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# United States Senate

COMMITTEES:  
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FOREIGN RELATIONS  
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RANKING

July 15, 2011

Dan Wenk  
Superintendent  
Yellowstone National Park  
P.O. Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190

Dear Superintendent Wenk:

Yellowstone National Park is one of America's most treasured parks. In Wyoming, we protect Yellowstone's beauty and encourage visitors to enjoy a wide range of its unique activities. Winter use activities in Yellowstone are also vital to the economies of Wyoming communities and the recreational enjoyment of Wyoming residents. Continued access for winter use is also fundamental to the purpose of the national park system. The National Park Service's preferred alternative (No. 7) fails to allow reasonable public access of the park and jeopardizes jobs in Yellowstone's gateway communities.

The Park Service's preferred management plan for winter use activities would dramatically reduce public access. Under your preferred alternative, half of the days in the winter season would see a decrease, causing a sizeable reduction in the number of individuals into Yellowstone during the winter season. This proposal will limit the public's ability to access the park and undercut the businesses and communities that rely on tourism and recreation activities.

The 2009 interim rule already went too far in reducing snowmobile access. The 2009 interim rule allowed 318 snowmobiles, down from 720 snowmobiles allowed in the winters between 2004 and 2008. The proposed preferred alternative would further reduce that number to between 110-220 snowmobiles for half of the winter season. Snowmobiles are integral to the Yellowstone winter experience. The Park Service must stop this drive to eliminate public access, and instead recognize the significant progress that has been made to mitigate environmental impacts.

The preferred alternative requires all oversnow vehicles (OSV) enter the park before 10:30 a.m., which is illogical and impractical. By forcing all incoming traffic into a narrow timeframe, it will cause higher concentrations of traffic. The restriction also fails to recognize the flexibility needed to adjust to changing weather conditions.

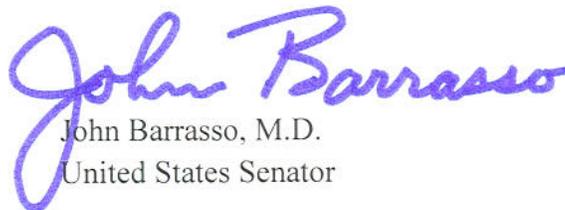
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Unguided or non-commercial access is a particularly important option for local residents. This option is only included in one alternative under consideration (No. 6). I urge you to incorporate snowmobile access for unguided, non-commercial groups, which should be separate and in addition to increased numbers for commercial snowmobile access. It can be authorized and managed with appropriate safeguards that ensure protection of wildlife and the environment.

I applaud the Park Service for including continued access through Sylvan Pass in its preferred alternative. Keeping access open through the East Entrance is essential to Wyoming small businesses and communities that depend on winter use activities in Yellowstone.

The concerns outlined in this letter must be resolved before the National Park Service releases the Final EIS and Record of Decision. As the nation's first national park, Yellowstone is the standard-bearer for park policy and management. The winter use management plan must provide sufficient opportunities for the American people to enjoy Yellowstone. By again proposing to reduce snowmobile access levels, the Park Service has failed in choosing a balanced and viable winter use plan. I look forward to working with you in the coming months to resolve these issues.

Sincerely,



John Barrasso, M.D.  
United States Senator