

Winter trail users discuss conflicts

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

More than a decade after conflicts over winter sports led to the ban of snowmobiles from much of a popular mountain meadow between Reno and Lake Tahoe, new discussions are under way regarding the problem in the same vicinity.

Involved are folks who cherish the quiet solitude of skiing or traversing the snowy backcountry by snowshoe, as well as those who are thrilled by zipping over a winter landscape on speeding snow machines.

Both types of winter sports enthusiasts say they aim to protect their interests but also say agreements can likely be reached.

Unlike in 2001 when the U.S. Forest Service prohibited snowmobiles across most of Tahoe Meadows, the government this time is not considering any such closures.

Instead, it is trying to find accord between snowmobilers and fans of quieter winter sports concerning issues such as noise, wilderness trespassing and public safety.

“Working together, we might find some common ground. We might find some success,” said Jeff Marsolais, deputy forest supervisor for the Forest Service’s Lake Tahoe unit. “When the groups own the solution, they set the stage for long-term success.”

The primary area in question lies along the western boundaries of Tahoe Meadows and down the slopes dropping westward toward Lake Tahoe, but any solutions agreed upon might apply other places where conflicts over winter sports arise, Forest

Service spokeswoman Cheva Heck said.

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