



Scoping Document

Tony Grove - Franklin Basin Winter Recreation

USDA Forest Service
Wasatch-Cache National Forest
Logan Ranger District
Cache County, Utah

**Comments Due:
May 15, 2006**

The Purpose of this Letter

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that the Logan Ranger District is proposing to adjust the boundaries of areas open and closed to winter motorized use in the Tony Grove/Franklin Basin area in Logan Canyon and to construct an over-the-snow trail between the Franklin Basin and Tony Grove parking areas. We welcome your comments, concerns, and suggestions regarding this proposal.

What is being proposed?

The proposed action is to adjust the boundaries of areas open and closed to winter motorized use in the Tony Grove/Franklin Basin area and to construct an over-the-snow trail between the Franklin Basin and Tony Grove parking areas. The boundaries of open and closed areas and the general location of the trail are shown on the attached map. A map is also available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/wcnf/projects/>. A map of larger scale can be viewed at the Logan District Office.

The Twin Creek drainage would be closed to motorized winter use. The boundary would follow the Tony Grove groomed snowmobile route to the ridgeline south of Tony Grove Creek, then would follow the ridgeline between Tony Grove and Twin Creek drainages. At the western end, the boundary would follow the ridgeline south of Coldwater Spring, and would connect to the Mt. Naomi Wilderness boundary at the 8950' Mt. Naomi peak.

The Bunchgrass Creek drainage would be closed to motorized winter use, except for the snow trail which would cross through lower eastern end of the drainage. The boundary would be the ridgeline between the Bunchgrass and White Pine drainages.

An area around the Hells Kitchen yurt would be closed to motorized winter use (see map).

The trail would be a designated, groomed route. From Franklin Basin to White Pine the trail would be groomed from 16 to 20 feet wide by the State of Utah snow grooming machine. The remaining portion of the trail from White Pine to Tony Grove would be groomed up to 8 feet wide using a snowmobile groomer operated under a special use permit. The proposed route would require the cutting of tall vegetation (trees and tall shrubs) for about 3.5 miles. Much of the route is composed of open meadows. There are areas that would involve the cutting of trees to clear the trail (a total of approximately 40-60 aspen and conifer trees). Down logs within the 8 foot wide snow trail would be bucked up and thrown off to the side. The route would be designated with diamond-shaped signs posted on trees. Yearly maintenance would include snow grooming and removal of newly fallen trees across the trail.

Two corridors would connect the trail to private property, in order to provide snowmobile access to the property owners. These corridors would pass through the closed Bunchgrass drainage, but would be open to motorized winter use.

Why are we proposing this project?

The Record of Decision for the Revision of the Forest Plan for the Wasatch-Cache National Forest provides on pages 25-26 as follows:

Although the open and closed areas are shown on winter recreation maps in the Revised Plan, these are approximate lines and the actual boundaries will be established in coordination with the State of Utah and local users to ensure that the areas are easily understood and will facilitate compliance. The actual boundaries will be displayed on Forest travel plans and where necessary posted on the ground.

During the Spring of 2005, people who were interested in winter recreation in Logan Canyon worked through a collaborative process to more precisely define boundaries of motorized and non-motorized winter areas and travel routes. The boundaries proposed through this process deviated from the boundaries in the Revised Forest Plan. Therefore, the Forest Service is initiating a formal decision making process to consider the proposed new boundaries, and determine if the Revised Forest Plan would need to be amended to adopt the new boundaries. The proposed action combines a proposal from the collaborative process with the proposal to construct the over-the-snow connector trail.

Purpose and Need:

The Tony Grove/Franklin Basin area is a popular winter recreation area for both snowmobilers and skiers. There is a need to manage the mix of motorized and non-motorized uses in this area, so that both groups can use and enjoy the area. For skiers, this includes reasonable access from plowed parking to ski-able terrain, and accessible terrain closed to motorized use so that noise and tracking of powder are reduced. For snowmobilers, this includes access to higher, unique terrain, and egress for emergency and mechanical breakdowns. Area boundaries need to be easily understood to promote compliance. Critical big game winter habitat west of the Logan Canyon Highway needs to provide relatively less disturbance for wildlife using the area.

There is a need for a snowmobile route between the Franklin Basin and Tony Grove parking areas. The need exists because much of the area directly to the west of the Logan Canyon Highway (between Tony Grove and Franklin Basin) would be non-motorized and/or in critical winter habitat for big game. Snowmobiles descending (through east-west motorized routes) from the high country snowmobile areas have no way to return to the parking areas at Franklin Basin or Tony Grove, to the north and south, respectively. There currently is no winter motorized access between these two parking areas.

The purpose of a designated, groomed snowmobile trail would be to provide the access between, and to, the Franklin Basin and Tony Grove snowmobile parking areas and adjacent private lands. A designated trail would help confine snowmobile travel to this motorized route within the surrounding Bunchgrass non-motorized area.

Preliminary Issues

1. Noise from motorized use
2. Effects to wetlands
3. Effects to air quality
4. Skier safety
5. Soil compaction
6. Effects to big game winter habitat
7. Access to private land

Preliminary Alternatives

The No Action alternative is described below. There may be other alternatives developed during the analysis based on the issues raised during this information-gathering period.

- Close some areas to motorized winter use, as in the 2003 Revised Forest Plan. These closures have been in place during the winters of 2003-2005.

What is the Decision to be made?

The decision to be made is where to locate boundaries between areas open to motorized travel and areas closed winter motorized travel. Also, a second decision to be made is whether to build an over-the-snow trail open to motorized winter use, and if so, where the snowmobile trail should be located, and to what specifications it should be constructed.

Who will make the Decision?

The Forest Supervisor, Faye Krueger is the official responsible for making the decisions. Rob Cruz Logan District Ranger will be accepting comments on her behalf. The decision would be made in 2006.

When do we need your Response?

We previously sent out a scoping letter describing only the proposal for the over-the-snow trail, and asking for your comments. We would like to know whether there are additional issues you believe need to be addressed, either for the trail or for adjusting the boundaries of areas open and closed to motorized winter use.

After we have completed more of the analysis for this project, we will offer a 30-day notice and comment period, as required by 36 Code of Federal Regulations §215. This later comment period will be used to determine commenters' eligibility to appeal the decision.

Written comments must be submitted to: Rob Cruz, Logan Ranger District, 1500 East Highway 89, Logan, Utah 84321. Electronic comments must be submitted in rich text format (.rtf) or Word (.doc) to comments-intermtn-wasatch-cache-logan@fs.fed.us.

Thank you for your time and efforts. We appreciate your ideas, suggestions, issues, and comments.

Sincerely,

/s/Robert A. Cruz

ROBERT A. CRUZ
Logan District Ranger

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Tony Grove - Franklin Basin Winter Recreation Proposed Action

Wasatch-Cache National Forest
Logan Ranger District



- Motorized
- Non-Motorized
- Non-Motorized, Wilderness
- Other Ownership
- Groomed Snowmobile Trail
- Proposed Groomed Snowmobile Trail
- Proposed Motorized Access Route
- Yurt
- Winter Trailhead
- Nordic Trailhead

