

# **Winter Use Plans**

## **Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

### **Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks**

### **John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway**

#### Abstract

The purpose of this project or planning effort is to ensure park visitors have a range of winter recreation opportunities that are appropriate to the national park setting, and that these activities do not impair or irreparably harm park resources or values. The need for the project stems from issues surrounding the type, amount, and character of historical winter access and recreation, and their impact on park resources, values and/or other visitors. The fundamental guiding principles for resolving the purpose and need issues and deciding on a winter use plan stem from the National Park Service Organic Act and other laws. This DEIS, and a new plan, is designed to address inadequacies of previous planning efforts for the same purpose, in accordance with recent court decisions.

Six alternative winter use management plans are evaluated in this DEIS. Alternative 1 would put into place the provisions of the temporary winter use plan of August 2004, with some modifications. Alternative 2 would prohibit recreational snowmobiling in the parks in favor of snowcoach access. Alternative 3(A) would close much of Yellowstone to oversnow travel, leaving the South Entrance to Old Faithful route open. A variation of alternative 3 (3B) is the no action alternative. Alternative 3B closes all routes to motorized oversnow recreation. This would be the outcome of the current temporary plan, should no new decision be made. The other three alternatives (4, 5 and 6) would allow varying levels of snowmobile and snowcoach access to continue in the parks. Alternative 6 calls for plowing roads in Yellowstone to allow wheeled-vehicle access from West Yellowstone and Mammoth to Old Faithful. The NPS preferred alternative is alternative 1. All six alternatives meet the purposes and need for this Draft EIS. However, alternatives 2 and 3 would offer a more limited range of visitor experiences in the winter, as compared to the other alternatives. Alternatives 1, 4 and 5 offer a greater range of opportunities for visitors, while alternative 6 offers the most varied ways to access the interior of Yellowstone National Park. Use levels in alternative 4 may discourage some winter visitors. The environmentally preferred alternative is alternative 3B.

Address, telephone number, and fax number of where to send technical review comments:

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Date by which comments on this review draft must be received from Cooperating Agencies:  
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