

Update on Winter Use in Yellowstone National Park

• What is the status of Yellowstone’s new winter-use plan?

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is now on public review for a minimum 60-day comment periods between May 5, and mid-July of 2011. A proposed rule will be released shortly for a separate 60-day comment period. The public is encouraged to review and comment on both documents.

• Where can I find out more about these documents?

The DEIS is available online, on the Yellowstone page of the National Park Service’s Planning, Environment and Public Comment website – PEPC for short (pronounced “PEP-see”). The online link is: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/yell>. Once there, click on the “Winter Use Plan” link.

The proposed rule will be available online at the Federal *eRulemaking* Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Use the Regulatory Identifier Number 1024-AD92 (RIN) to navigate to “Yellowstone National Park Proposed Rule.” Follow the instructions for submitting comments.

• How can I comment about these documents?

We encourage you to comment on both the DEIS and the proposed rule. We will accept comments on both documents in several ways.

To comment on the DEIS:

Go online to the National Park Service’s Planning, Environment and Public Comment website (PEPC). The online link is: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/yell> Once there, click on the “Winter Use Plan” link and follow the instructions.

Comment in person at any of the six public meetings that we have scheduled during the comment period. If you cannot attend in person, you can participate in one of two online webinars, or electronic “meetings.” Comment in writing by mailing your letter to:

Winter Use Planning
P.O. Box 168
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190

Hand deliver your written comments to:

Management Assistant’s Office, Headquarters Building, Mammoth Hot Springs, Yellowstone National Park, WY.

To comment on the proposed rule:

Submit comments online through the Federal *eRulemaking* Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>. Use Regulatory Identifier Number (RIN) 1024-AD92, Follow the portal instructions.

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Mail written comments to:

Yellowstone National Park
Winter Use Proposed Rule
P.O. Box 168
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190

Hand-deliver written comments to:

Management Assistant's Office, Headquarters Building, Mammoth Hot Springs, Yellowstone National Park, WY.

• How much time do I have to comment?

The official public comment period on the DEIS will be a minimum of 60 days. The exact closing date will be 60-days from the date the official EPA Notice of Availability publishes in the *Federal Register*. The exact deadline date will be updated once that occurs. The deadline is likely to be in early to mid-July. The deadline for public comment on the proposed rule also will be 60 days after it is published in the *Federal Register*.

• So what happens after that?

The NPS will analyze all the comments we receive and determine if we need to correct or add to the analysis of the alternatives or adjust or change the preferred alternative. Then we will prepare a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), an official Record of Decision announcing the adoption of a new winter use plan, and a final regulation that formally puts it into effect.

We expect to issue a FEIS this fall, sign a "Record of Decision" and publish a final regulation prior to the opening of the 2011/2020011-12 winter season, scheduled to open on December 15, 2011.

• What are the key elements of your "preferred alternative" for varied levels of winter use and visitor experience?

Variable levels of oversnow vehicle (OSV) use so that park visitors can have different types of winter experiences. The four different and variable levels of daily snowmobile and snowcoach use are:

330 snowmobiles and 80 snowcoaches a day
220 snowmobiles and 50 snowcoaches a day
110 snowmobiles and 30 snowcoaches a day
110 snowmobiles and 80 snowcoaches a day

Daily allocations of snowmobile and snowcoach numbers could be shared among guides and outfitters at and among the park entrances, as long as the overall daily limit was not exceeded. This would allow guides and visitors to fill allocations more efficiently.

To reduce the effect of OSV noise on park soundscapes, oversnow vehicles would be required to enter the park before or by 10:30 a.m.

To reduce safety concerns regarding late-night travel, snowmobiles and snowcoaches would not be allowed to travel through the park before 6 a.m. and after 9 p.m. except in emergencies.

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Best available technology (BAT) would continue to be required for snowmobiles, with the addition of a new limit on nitrogen oxide (NO_x) emissions. Snowmobile sound levels would be measured by using the most current sound-testing protocols of the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE). The NO_x requirement addresses a newer concern about increased emissions from four-stroke engines and diesel vehicles (snowmobiles and snowcoaches). The modification in sound testing would bring the park up to current, national methods.

BAT for snowcoaches would be established. By December 2014, all snowcoaches would be required to employ model year 2010 or newer engines and emission control systems. Sound from snowcoaches would not be allowed to exceed 73 decibels, the same as BAT snowmobiles. This would address the impacts from snowcoaches, which are recognized as contributing to air quality and noise issues.

The weight of a snowcoach would not be allowed to exceed 4.5 pounds per square inch to limit potential damage to park roads.

Snowcoaches would not be allowed to exceed their Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (including the weight of snow-track systems) to ensure that coaches are operated safely and to reduce road damage.

Side roads would be limited only to ski and snowshoe traffic to provide more non-motorized experiences for park visitors. The east side of the park would be reserved for ski and snowshoe traffic only after March 1 for the same reason.

• Why is this preferred alternative so complicated?

This alternative is a new and different approach, with multiple elements that combine to give park visitors a greater variety of ways to enjoy Yellowstone in winter. Having days of both higher use and lower use is one way to do this. So is allowing for more routes that are for skiing or snowshoeing only. To reduce any confusion or uncertainty, the park will announce the daily schedule a full year in advance of the next winter season.

• How will you decide, year by year, what that daily schedule will be?

Any year-to-year changes in the schedule would be adaptive management decisions based on monitoring data and other information developed from winter use under the variable schedule. Such decisions would be made according to the park's visitor use and experience goals for winter use.

• Why have you singled out snowcoaches for such significant restrictions?

When winter-use planning first began in Yellowstone in the 1990s, snowcoaches were a small factor. In those days, snowmobiles were far more prevalent, averaging 795 machines in the park each day. Snowcoaches numbered only 15 a day. Today, there are many more snowcoaches, and they carry about half of Yellowstone's annual oversnow visitors in winter. Unlike with snowmobiles, the sound levels and engine emissions from snowcoaches have not been regulated until now. BAT requirements for snowcoaches have been proposed in previous winter plans but never were implemented.

As we reviewed air-quality data and modeling results for this plan, it was clear that snowcoaches have an effect on park air quality and soundscapes. It also was apparent that snowcoaches with older engines and emission controls create large amounts of air pollution. Studies in the park show that some newer snowcoach models are louder than BAT snowmobiles. Ninety-four percent of loud sounds in the park in winter are from snowcoaches. So the NPS believes it appropriate to set air and sound emission requirements for snowcoaches, just as we have for snowmobiles for the past seven years.

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The park proposes to require snowcoaches of model year 2010 or newer for their improved air quality and sound levels. We propose to balance the investment needed for this new equipment by allowing three winters to implement the requirement, and by allowing the vehicles to be used for at least 10 winters.

Another snowcoach issue also has emerged. Larger, heavier snowcoaches apply greater pressure to the ground than older models. Some apply up to more than 5 pounds per square inch (PSI,) where vehicles' snow tracks meet the ground. This is more than twice the typical 2.5 PSI of older Bombardier-type coaches. The newer, heavier models create ruts in the snow roads. In soft or unconsolidated snow, the ruts deepen significantly and create dangerous travel conditions for snowmobiles and other snowcoaches. Park staff have witnessed and experienced snowmobiles tipping over while trying to navigate these deeper ruts. In soft or unconsolidated snow, grooming does not help much. Ruts sometimes have reappeared after a single pass by a heavy snowcoach.

In previous winter plans, the NPS imposed size and weight limits to begin to address snowcoach damage to snow roads. But this did not address the concerns adequately, and so the NPS now proposes a PSI limit.

The NPS also proposes that coaches not be allowed to operate if above their Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR), GVWR is the design weight limit of a vehicle. It accounts for vehicle weight, track systems, fuel, passenger load, and cargo weight. Operating a vehicle above this rating is unsafe and hard on the vehicle. The NPS believes visitor safety and snow-road rutting make it imperative that snowcoaches operate within their design limits.

• How did you come up with all these alternatives in the DEIS?

A Project Team of staff, scientists and other experts from Yellowstone and the NPS began early discussions and work in summer 2009. The team also created a Science Advisory Group to gather and examine the latest information on the effects of winter use on Yellowstone's wildlife, air quality, land and soundscapes and the park's other natural, cultural and historical resources.

In spring 2010, the Park Service conducted public "scoping," during which it hosted meetings and collected comments – in person, online and by mail – about the range or "scope" of issues and subjects to study in the EIS. Using those more than 9,000 scoping comments and other information, the Project Team developed the alternatives to represent a broad range of potential ways to operate Yellowstone in winter.

The preferred alternative was later developed as a way to provide a wider variety of experiences for visitors, yet assure protection of park resources.

• Why don't you just do what the majority of the public comments asked?

Winter-use planning, like all planning in the NPS, is not conducted by popular vote. Comments during scoping helped Yellowstone identify a range of alternatives as well as refine the preliminary purpose, need and objectives for this plan. But deciding how to manage the park for winter use is not determined by how many people or points of view favor one course of action or another. It is based on careful analysis of the effects, both good and bad, that each alternative might have on the park and its resources. After the DEIS is released, NPS will take more public comments and suggestions before making a final decision on the new winter plan.

• What are the most recent statistics for oversnow vehicle use in Yellowstone?

Last winter (2010-11), Yellowstone averaged 194 snowmobiles a day and 40 snowcoaches a day. (The interim plan for the past two winters allowed up to 318 snowmobiles and 78 snowcoaches a day into the park.)

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We believe that heavy early season snowfall, which continued through the season, was responsible for changes in Yellowstone’s visitation last winter over the previous year. Wheeled vehicle entries to the park declined and oversnow travel rose slightly.

The number of snowmobile visitors was up slightly this year, after dropping off significantly between winter 2007-2008 and winter 2008-2009. The number of snowcoach visitors also dropped between those two winters. But it has also rebounded and was slightly larger last winter than the number of people who entered the park by snowmobile.

Over the past three winter seasons, snowmobile use has averaged 195 individual machines a day (in an average of about 30 guided groups a day). Guided snowcoach use also averaged about 34 vehicles a day.

During the three winter seasons before the interim plan used in 2009 and 2010(2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09), the number of daily snowmobile entries into the park exceeded, about 25 percent of the time, what the interim plan allowed.

Table 2 summarizes the past four winters’ oversnow vehicle use.

TABLE 2: Summary of previous four winters’ OSV use				
Snowmobile and Snowcoach Activity by year	Winter 2010-2011 (Daily limits: 318 snowmobiles and 78 coaches)	Winter 2009-2010 (Daily limits: 318 snowmobiles and 78 coaches)	Winter 2008-2009 (Daily limits: 720 snowmobiles and 78 coaches)*	Winter 2007-2008 (Daily limits: 720 snowmobiles and 78 coaches)
Snowmobiles - daily average	194	187	205	294
Snowmobiles - peak day	289	293	426	557
Snowcoaches - daily average	40	32	29	35
Snowcoaches - peak day	68	59	54	60

**In 2008-2009, operators planned for 540 snowmobiles based on 2007 winter plan.*

• Science has told you previously that banning snowmobiles in favor of snowcoaches would be better for Yellowstone. Why haven’t you simply done that?

The 2000 winter use decision called for banning snowmobiles. That decision was rejected by a U.S. District Court judge in October 2004. When the NPS made that decision to ban snowmobiles, information at the time indicated that converting to snowcoach-only access would improve the park’s air and sound quality. Modern, “best available technology” snowmobiles (BAT for short) were not commercially available then, and a program of commercial guides had not been put in place.

The DEIS for this new long-term winter plan relies on the latest information and science to analyze snow-vehicle alternatives for the park. This includes data from recent monitoring, as well as the use of computer models and other forecasting techniques to evaluate the effects of the alternatives.

• What is this “best available technology (BAT)” all about? Why is it needed and how did the park come up with it?

“Best Available Technology” describes elements of oversnow vehicles that best protect Yellowstone’s resources in winter from damage or degradation. They include engine emissions limits, noise controls and other operating aspects of snowmobiles and coaches.

At present, “BAT” for snowmobiles requires the use of the cleanest and quietest snowmobiles available – models that produce 90 percent fewer hydrocarbon emissions and 70 percent fewer carbon monoxide emissions than conventional two-stroke snowmobiles. BAT for snowmobiles also limits noise to 73 decibels or less. In the preferred alternative, the NPS is proposing an additional BAT requirement for snowmobiles that would limit nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions.

All the winter-use alternatives that include snowmobiles require BAT. So do the alternatives for snowcoaches. The NPS is proposing that by December 15, 2014, all snowcoaches must be model year 2010 or newer, or their engines and emission control systems are replaced with model year 2010 or newer equipment. By that time, they must also comply with the same sound requirement for snowmobiles. Their sound may not exceed 73 decibels when operating at or near full throttle.

• If you aren’t going to make the final decision on a new winter plan until later this year, how can the park and OSV operators, neighboring communities and winter visitors possibly prepare in time for next winter?

All of the winter-plan alternatives that include OSV use anticipate the need to continue with the major elements of Yellowstone’s most recent, interim plan for transition in the first year (2011-12). That means that next winter, the first season under such a new plan, would have the same OSV limits in effect last winter: Up to 318 BAT snowmobiles and 78 snowcoaches a day. This would allow park OSV guides and other outfitters, Yellowstone “gateway” community businesses, and prospective park visitors the time and certainty they would need to plan for that winter’s operations and vacation visits.

• Does this study mean that the park is probably going to remove all snowmobiles?

The range of alternatives examined a broad spectrum of possible actions, from closing the park to all oversnow vehicles to returning to the higher limit of up to 720 snowmobiles a day in Yellowstone’s 2004 winter plan. Two of them – Alternative No. 1’s ban on all oversnow vehicles, and Alternative No. 5’s gradual phaseout of snowmobiles with new snowcoaches – considered the possibility of eliminating snowmobiles. Alternative No. 7, the one preferred by the park and the NPS, would not remove snowmobiles.

• Why didn’t the EIS look at a higher number of snowmobiles, like in the old days?

The range of alternatives reflected and took into consideration several factors: Public comments during scoping, winter-use plans from recent years, court decisions in lawsuits over winter use, and actual OSV use numbers in recent winter seasons. Alternative No. 3, for example, envisioned up to 720 snowmobiles a day. That figure was the maximum limit in Yellowstone’s 2004 winter-use plan. It also is close to the historic average of 795 snowmobiles a day in the 1990s and early 2000s, when all snowmobiles had louder, dirtier two-stroke engine technology. Over the past six winter seasons, the peak single day for snowmobiles entering the park was 557, a number similar to the 540 maximum daily limit that was studied under Alternative No. 6. In that same six-year period, daily averages for snowmobiles entering the park have ranged from 187 to 294. Reflecting that historical pattern, Alternative No. 2 envisioned keeping the same limits in force under the most recent interim winter plan of the last two winters.

• What about the economic effects of the preferred alternative?

The economic impacts of each alternative were analyzed using a standard economic model that projects what income and employment might result if that alternative were implemented. For the five-county area around the park, implementing the preferred Alternative No. 7 would generate between \$8.2 million and \$14.4 million in total economic output and create between 108 and 190 jobs (compared to the “no-action” Alternative No. 1, which would eliminate snowmobile or snowcoach use).

• But compared to a decade ago, the severe reduction in snowmobiles visiting the park has caused significant economic hardship for nearby communities, hasn't it?

The NPS recognizes that changes in winter use patterns have created challenges for local communities and businesses whose winter economies are based in part on snowmobile access to Yellowstone. The DEIS presents a variety of indicators for the region that discuss the relation between park visitation and the economy. This study and analysis also goes beyond merely reporting numbers and discusses the people and companies that have been affected by the changes in winter use. Businesses, their employees, and employees' families have been affected by the fluctuations in winter use.

• You planned for up to 318 snowmobiles a day the past two winters and never reached that number. Why?

Yellowstone's 22 commercial snowmobile guides and outfitters operate from four different entrances to the park in winter. Each guide and outfitting company has a set, daily allocation of snowmobiles. It is a challenge both for park visitors arranging a Yellowstone trip and snowmobile outfitters providing the service to align numbers and available opens perfectly every time. In addition, some OSV guides and outfitters did not have the full number of BAT snowmobiles available last winter to accommodate all of their allocated slots for entering the park.

Given these two factors, it was virtually impossible to reach the maximum limit of 318 snowmobile entries every day last winter. As a practical matter, regardless of the daily limit, a “peak” day in winter probably always would be 5 to 10 percent below the maximum allowed. For instance, between 2004 and 2008, when the daily limit was 720 snowmobiles, the highest day ever reached just 557. Although the limit for snowcoaches was 78, the most ever on a single day was 68.

• Will visitors who own their own snowmobiles be able to ride into the park on their own, without commercial guides leading them?

The alternative for “variable management” (Alternative No. 6) envisioned allowing up to 25 percent of daily snowmobile entries into the park to be non-commercial and/or non-guided – that is, unaccompanied by the commercial guides required to lead all snowmobile visitors in the most recent winter-use plan. Under Alternative No.6, the remaining 75 percent of daily snowmobile entries to Yellowstone would remain with commercial guides only. Personal, privately owned snowmobiles would be allowed only if they meet BAT standards. Otherwise, under that alternative, non-commercially guided snowmobilers would have to rent BAT machines.

In addition, that alternative could require such operators to view a training video or complete a brief course in snowmobiling in the park without a guide.

- **The park now allows private vehicles to drive in winter on plowed roads between Yellowstone’s north entrance, park headquarters and the towns of Silver Gate, MT and Cooke City, MT. Why doesn’t the “mixed-use alternative” (Alternative No. 4), under which the west road to Old Faithful would be plowed, allow private vehicles to drive on it in winter?**

The “interior” expanse of Yellowstone is a special place to visit in winter, and is subject to fast-changing weather conditions. When it comes to the park allowing private vehicles into its interior, the park has concerns over visitor and employee safety. The park has had very good success (including a good safety record) with commercially guided snowmobile and snowcoach travel from West Yellowstone, MT to Old Faithful and beyond. The park would continue this practice of safe, commercially operated wheeled vehicles under Alternative No. 4 on newly plowed roads from Mammoth to Old Faithful and West Yellowstone to Old Faithful. An alternative that would have allowed private vehicles on plowed roads in the park’s interior was considered but dismissed from further analysis in the DEIS.

Under all seven alternatives, the park would continue to allow private wheeled vehicles to travel only the portion of park road from the north entrance through Mammoth Hot Springs and east-northeast out to Silver Gate and Cooke City, MT. We have provided this access for decades because the road provides residents of those communities northeast of the park boundary their only access to the “outside” in winter.

- **Is there a “Best Available Technology” for wheeled vehicles, too?**

Under Alternative No. 4, which would include the plowing of some of Yellowstone’s west-side roads, the park and NPS anticipate visitor access in commercial wheeled vehicles. The NPS expects to require that those vehicles meet the latest emission standards that the EPA has established. For gasoline-fueled vehicles, that could be EPA’s “Tier II” requirements. For diesel-fueled vehicles, it could be the most modern emission control technology available.

- **What about continued use of Sylvan Pass from Yellowstone’s east entrance?**

Before 2004, winter-use rules required only that OSVs stay on park roads. There were no limits on the numbers or kinds of snowmobiles and snowcoaches. The park was open to OSV use during the winter season 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There were no requirements for guides.

Since 2004, the NPS has monitored and managed winter use more closely. The park has documented significant improvements in air quality, fewer wildlife disturbances, and a reduction in impacts on the park soundscape from OSV compared with the era of unregulated use. The park has used such data, plus any new scientific information available since then, to help decide on the next winter use plan.

- **What about winter-use alternatives and ideas that you rejected in the course of creating this range of alternatives? Do you have a list of those?**

Chapter 2 of the DEIS contains a list of alternatives that were considered but dismissed. In the process of preparing an EIS, the NPS identifies which alternatives to develop and analyze in detail. It also includes in the EIS a list of any others it considered but set aside and did not analyze in detail. This includes explaining why those ideas were rejected. Typically, such alternatives are ideas that we believe already were in the chosen range of alternatives, appeared unreasonable, or did not meet the winter plan’s purpose, need and objectives. Five of seven alternatives, including the preferred alternative, call for Sylvan Pass to remain open for OSV use. In those cases, the park and NPS would continue to manage the pass under an agreement reached in 2008 with the state of Wyoming, Park County, WY and Cody, WY.

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Under the “mixed-use alternative” (Alternative No. 4), the DEIS studied the effect of closing Sylvan Pass to motorized oversnow travel. This alternative would still allow limited snowcoach access to the park’s east entrance to drop off cross-country skiers and snowshoers.

• One of the alternatives (Alternative No. 1) would close the park entirely to OSV use. Another (Alternative No. 4) would close Sylvan Pass, the only park entrance from the east. How can Yellowstone and the NPS justify such radical change in uses that have gone on for decades?

Although those two alternatives are different from present and recent past practice, it is important in the environmental impact analysis that a broad and appropriate range of possible alternatives be examined. This allows park managers and the public to compare and contrast the effects, pro and con, of widely differing scenarios on the park and its winter resources.

• Why did one alternative suggest closing Sylvan Pass but all the rest, including your preferred, keep it open? I understand it costs you \$325,000 to keep it safe and open for fewer than 100 visitors over an entire winter. How can you possibly justify this?

Again, it is important in preparing an environmental impact statement that a reasonable range of alternatives be studied so that the decision maker – in this case, the National Park Service – can make an informed choice. Cost, safety, and environmental impacts are just some of the topics that the NPS looks at in developing a range of alternatives.

• What about all the lawsuits over Yellowstone winter use? How do they affect this?

At present, one legal action is pending over the park’s winter use: the State of Wyoming and Park County, WY have appealed the Sept. 17, 2010 decision of the U.S. District court in Wyoming (see below) to the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals.

When the interim winter-use plan was issued in 2009, the NPS was sued by Wyoming and Park County. They contended that the park and NPS did not look at a wide enough range of alternatives for the interim plan. They also argued that NPS did not consider the option of allowing private, non-commercial guides to lead snowmobile trips into Yellowstone. Finally, they contended that NPS went too far in restricting winter use. They argued that the federal laws that created Yellowstone and the NPS permit use of the park up to a threshold of unacceptable impact or damage. Oral arguments on this suit were on July 9, 2010 in U.S. District Court in Cheyenne, WY. On Sept. 17, Judge Alan Johnson ruled in favor of the National Park Service.

On Sept. 28, 2010, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia denied without prejudice the Greater Yellowstone Coalition and National Park Conservation Association’s petition for the court to take jurisdiction over winter planning. The Washington, DC court gave the plaintiffs until Oct. 25, 2010 to refile their petition, which they did not do.

• How long has winter use in the park been an issue, and why hasn’t it been settled yet?

Winter use in Yellowstone has been debated for more than 75 years, in more than a dozen separate cases. From about 1935 to 1970, debate centered on whether the park’s roads should be plowed so visitors could drive to Old Faithful and see other Yellowstone sights in winter. Since the early 1990s, the debate has focused on the number and type of oversnow vehicles allowed into the park in winter. In the last dozen years or so, the debate has been over several different winter management plans and lawsuits challenging them.

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Winter use today in Yellowstone is an issue of values, and there are many, differing opinions about what levels, types and amounts of use are appropriate in such a unique and special winter setting.

Examples include any that would return the park to the unregulated conditions of the 1980s and 1990s, because Yellowstone suffered effects in that era that hurt park resources. As another example, the NPS rejected suggestions that Yellowstone build a monorail or other fixed-rail mass transit. Previous analyses showed the cost and potential effects on such systems on the park would have been extraordinarily significant.

- **All these different levels of snowmobile and snowcoach use are confusing. Why can't you just ban all snow machines from the park?**

The No Action alternative (Alternative No. 1) did examine what the park would be like without snowmobiles or snowcoaches. Visitors could still enter the park, but only on skis or snowshoes. In considering such a future for Yellowstone in winter, we believe it is important to recognize that it is 30 miles from the park's west entrance to Old Faithful. Under the no-action alternative, the roads would not be groomed or maintained for skiing or snowshoeing. Most park features could be reached by only the hardest of Nordic sports enthusiasts on skis or snowshoes.

- **Why aren't fat-tired snow bicycles and kite skiing allowed in the park under any of these alternatives?**

For safety reasons and other concerns, not every form of recreation is appropriate within Yellowstone National Park. Although these are new and potentially popular forms of recreation, snow bikes would use the same roads now used by snowcoaches, snowmobiles, skiers and snowshoers. The NPS believes that adding them to the traffic mix on the park roads could create additional safety concerns and conflicts among park users. Kite skiing in the park would create additional safety concerns on lake surfaces and in open areas and meadows near busy travel routes.

- **You want to continue to allow some snowmobiles in the park. Won't they run wild through forests and meadows, or chase moose like those irresponsible sledders in that video I saw online from a national forest in Colorado? How can you possibly control them?**

Snowmobiles and snowcoaches have never been legally allowed to go off-road in Yellowstone. In the past six winters, the use of commercial guides has assured that groups on snowmobiles remain together and stay on the roads.

- **All snowmobiles are noisy. How can you justify them in the beautiful quietness of America's oldest and most famous national park?**

Yellowstone's "best available technology" requirement means that only the quietest snowmobiles available are allowed in the park. Ever since the imposition of BAT requirements, most park noise issues have involved snowcoaches, not snowmobiles. That is why we intend to establish a BAT requirement for snowcoach sound. Under the preferred alternative, winter silence will predominate away from developed areas and road corridors and will exist for large portions of the day along many of the travel corridors.

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- I own my own BAT snowmobile and I am a responsible rider. I have taken the state training courses. Yet I can't ride into the park on my own, and have to pay somebody else to "guide" me in. Why?

The park has seen a decrease in traffic offenses, accidents and tickets issued since guiding requirements were instituted. In the range of alternatives considered in this DEIS, Alternative No. 6 specifically allows for up to 25 percent of snowmobile entries to the park to be unguided or non-commercially guided. This alternative recognizes that there are experienced riders and training courses available for people to become un-paid group leaders. This alternative allows the public and the NPS to compare and contrast the effects of 100 percent commercial guiding with a program that would allow some unguided or non-commercially guided entries.

- What were the entry limits for snowmobiles and snow coaches under the interim plan (and under the first year of implementation of a new, long-term plan)?

Table 3: Yellowstone daily snowmobile and snowcoach entry limits		
Entrance	Commercially guided, BAT snowmobiles	Commercially guided snow coaches
West Entrance	160	34
South Entrance*	114	13
East Entrance	20	2
North Entrance	12	13
Old Faithful	12	16
Total	318	78

Snowmobile and snow coach use between Flagg Ranch and the South Entrance in the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway will be governed by rules for use in Yellowstone.

- What are the daily snowmobile and snowcoach entry limits under the Preferred Alternative?

Table 4: Daily Snowmobile and Snowcoach Entry Limits Under Alternative #7								
Park Entrance/ Location	Level A		Level B		Level C		Level D	
	Commercially Guided Snowmobiles	Commercially Guided Snowcoaches						
North Entrance	11	12	0 - 11	8	0 - 11	6	0 - 11	12
West Entrance	176	36	110	22	66	12	66	36
South Entrance*	110	14	66	8	44	6	44	14
East Entrance	22	2	0 - 22	0 - 2	0 - 11	0	0 - 11	2
Old Faithful	11	16	11	10	0 - 11	6	0 - 11	16
Totals	330	80	187 - 220	48 - 50	110 - 143	30	110 - 143	80

Snowmobile and snow coach use between Flagg Ranch and the South Entrance in the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway will be governed by rules for use in Yellowstone.

• How many days will be at each use level?

• About half the winter season days would be at Use Level A (330 snowmobiles and 80 snowcoaches). About one-third would be at Use Level B (220 snowmobiles and 50 snowcoaches). Use Levels C and D would apply to about one-sixth of the winter season days.

• Would the days be fixed every winter?

The park superintendent would announce the schedule for the next winter season one full year in advance of the season's starting date. The schedule could vary from year to year to provide for different and changing visitor experience opportunities. It also could take into consideration the knowledge gained through monitoring and adaptive management during the previous winter.