Kenai Winter Access Collaborative Learning Workshop
Chugach National Forest
AVTEC Lounge, Seward
2/24/05

NOTE: The comments below are displayed almost verbatim from the documents received from the public at the above-mentioned workshop. We did leave out words or sentences that were illegible and tried to correct any misspelled words. The numbers identified at the beginning of some statements below refer to the numbered items in the document handed out at the workshop entitled: "Kenai Winter Access Constraints, Assumptions, and Reference Points - - - 22 February 2005". This document is available on the project website: www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach/news_releases/kenai_workshop/kenaiworkshop1.html

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We need to come together and map out a few trails to areas that we all love to visit and enjoy the scenery. Both user groups should work together and come up with different trails for each user groups.

#2 These conflicts are sorry to hear. Yes motorized and Heli-skiing use a machine to get them there, but why close areas to motorized users after it was already open to them? It's not good to open something for so many years to motorized and then turn around and close it. Why not have new places explored and figure out where and which ones are for nonmotorized and motorized? But it's not good to close out motorized users after they have been able to use that area.

#6 I don't believe either group can judge one another. Either way one looks at this assumption, they will agree or disagree. Yes motorized users group respect nonmotorized users and try to give them plenty of space to enjoy their hike, etc. Alaska is getting pollution each day by humans in general, why do you think we are in global warming? Humans, machines causes to the pollution nonmotorized users can't blame this solely on motorized. Every human on this planet pollute x-amount each day whether they know it or not. If we are so worried about pollution, why not make a better snowmachine that is as good as the old, but is safer to our environment. Personally, I disagree with number six. There are many motorized users that have put up for years the closure to trails for not enough snowfall or seasonal changes. People need to realize our society is moving on into the future and motorization is a part of the future. A little noise also isn't bad, it alerts wild animals where you are so one won't startle it and be attacked.

#12 There is no way 80% is opened to motorized. Maybe half that or less. If there was 80% open to motorized users we wouldn't be having these meetings or conflicts with motorized and nonmotorized. We would be in heaven and enjoying the 80% that we so have.

#17 Many motorized users do slow down while passing nonmotorized users. And nonmotorized normally give way for motorized users. We work with each other when we come into contact with one another. It just seems that when we are with our groups (motorized and non) we gang up on the other one and that leads us to where we are now.

GIVE US ACCESS

Highway parking where motor access is limited by geographical lay of the land

My skier friends and sledders get along good. You hear bitter complaints from few.

#6 They may choose new places but those are our old places we ride and now they want it closed, there were no skiers there before.

#8 The area's to be closed will still get heavy noise from the highway.

#11 No

#12 No 80%

#13 I do not think you hear from the majority of skiers

#7 Part of the problem with increasing closures is that you're concentrating the use areas.

#17 When riding and I come up on a skier, I do slow down and move as far to the opposite side of the trail as possible. It's, again, a few bad people who don't follow this. It's all about consideration – including skiers wearing reflective clothing when skiing at night on multi-use trails. It doesn't always happen and it's difficult to be as considerate as possible when you come up on a skier in black when riding at night!

#21 Often the nine cabins along Res. Pass aren't open to skiers after Feb. 15 either due to poor trail conditions from snowmachines. Large "whoopde-doos" and poor snow equals no skiing.

#7 Limiting motorized use does not potentially displace snowmachine users, it **does** displace them. The 'other' open areas are rapidly disappearing. When I asked the NPS (Kenai Fjords) where the alternate place to ride was, the answer I was given – in writing – was "the road." This is not a desirable "other" area.

#12 As mentioned, I feel the 80% number is extremely misleading. Of the 80%, how much is ride-able?

#16 Parallel trails are a great idea because as a skier it's easier to ski down a trail that has been set by a snowmachine than breaking trail on your own.

#19 Closing Carter/Crescent from Jan. 10 – Apr 10 is generally when snow conditions permit riding. My suggestion, if this ere implemented would be to alternate years when it's open form before Jan 10 – April 10 and the next year open Jan 10 – April 10. Then coincide this with the Resurrection River Trail, so you could always ride one place. Skiers and snowmachiners can easily share the same areas. It's too bad a few selfish people on both sides have brought us to this!

#7 Why is it if so much land closed to motorized users already? Why close even more? This is just going to lead to more angry people. We (motorized) have five areas to ride, but we also have to get proper snow coverage. That's another limitation right there. Is five areas too much to ask for, for what Alaska has to offer? There is half a million acres here for people in general to explore. When you limit more and more, motorized users will find other areas that aren't allowed to go.

#19 I'm sorry time sharing isn't the best answer. Nonmotorized users are able to go anytime, all year round. Where as snowmachiners might have restricted access. Don't put time limits, make new trails. Both user groups need to get together and work together and figure out a better trail access for a new one. We need t figure out where new areas for trails can be. Make new trails; get volunteers to help to make them.

Gone March 15 – May 15 then ready to "roll up our sleeves"
Please keep us in the loop!

#4 The population anticipated to increase will require "more access" into these recreation areas. Providing a better trail system (that is currently funded by all users) would help abate some of the congestion.

#6 Regarding noise, you can only hear a snowmachine for approximately – 2-4 minutes unless it within tree line. Again, the safety concerns should encompass more and wilder trails to the areas of recreation.

#3 Need to make sure the term "cross country" skiing includes telemark skiing in addition to normal backcountry touring.

#6 Trail conditions are an important part of this. Heavy snowmachine use tends to make trails very undesirable if not impossible to ski on. Even thought the Resurrection Pass Trail is closed to motorized use in late winter, the trail is "mogulled" out in many places and not enjoyable to ski on. Also, it's not just the general noise that is annoying, it's the drone of a single Machine transiting an area is much more tolerable than high-revving, variable pitches coming form machines engaged in high-marking or similar activities.

#7 Kenai Fjords NP currently does not limit snowmachine use. The new Exit Glacier Area Plan, once implemented, will only exclude snowmachines for a few acres immediately in front of Exit Glacier terminus.

#11 Don't know if that was the actual reason for the decision, but that trade-off was certainly in the minds at many non-motorized users.

#12 Probably not accurate. Terrain makes many areas inaccessible. The question of how many acres are "available" for winter use is a complex GIS question that involves topography as well as distance from access points.

#13 Add Carter/Crescent and Manitoba Mountain

#16 A non-motorized trail in the trees is not always a good idea. The snow gets to icy and nasty. Open areas or wide corridors are more desirable.

#19 Time sharing or split seasons won't work well here due to extremely variable weather and snow conditions. When the conditions are good, which can be few and bar between, everyone wants to get out and play. Also, if snowmachines have the first half of the season, then snow conditions can be nasty as trails are rutted and slopes are tracked up.

#21 I don't disagree with this, but it should also be noted how many are available!!

Key points
There's still a lot of rhetoric going on among the user groups. People are still being very closed-minded, on both sides of the issue. We had a long ways to go in terms of mutual understanding.

If the FS needs dollars to build trails into new areas, maybe lease/permit, a lodge in that area (on RFP) that is reciprocates by creation and maintenance of the trails.

Skiers have a limited range. I suggest creating rider-free areas close t road accesses that have snow-machine trails that skirt that area and give access to backcountry.
POSTING and ENFORCEMENT is critical! Weeding out that handful of really problem-riders would help tremendously.

* Do not make big improvements to difficult trails. The resulting increase in rider density would destroy the experience.

Riding requires a huge amount of terrain. Noise-free skiing requires an equally large quantity of terrain.

Bad snow years of ten result in little or no riding opportunity well into February.

#4 & 12 Also unavailable to snowmachines is country cut off by salmon-rivers (which we aren't to cross).

#4 & 12 Available to riders are: areas above tree line (that have trail access), river valleys (frozen or non-salmon), and frozen lakes.

#6 & 7 Limiting access to riders results in higher (more dense) concentrations of riders. THIS IS SERIOUSLY DISRUPTS THE QUALITY OF THE RIDE. The greatest value of a day's conditions is the virgin powder.

#1 Agree – Recreation studies and literature supports

#2 There is a need for a regional perspective of the Kenai Peninsula. To consider the available opportunities for snowmachines and cross-country skiing or related solitude experiences. It seems there are a multitude of snowmachines opportunities in this area and very few areas for

just solitude experiences that safety and quietness one factors. The shared motorized and nonmotorized areas disperse the users that one seeking quiet and the solitude experiences.

#5 If there are new areas that could be developed solely to separate user groups with noise barriers and dispersed use and overuse by snowmachines – areas that can be enforced with access point limitations?

#6 Agree – both user groups are seeking different experiences, neither group is right or wrong – just have different core values – their needs to be consideration of existing opportunities in region of: 1. snowmobiles opportunities, 2. cross-country ski opportunities, 3. Both together (are the areas ever monitored to see if diverse user groups access or has it defaulted to snowmachiners solely? (Are there areas to be developed that can use same access point but have diverging paths to separate user group areas. There are real issues of safety on narrow trails with blind corners and smell and noise and disruptive behavior that neglects a respect to the environmental considerations.

- If use beginning of trails with motorized and nonmotorized uses A shouldn't be too long because nonmotorized 0 go as long on trail compared to motorized use.

#4 Some winters like this one, rivers are open, no skiing or motorized use. I don't think you can divide the use in valley and river bottoms.

#13 South Fork Snow River

#17 Yes

#19 No

#20 Yes

Although I came just as speakers were starting, there was no "describe situation" to summarize purpose of meeting and define conflict. Perhaps I missed it, or it was assumed.

#1 There are reasons why winter tourism can increase much faster than the overall population growth. Expansion of winter destination visitation by Heli-skiers and snowmachiners could increase the demand significantly.

#2 (2) Options for additional short side roads would significantly improve access.

#12 There are choke points for access that effectively limit the use of terrain. Topography characteristics have the same effect. As an example, the bottom five miles of Snow River is effectively closed to both skiers and snowmachiners by thick trees in the valley floor. Reside slopes however are quite accessible to Heli-skiers.

#13 I question 20 Mile. The motorized/nonmotorized ration is over 90/100. Why isn't Turnagain Pass and Manitoba Mountain on this list?

#14 Should include helicopter skiers in this assumption about traveling deeper and needing staging areas

#25 Only a half of one planning unit meets this description.
(Note) There is a very sharp distinction in the plan between motorized and nonmotorized uses. In Canada, there are approximately 50 destination backcountry ski lodges that use helicopters and snow-cats for access to an essentially "quiet" zone.

#5 Enforcement and compliance

This statement is a showstopper. The statement forces the USFS to do one of two things: One, find tons of money to hire lots of law enforcement to insure that snowmachiners comply with closures or two admit and that they can't enforce the closures. If the latter and I suspect that is most likely, there is little value to closures.

#1 Agree

#2 Agree

#3 Agree

#4 Agree

#5 Agree

#6 Agree

#7 Agree

#8 This statement is false – nonmotorized recreation can still take place even if motorized assess is voided.

#9 Agree

#10 Agree

#11 Disagree – I'm 61 years old, I ski and snowmachine, Lost Lake is no longer an option for me in either activity.

#12 Disagree – as stated 80% is available but much is inaccessible even if trails could be built.

#13 Agree

#14 Agree

#15 Agree

#16 Agree

#17 Agree

#15 In general if the trail to the backcountry is longer than three miles the skiers will not reach the backcountry.

#17 The skiers I see stay in our tracks so who should so who should move? Please make trails.

#19 Snow changes so shut outs for us (See D) to be short term Day or week, what do you mean not closed to skiers ever? Skiers can walk up a bad trail.

#21 Closed again

#22 NO

It seems motorized and nonmotorized groups represent different core values and expectations and there should be areas available in a region for each group to have separate use areas and a few shared areas.

Alternative days/weeks may be hard to enforce as folks come from all over and hare to communicate regulatory information and weather plays a major factor too.

Don't use a visitor capacity unless it's absolutely the last resort and as this tends to disperse users – social and environmental impacts

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#4 Nonmotorized users appear to have more conflict

#5 Need more trails, access

#6 Totally agree – many nonmotorized individuals stereotype motorized users – many are older, cautious

#7 Kenai Fjords NP – Both users have managed to co-exist

#9 Once "on top" there is room for all – creation of 2 trails may be answer although only 1.5 miles have to be shared currently

#12 Most is inaccessible as mentioned

#15 Interesting – never thought about trailhead conflicts other than lack of parking, toilets

#16 Absolutely either is possible but leave the mountain top to all – many skiers unable to ski up trail but could ski on top

#17 Yes

#19 Current logbook shows little nonmotorized use compared to motorized

#20 We all want it all – opportunity to motorize and nonmotorized use – many do both. Seward locals can make Carter/Crescent work; I realize we have to deal with rest of Alaska's population

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#7 Snowmachines should be concentrated to disperse environmental and social impacts. However, there should a spectrum of experiences available and a consider – of historical use patterns – (novice _ expert)

#8 There needs to be areas for JUST nonmotorized activities – right now there are none for cross-country skiing (12 Mile, you can just go in a loop) – backcountry solitude experiences are really needed in this area.

I support the decision to close area to motorized use given these is a spectrum of opportunity and experiences provided for motorized folks – The motorized users have more areas and opportunity than nonmotorized in our area (region).

#2 This probably addresses many assumptions. It seems like many of the problems come form snow machines going fast on trails where skiers are skiing. I have seen sleds going way too fast – blazing by skiers, but I have also seen skiers on trails wearing all black at night. I think if there were some enforcement on all the trails, it would take care of many of the problems. Instead of spending time and money to make these changes why not put some enforcement in place.

#6 When you talk about disruptive experiences, you should consider how disruptive skiers, and dog sledders are with the wildlife in these areas. I have driven by many moose or my sled and they never pay attention, but you take a skier or dog-sledders by a moose and they get very agitated. As for the conditions of snow, nine out of ten skiers I have talked to on the trails are grateful that we took our sleds up the trail and made it easier for them. A select few skiers are complaining about a very select few bad apples in the snowmachining community.

#7 We have heard about limiting sledding in areas before, but never about limiting skiing. To my knowledge, there is not a single area in the entire state, that only snowmachiners are allowed, yet there are several areas where machines are not allowed.

#10 – 11 In the past there was talk of limiting snowmachine use to Dec 15- Feb 15 or something close to that. That would make sledding up there a two-week time-period if weather stays the same, especially if the trails are closed until ideal conditions.

#13 Split seasons sound really good, except the snowmachiners get the short - end of the stick because they get the DEC-FEB season, which as stated before there is no snow in the early season, or not enough to open trails to sleds. These trails could be used by skiers, who could hike up in the mud and ski in the snow in higher elevations. Maybe give the skiers the Dec-Feb season and the sleds the Feb-Apr or make seasons shorter two weeks at t time or something.

Maybe the Forest Service along with the National Park and City of Seward could support a snow cross track across the bay.

If you want volunteers, building trails call me. Also makes more sense to have the people who use the trails make the trails.

It is critical to establish a limit on how many people can safely recreate in specific areas of the Kenai Peninsula and still have a positive experience.

This area cannot possibly absorb all the potential users streaming south from Anchorage despite the increase in developed trailheads and expanded parking lots, and trails.

Set a conservative limit and the say "no more."

The Planning Assumptions (p.2) point out the concentration of people and wildlife in valley bottoms and corridors yet I do not find specific mention of brown bear protection: denning, resting, corridor, food, access considerations. We do not even know how many bears are in the eastern Kenai Peninsula and yet huge impacts from these plans are allowed without any scientific base.

I am concerned about the focus on "natural appearing" character such as p 6 – it implies a false sense of ecological balance. As long as it "looks" natural if it's ok, even if the ecosystem is battered and out of balance. Let's maintain a healthy, natural ecosystem, limit human use via limited parking, limited season, limited time, even a reservation system to ensure a quality experience.

The pie cannot be made infinitely bigger.

#7 Forest wide Direction
Also mange for brown bear – specifically, not lumped with other wildlife. Restrict fishing to daylight hours to reduce road kills and encounters in the dark

#8 Establish flight corridors to avoid popular recreational areas (e.g. – not over Exit Glacier, Mt. Alice, Lost Lake, etc.)

#18 Good idea

#19 I would live with the Jan 10th to April 10th open to motorized use – seasonal switching year to year is not a good idea. Confusing and will lead to arguments when weather is adverse.

#1 Big assumption on the project increase – we need to deal with right now with recent snow conditions over the last few years winter recreation is on the decline.

#2 More access is very important if everyone disagrees about use of the trail, make more and make them user specific (Turnagain Pass has a good separation zone) go with that same idea. Catch a skier on your trail and you know he is wrong.

#8 No way, skiers go more places and have access to the whole state they don't need a trail to get somewhere.

There is not a compromise on Carter/Crescent user groups are granted fair and equal access.

#12 80% is a very big miss perception, 100% of the area is open to skiers and other user groups. Motorized vehicles are restricted by terrain to gain access.

#11 Get real, closing areas is not the answer, more access and new trails for nonmotorized use is.

#12 80% is not right

#13 The same can be said for winter-motorized use.

#14 Yes, but this becomes greater when access continued to be limited

#15 You're getting there, more and proper access

#16 You're getting there, more and proper access

Don't manage for renegade groups, manage the categorize areas where 2000 plan works

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#19 Time-sharing – offsetting the months of use, at Carter-Crescent and Resurrection Trail is a possibility that may work.

#8 A decision that does not limit any user Permits all users. Item 8 shows an outside view of how to solve the access issue. We are all going to have to compromise.

#13 20 Mile may not vet in this area – a comment by motorized users that these are also prize areas would be expected, they are also prized by others.

#19 Time-sharing is already imposed by climatic conditions. 1" of snow permits nonmotorized winter use. More snow is required to accept machine use. This otherwise allows 1-2 months of early use by nonmotorized.

#7 Yes, displacing the motorized users from one location will definitely increase their concentration in other areas. More access into areas.

#9 Carter-Crescent Lakes is in need of another trail (Trail Lake – River Campground) near a road 5 miles back toward the Saddle Cabin at Carter-Crescent. Extend this road/trail up to the Saddle Cabin and designate it as a specific user route.

#12 80% of KP open to motorized while on a map is perhaps valid, in reality only a small portion is accessible.

There are currently plenty of areas for skiers to ride or hikers to hike, without the presence of snowmachines. The mountains surrounding Seward are all accessible only by foot such as Alice, Tiehacker, Mt. Eva, Mt. Marathon. Each of these areas also has trails. There are other areas just outside of Seward such as North Fork of Snow River, which very limited snowmachine traffic. Closures are not an option for motorized users. Resurrection River trail receives limited snowmachine use, my point, there are plenty of areas for nonmotorized users to currently go and enjoy what they do.

#12 80% of the Peninsula is not available to motorized use. Snowmachines are limited to rails for access. Nonmotorized users have access to 100% of the Peninsula. You can take a set of ski's or snowshoes and start moving. You do not need a trail. There are no areas closed to nonmotorized users, which are just opposite for the motorized crowd. The best solution is to develop new trails with new rules. Develop new trails into the same areas currently or develop new areas such as Mills Creek. There has been talk of this for the Crazy Hut people, if this is developed it should be a Forest Service trail, with Forest Service cabins not 1,700 sq. ft. house. Don't take away areas or limit access to areas for motorized users. That is not a fair solution.

#8 Carter-Crescent – should be developed to allow access by both groups - alternative trails, walls, trails, etc.

#14 Snowmachines want to be about tree line in large bowls with deep snow – have trails to get them up higher – have skiers lower.

#15 Good idea as there is a need for more places

#16 This is a good plan and I have thought of this previously – a wider trail or separate – motorized do not stay on a trail long as they are trying to get to higher area.
I want to see trails connecting Cooper Landing, Moose Pass, Hope, Summit, and Seward by auto, skiing, snowmachines, and dog sled.

#7 Why would we want to over congest and trample a more localized area – by displacing people? There is plenty of room for all just the way it is.

#8 There are plenty of trails for nonmotorized use – within a 2 mile radius.

#1 Agree plus winter tourism until also be expanded resulting in expansion from outside influence! Travel

#2 Agree

#3 Agree

#4 Wouldn't use the term "major" conflicts, just conflicts

#5 I agree as Cooper Landing is in the process of putting together a sown hill ski area, extreme skiing, and a winter snow area – so expansion of winter recreation needs to be considered

#6 in my experience, speaking with cross-country skiers – they prefer to ski over trails gone over by snow machines because of the corridor effect of the terrain – why can't motorized, nonmotorized share parts of trails to get to areas there might be separated at different elevations. I feel that there are enough areas that can be developed that there would be areas that could be totally separate for motorized to maintain the quiet. We need to set where skiers and machines with maps to lay out trails. I would like to see cross-country ski trails along the N. side of Kenai Lake and Cooper Landing that could connect to Moose Pass and also a snow machine trail that would connect Carter/Crescent and Moose Pass.

#7 In the statement you say much of the one half million acres are closed to motorized located in 12 you state 80% is available – conflicting statements -

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<u>Economics</u>
Snowmachines contribute much more to local economy than skiers
1. Fuel, 2. Lodging, 3. Food, 4. Equipment repair/maintenance, 5. Snowmachine registration

Many areas are only accessible to skiers due to topography restrictions so why close areas to snowmachines.

#1 Yes, I agree population will increase Why not educate the people coming in to work together. Keep in mind snowmachiners, (motorized crowd has maintained access to these trails). The trails are distinctly marked and were traveled, packed making access easier for the folks on skis, snowshoe, and foot. How about two accesses/separated. One hand helping the other. Wouldn't this ease congestion.

#3 I agree keep the uneducated out of areas they don't belong. Average tourist should not be in deep access because of their lack of local knowledge.

#4 Once again – one deserves the other, either dual access or none at all.

This is my first meeting, so I'm not quite up to speed on the matter at hand.

#6 Safety concerns, the areas in question generally require a short, single wide trail to get to the riding areas. This also relates to number 17 if you're on the trail walking, you will most definitely hear a snowmachine coming, step aside, and we will slow down also. If you're in the open country, there will be no "close calls," or other users.

At this time – I'm out of time. So all I can say is another opinion. There cannot be a compromise these issues. These areas must remain open to both user groups or neither. Thank you.

P.S. I use these areas very often, I was at Carter Lake today, coincidently the parking lot was full of snowmachiners, not one skier, and rarely have I seen other than snowmachines.

Why close anything to snowmachines?
- The majority of participants at the Forest Service meetings generally are part of the snowmachine crowd – nonmotorized users are a definite minority users at the meetings I have attended.
- Most people I have ever met in the backcountry are riding snowmachines 95%

#5 Enforcement of closed areas would not be feasible due to amount of area to be enforced

Many trails in the Kenai Peninsula have been built and developed by snowmachiners, why should it be a criminal offense to use an area, which traditionally has been used by snowmachines.

#2 You need to take children and access into the problem, frolicking with kids! This area motorized winter access Dec 1 thru April

#3 Snowmachines allow the most access to public lands and the trails and cabins

#4 The answer to this conflict is more access, two trails into the same area

#6 Again, the disruptive on the trail is due to large areas only accessed by one trail system, more and better trails for nonmotorized use, not limits.

#7 Chugach State, Kenai Fjords, Kenai national Wilderness etc. need to work together for more access for nonmotorized use

#8 This would allow only a small special forest group to access any trail or cabin

#9 Yes, families have used this area for generation to explore their children to the great Alaska winter outdoors

#10 Be careful here – the group should not infringe on the others, these areas at best are open only 20% of the time, for nonmotorized use.

A. Suggest opening un-ride-able areas (steep-side ravines and treed hillsides for example) to skiers by way of clearing new trails specifically for skiing

B. Suggest closing a few good riding areas to skiers. Seeing a few “no skiing” signs might go along way toward mending fences, as well as providing some quilt-free riding.
Lost Lake Trail was built by snowmachines! Many, many, many skiers are happy to share with riders. Most skiers don’t mind.

(Everybody minds the problem riders)