annual Expenditures (daily trip plus equipment)
Resident Snowmobilers	Wyoming: 764,844	\$68.50	\$1,519,330	\$123.37	\$2,736,347
	Beartooths (2.9% of state): 22,180				
Non-Resident Snowmobilers	Wyoming: 753,446	\$98.99	\$2,312,109	\$129.53	\$3,025,432
	Beartooths (3.1% of state): 23,357				
Commercial Outfitter Clients	Wyoming: 45,480	\$180.44	\$24,540	\$244.55	\$33,259
	Beartooths (0.3% of state): 136				
Total			\$3,855,979		\$5,795,038

Summary: WSSA Opposes this Proposal

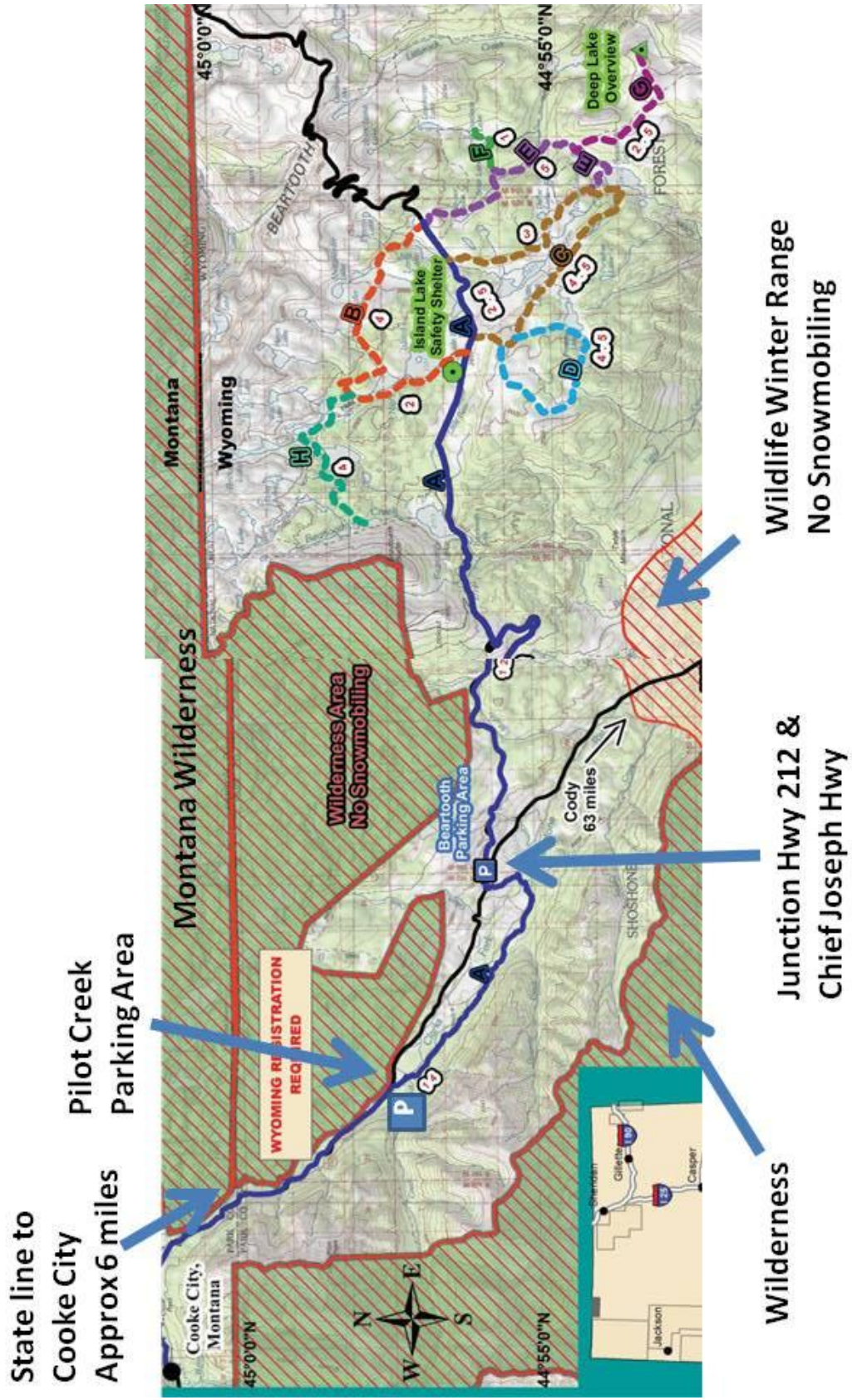
The Beartooths Snowmobile Trail System provides important winter recreational opportunities for Park County, Wyoming residents and visitors. It also generates important expenditures for the local winter economy. The WSSA is opposed to plowing this highway during the winter season and urges decision makers to *not* pursue such an action for the following reasons:

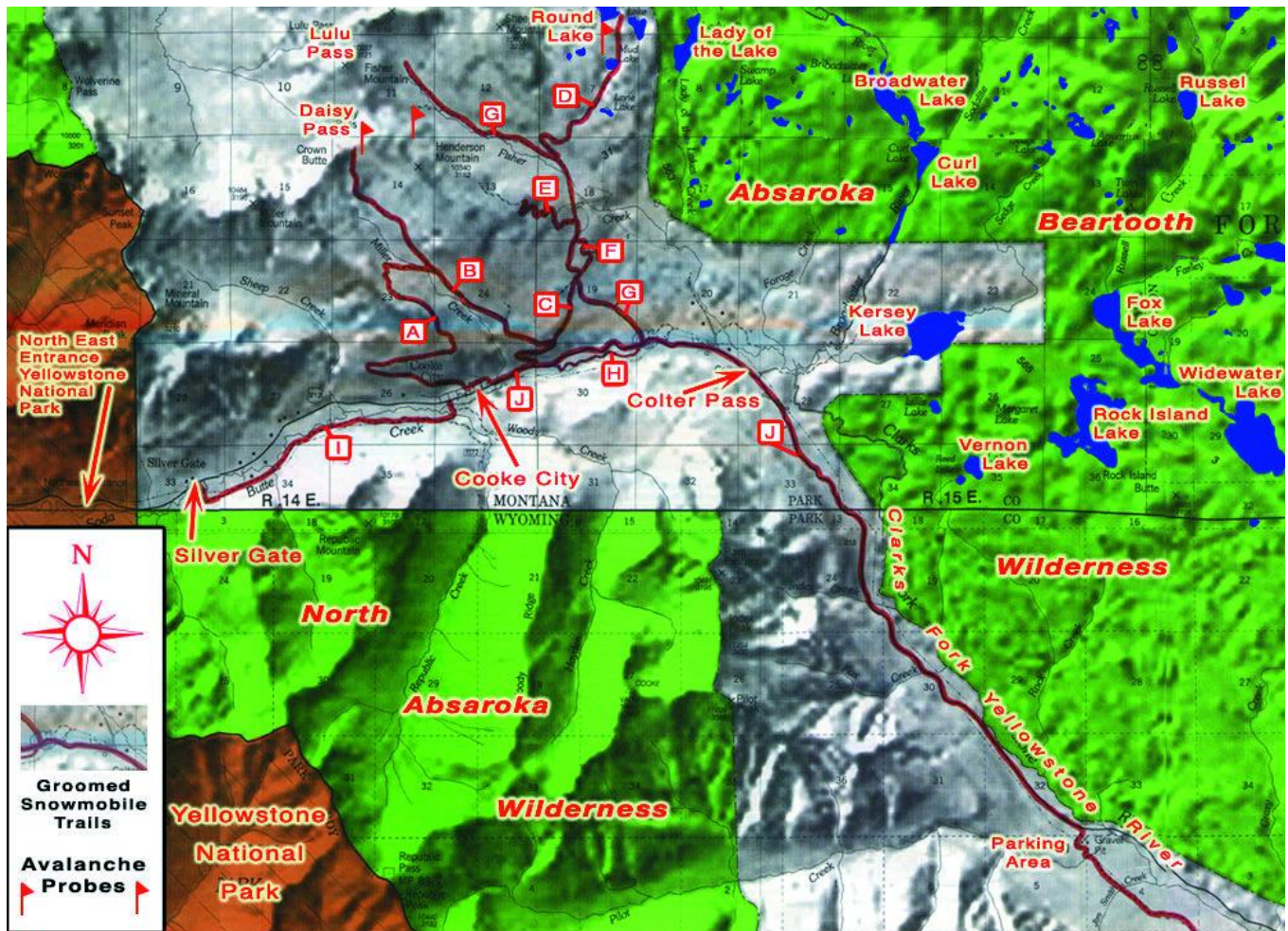
1. Plowing this roadway would eliminate the connection and continuity between important snowmobile trails in Wyoming and Montana.
2. If the highway between Pilot Creek and Cooke City would, in fact, be converted to a plowed roadway, an alternate off-roadway route would likely not be available – and certainly would not be easy or inexpensive to accomplish – for the following reasons: A) topography and terrain in the area is difficult to negotiate, so an off-road route may be physically impossible since a snowmobile trail needs to have a minimum constructed width of at least 10- to 12-feet in order to accommodate trail grooming equipment; B) any new off-highway route would require permission and environmental clearance from the U. S. Forest Service; this would involve preparing an EA or EIS which could potentially cost several hundred thousand dollars and take years versus months to complete; C) snowmobile trails in this area are under a ‘no net gain’ status due to the Lynx Conservation Rule – meaning any ‘replacement trail’ would need to be the same length or shorter than the existing roadway route or it cannot happen; given the challenging off-road terrain in this area, it is likely an impossibility that any new off-road snowmobile trail route would be shorter or even the same length as the existing, fairly direct, roadway; and D) construction of any new off-road trail route would be extremely expensive (likely in the ‘hundreds’ of thousand dollars to construct to Forest Service standards), and funding does not exist for this task.
3. Plowing this roadway would likely eliminate half of the existing revenue for the Beartooths snowmobile trail system since, on average; half is generated annually from permit sales in Cooke City. With the roadway plowed and the trail’s connectivity eliminated, there would be no opportunity or reason for riders from Wyoming to go to Cooke City, or vice versa. If this were to happen, it is likely that total revenues for the area would fall to the point there could be insufficient funds to continue maintaining any of the remaining snowmobile trail system in Wyoming (i.e., the entire Beartooths snowmobile trail system could potentially be lost).
4. Plowing this roadway would substantively decrease existing winter visitor spending in the area; the best-case scenario is that spending would likely be cut in half and the worst-case scenario is that the entire trail system could be eliminated and result in the loss of all trip expenditures (\$3.8 million per year in Park County, Wyoming), along with much or most of the annual equipment expenditures.
5. Plowing this roadway would be expensive. All previous Winter Use studies in Yellowstone National Park have concluded that continued over-snow access (versus plowed roadways) is best; the same remains true for this section of Highway 212.
6. Plowing this roadway would not provide good or dependable winter access to Cooke City and Yellowstone National Park from Cody, given that motorists would have to traverse both Chief Joseph Highway/Dead Indian Pass and the Beartooths Highway which is prone to avalanches and rock slides between Pilot Creek and Cooke City. Additionally it needs to be understood that, if ‘plowing the plug’ ever becomes reality, it is highly unlikely Park County Wyoming will continue plowing from the Chief Joseph/Highway 212 junction to Pilot Creek at its expense – so whatever the new plowing entity is on Highway 212 would need to bear the full cost of plowing approximately 15 miles from this intersection to Cooke City, versus only from Pilot Creek to Cooke City.

Cooke City/ Silver Gate Area Snowmobile Trails



Beartooth Area Snowmobile Trails





- A Miller Trail**
This trail begins by the Cooke City School on River Road. The trail is steep with several switchbacks. Miller trail intersects Daisy trail approximately 1 ½ miles from Cooke City.
- B Daisy Trail**
This trail leaves Highway 212 ¼ mile east of Cooke City and is the shortest route to the high country. The trail ends below the saddle of Daisy Pass between Crown Butte and Chimney Rock. Caution is advised on steep terrain as avalanche hazards exist.
- C Cut – Across Trail**
This 1 mile trail connects Daisy trail with Lulu trail.
- D Round Lake Trail**
This 2 mile trail leaves Lulu Trail and travels north toward Round Lake. The route travels through alpine country at high elevations where sudden storms may occur. The groomed trail ends near a US Forest Service cabin where avalanche probe poles are located
- E Henderson Trail**
This trail leaves Lulu trail and travels ¾ mile to the base of Henderson Mountain. Caution is advised on steep terrain as avalanche hazards exist.

- F Rommel Trail**
Rommel is a ½ mile loop trail that connects with Lulu trail.
- G Lulu Trail**
This trail leaves Highway 212 approximately 1 ¾ miles east of Cooke City and travels the length of Fisher Creek drainage. Lulu trail is intersected by (C.) Cut – Across,
- H Soda Butte Trail**
This 2 ½ mile trail follows the historic Bannock Trail east of Cooke City through the Soda Butte campground.
- I Bannock Trail**
This 3 mile trail follows an historic trail from Cooke City to Silver Gate. Travel with caution as several year – round residence live here, many with children. Moose are also spotted along the trail.
- J Beartooth Highway 212**
This route travels from Cooke City to the Pilot Creek trailhead in Wyoming. Beyond Pilot Creek the route is intermittently groomed to the Top – of – the – World area near Beartooth Pass by the Wyoming Snowmobile Association. A \$15 permit is required to ride on Wyoming's trails. The permit may be purchased at the Cooke City Exxon Station or Cooke City Yamaha.

Government Affair Committee - Minutes
Cody Country Chamber of Commerce
June 9, 2010

Present: Marc Thompson, Claudia Wade, Charles Kepler, Lou Cicco, Bob Hanson, Dick Wilder, Andy Whiteman and Dossie Overfield.

Absent: Lee Haines, Kathy McDonald, Greg Irwin, Kathleen Jachowski, Paul Sandbak and Neil Thagard.

Guests: Karen McCreery, Senator Enzi's Office, Terry Root, Shoshoni National Forest and Bert Miller, Wyoming Snowmobile Association.

Staff: Judy Sanders

Marc asked that Claudia update the committee on the latest news of the new Executive Director of the Chamber, Joe Locurto. Joe will start on June 14; he is renting a home and once his home in Nevada is sold his wife will move out to Wyoming. They will be traveling back and forth on weekends until then.

Karen McCreery started out the meeting by updating the committee on news from Senator Enzi's office and passing out pertinent information on contacting his office as well as pocket size US Constitutions and news of the Nations Christmas Tree that will be coming from the Grand Teton National Park. Karen also shared the news and concern of large semitrailer trucks with pups traveling on the Chief Joseph Scenic Highway, state highway 296, in the summer of 2011. These semis will be hauling mine tailings from the New World Mine to Whitehall, Montana for the process of extracting gold from the tailings. The New World Mine is owned by the state of Montana and with the increase of value in gold it appears the effort to extract it is worth the effort of hauling the tailings. There is a large concern about the issue of the trucks traveling that road due to its scenic and popular attraction to visitors to Cody, as well as a hazardous risk to the forest if a truck was to have an accident. There does not appear to be anything to be done to stop this large amount of truck traffic in the summer of 2011. Highway 296 is the only road available for travel out of the Cooke City area. The only restrictions on the truck hauling is the load limit, it must be within guidelines/law of the State of Wyoming.

Karen lead the discussion on information concerning the opening of Highway 212 during the winter month's into Cooke City and the Northeast entrance of Yellowstone National Park. She asked that Terry Root, Wapiti Forest District Ranger, come and address the issue due to his history and knowledge of all that would need to be accomplished and some of the costs and issues involved.

Terry Root spoke at length on the winter opening of Hwy 212 into Cooke City in the winter months. At this time the highway is closed and only used by snowmobilers in and out of Cooke City on the East end of town. The west entrance to Cooke City is plowed by the National Park Service so that residents of Cooke City have access to Mammoth Hot Springs for health care and then out the North gate for access to other Montana towns for shopping etc.

There is a lot involved in an attempt to keep that road open in the winter. It will shut down snowmobilers traveling in and out of Cooke City, which will impact Cooke City negatively at this time due to the lack of room for parking the large pick-up trailer outfits that come from the Midwest and other adjacent states. Right now the snowmobilers have adequate parking at the newly expanded Pilot Creek parking area, which is provided by the Shoshone National Forest.

Also there is the possibility that the Superintendent of Yellowstone would not plow the northeast road in YNP and close access down in the winter time, so one could only get as far as Cooke City.

Other concerns are who would plow the road? The state of Montana or the State of Wyoming, who pays for the plowing and what is the potential cost?

Another issue that would be considered a roadblock is the listing of the Canadian Lynx, which in turn does not allow any additional snowmobile trails in that area of Shoshone National Forest. If the road was to be opened and to compensate for that loss a trail would need to be 'built' and the equal amount of the new trail would close down an existing trail. No additional mileage is allowed on the current trail system.

To go any farther in this process a NEPA assessment would have to be done which can cost anywhere from \$50,000 - \$150,000. Also, a legal battle from environmental groups would most likely ensue as well as from the snowmobile associations.

Bert Miller of the Park County Snowmobile Association and Wyoming Snowmobile Association joined the conversation with comments from the snowmobile advocates viewpoint. Approximately \$5.8 million in revenue was received in the State for the winter season of 2001 from winter trail

use. The 2500 miles of groomed and marked trails is ranked top in the nation, and there is great concern that opening the highway in the winter would affectively close down the snowmobiling in Northwest Wyoming.

It was also shared that in February 2002 1,890 snowmobiles entered the East Gate into Yellowstone. In February 2010 only 14 snowmobiles entered the East Gate.

Meeting adjourned.

Next Government Affairs/National Parks Committee Meeting is July 7,
Wednesday,
2 pm in the Barling room of the Park County Courthouse.

UPPER YELLOWSTONE SNOWMOBILE CLUB
PO BOX 1111
COOKE CITY, MT 59020

3 July, 2010

To: All Concerned Parties

Re: Hwy 212 from Cooke City, MT to Pilot Creek Parking Lot, WY

Due to the "buzz" from outlying communities, organizations and within the Cooke City area concerning the potential of plowing Hwy 212 from Cooke City, MT to the Pilot Creek Parking Lot in WY we find it necessary to state our position.

We find it perplexing that organizations are conducting meetings concerning this "plowing issue" yet Cooke City residents, business owners and organizations are not being notified or invited although this issue would affect Cooke City more than any other community.

The purpose of the Snowmobile Club is to promote the sport of snowmobiling for families and individuals alike and to provide groomed and ungroomed trails for the enjoyment of all.

Since the early 1980's there has been a concentrated effort to promote the Cooke City area as a snowmobile destination area. Advertising the Cooke City trail system as it connects to the Beartooth area trail system allows us to provide 125 miles of world class trails for all levels of riding ability. This trail system is not exceptionally long but due to the diversity of what is available it provides riding to thousands of people from all over the country every year.

The parking lot at Pilot Creek is vital to the people arriving from the east as it allows them a large, clean area to park without having to drive all the way through Livingston, MT and Yellowstone National Park. The nine miles from the parking lot is groomed by Wyoming to the state line and then by our club groomer into Cooke City.

One by one the small number of snowmobiling areas in the west are being closed, thus causing more concentrated use in smaller areas.

The Upper Yellowstone Snowmobile Club does not support the plowing of Hwy 212 from Cooke City, MT to the Pilot Creek parking lot in Wyoming. Plowing that section of road will completely disrupt the snowmobiling connection between the Cooke City area and the Beartooth area; a connection that has taken years to establish. Because of the connection of the two current trail systems millions of dollars of revenue are brought into both states every year.

We do not want to lose any trail, we do not want Hwy 212 plowed.

Anxiously awaiting a reply,

Dale Dempsey, President
Representing the UYSC Membership