

Stemilt-Squilchuck Recreation Plan Post SEPA Comments

Hello Commissioner Bob Bugert: I strongly support the Compromise Plan for the Stemilt area. I was personally involved in some of the small-group meetings over a year ago, when a sketch of the Compromise Plan was put together. This was a group of motorized and non-motorized recreationists attempting to find common ground. At that time we arrived at a consensus that all of us felt was reasonable—not any group’s “ideal” but something we all could live with. This sort of process is what citizens in a free and open society can accomplish, give the right circumstances. While more recent circumstances have had the effect of eroding that earlier consensus, as emotions and positions have hardened, I strongly believe the original ideas set forth, at present found in the compromise Plan, are more than worthy of adoption.

Dear Commissioners Overbay, England, and Bugert,

I want you to know that I care very much about the designation of non-motorized winter recreation area in the Stemilt and Clara Lakes basins. I have participated by supporting El Sendero and Gus Bekker, attending meetings and speaking up during the formation of the DNR Naneum Recreation Plan, attending and speaking up at the March 21, 2018 Stemilt Recreation Plan Open House, and participating in on-line discussions. I submitted a public comment on the plan (attached below) and my comments are still valid.

I guess I lost faith in the public process, and have been afraid to speak out, since the March 21 Stemilt meeting. The snowmobile crowd there was misinformed and angry. I felt threatened, (and still do). I am now afraid that if I come to a public meeting and speak out, my comments and my name will probably be published in the Wenatchee World, and I will become a symbol of the tree-hugging left, and a target of a powerful and angry group.

I heard that there was an organized and vocal motorized presence at the last meeting. I now wish there had been some chatter and effort to mobilize skiers too, but there wasn't. I have two points that I think are important to consider.
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cont. 1. The argument that both groups can coexist in the same space is not valid. I am immobilized when being circled by snowmobiles, and after they are gone, the area they rode across is no longer good for skiing. I have three video examples of this immobilization to share with you. I hope you take the time to watch at least the most recent one.

2019 Snowmobile encounter in Stemilt Basin. Completely debilitating to my group. All we could do was stand still.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ-Jdd3aTH4>

2014 Snowmobile encounter in the Clara Lakes Basin: Look how close they get to me!

<https://vimeo.com/88717687>

2012 Snowmobile encounter in Stemilt Basin.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_7j9mOAHxM

2. The voice of the mob of snowmobilers complaining about losing terrain is misleading. About half of the terrain proposed for non-motorized use is quite steep. Motorized access is limited to skilled riders on specialized long-track mountain sleds. There are some snowmobilers who genuinely will feel a loss if the area becomes non-motorized, but the bulk of the club riders enjoy only the groomed roads and meadows which are not threatened by any of the proposals. These riders most likely have never visited, nor have the skill to ride most of the proposed non-motorized area. The voice you are hearing is amplified by people who won't be affected if the basin becomes non-motorized. I submit that the actual number of people affected includes only those who actually recreate in the proposed non-motorized areas. Although I don't know for sure, I'd guess that the number of unique snowmobile riders that actually visit the basins of the proposed non-motorized area is less than 30. I personally know over 80 skiers who I have either skied with in the Stemilt or Clara basins, or who I have seen out there. These include: "list of 82 names"

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cont. The originally proposed eastern non-motorized boundary follows a road, which is easy to sign, and easy to understand. The "compromise" still provides some motor free skiing. However, the area is small enough that when engines are between the original and the "compromise" boundaries, the muscle driven recreation area will not be quiet. The snowmobile suggested option is too small and not continuous. It really doesn't allow for a quiet winter experience for non-motorized recreationalists. I support the originally proposed non-motorized winter recreation boundary (as mapped in the March 21, 2018 document).

Snowmobiles really do destroy a skier's experience, and I contend that there are more skiers who will be affected by this decision than snowmobilers.

I hope that you are not swayed by the last-minute organized outcry of an artificially augmented motorized population. The muscle powered crowd has participated and commented for years, but has recently come to feel threatened and disenchanted with the process. Please don't penalize us for missing these final meetings, when many of us have already weighed in, given our comments, and shared our opinions over the course of a multi-year process.

Will you please confirm that this email comment is received and will be included in the public record?

Dear Commissioners Overbay, England, and Bugert,

The county's lengthy process in approving the Stemilt Recreation Plan has been difficult to stay connected to. In other processes I've been involved with, public input has been solicited and then committees/subgroups have crafted a range of options and approval of one of those options have been made on a defined timeline. In this process the option that was developed collaboratively between motorized and non-motorized factions was hijacked by an aggressive subset of motorists that had had the opportunity to participate earlier but had not. This subset was allowed to nullify previous work and reset the entire process. It's been difficult and frustrating to stay involved when both the process and finish line keeps changing. First the finish line was March 2018, then June of 2018, now June of 2019. Furthermore, I feel like the input many of us gave earlier has been forgotten rather than incorporated into the new process. Yet all the people I know who contributed comments earlier (stating that the Original Non-Motorized Proposal was a fair deal) still stand by that position. Given that the non-motorized advocates in this process are primarily unaffiliated individuals who are not part of a club that is coordinating and advocating for, this never-ending process is a severe handicap in knowing how and when to engage. In the future I respectfully ask that you be kinder to those of us who want our voices added to the discussion but who lack the ability to hang in there for years as the ground rules change.

With that said, you should still have my comments on record that were submitted in April of 2018 when I still believed this process had a discernible end point. My comments are as valid now as when I submitted them and should have equal weight to any testimony given more recently. And yet I fear my comments (as well as the comments of many others who weighed-in long ago) are not being given equal weight to the eleventh-hour comments given by snowmobile club members during the previous two meetings.

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Even though I'm not a member of a club with an aggressive strategy to maximize its holdings, these are public lands and the number of us who ski and snowshoe is much larger than the number who snowmobile (I've submitted these statistics to you in the past and they should be part of the record). So once again I submit that we deserve a fair shake in having a meaningful allocation of public land designated to our form of recreation. Snowmobilers keep insisting non-motorists and motorists can share the same terrain, using the trick that if you repeat false information frequently it will be believed. But for most of us who ski or snowshoe, the statement remains patently false because what we value from our experience is quite different than what snowmobilers enjoy. An apt analogy: Our locals don't hike along the shoulder of Highway 2 for enjoyment -- they go to non-motorized trails like the Loop Trail, or trails in the foothills. This doesn't make them selfish or elitists (some of the labels showered on non-motorists) -- it just means they're out walking for different reasons than the motorists driving Highway 2.

So, as I commented a year ago, I still strongly believe that in the context of how much of the Stemilt Basin will remain open for snowmobiling AND how many tens of thousands of interconnected acres that snowmobilers use in the Colockum, Naneum, Beehive, and Table Mountain areas, that a 4,500-acre non-motorized area (the Original Non-Motorized Proposal) is an extremely slim slice of the pie. Furthermore, my own use of the Stemilt Basin lands nearest Mission Ridge and of the basins above Clara Lake (areas that would be non-motorized if the Original Non-Motorized Proposal were approved) indicate these areas already see much more non-motorized use than motorized use. This is partly because the areas being discussed are easy for local skiers and snowshoers to access, partly because snowmobilers have so many places they can reach on a sled that they disperse, and partly because the slopes I'm referring to are steeper and attract a fairly small subset of very skilled snowmobilers.

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The Compromise Proposal is far from ideal and the reduced size of the area and the nebulous borders will create noise, encroachment, and enforcement issues. Nonetheless, the Compromise Proposal will at least offer a quiver of experiences that will please snowshoers and skiers of all abilities.

The Motorized Proposal, meanwhile, is untenable. It so reduces and fragments the terrain that it will not give skiers and snowshoers experiences they'll keep returning for. I submit that choosing this option is a step backward. Non-motorized outdoor sports are growing quickly and backdoor access to places to engage in these activities is a driving factor in where people choose to live these days. Not only do the numbers justify a fair allocation of public land for different forms of non-motorized recreation, but turning away from what the numbers and trends indicate seems contrary to good planning. (Statistics backing up the claims made in this paragraph have been shared with the county several times throughout this process).

Thank you for your consideration.

P.S. I'm also attaching comments my wife, Jan, submitted to this process in April of 2018. When I asked her to attend the hearing last week she said, "No way. I'm not going to get yelled at again." She told me to resubmit this letter. "What I want to see hasn't changed." So please add my wife's letter and my own to the record as support for the Proposed Wintertime Non-Motorized Area (4,535 acres).

Hello

I am writing in support of keeping a sizable chunk of the Stemilt Basin as non-motorized. Although I was not able to make the last meeting because I had other commitments, I would like my comments added to the public record and I want it to represent what I would've commented on if I had been there.

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I strongly support the need for sizable non-motorized winter recreation areas in the Stemilt Basin and around Clara Lake because I use the area often for biking year round. I am a fat biker and the Stemilt Basin adds a lot of beautiful area that is peaceful and perfect for non-motorized recreation. I am also a backcountry skier and snowshoer and need spaces where I can feel safe and recreate. I am also less likely to see wildlife with snow machines.

As our mountain biking scene continues to boom, we need additional places where trail users can go and enjoy being outdoors, spend money in our local economy and attract people to live here. Having non-motorized places like the Stemilt Basin and Clara Lakes provide places that are attractive not only to me but to others from outside the region, to recreate without fear of being overtaken by snow machines or their loud engines.

I support and am asking you to support the Original Non- Motorized Proposal.

Thank you for your time.

I support the compromise winter recreation plan for the Stemilt Basin.

With many years of planning myself and the committee have made a well rounded compromise to a heated topic.

The entire recreation plan for the Stemilt Basin is desperately needed to protect the water and wildlife. This is not a new idea, from the Forestry Service, State Parks and WDFW agree when you have a organized recreation plan you protect natural resources. The current problem with the area is there is no plan and natural resources are being destroyed.

I implore you to support the winter compromise plan and the entire recreation plan for the Stemilt Basin.

I was unable to attend the most recent public meeting regarding The Stemilt Basin Recreation Plan . I respectfully ask to have this comment added to the public record as it represents what I would have said had I been present.

I strongly support the Original Non - Motorized Proposal. Snowmobiling and skiing/snowshoeing are usually quite incompatible activities. The people traveling on foot in an area shared with snowmobiles are essentially doing a lot more sharing. The noise, the often large party sizes, the exhaust smells are all quite degrading, and transforming to the nature of mountains in winter which skiers and snowshoers seek. In addition, changes in snowmobile technology in the last couple decades have greatly increased their reach. The places where skiers can find quiet nature, and untracked mountains, has shrunk from technology advances alone.

Also, the lands within this study area are relatively close and easily accessed from the urban area of Wenatchee. That also increases their value as a place for non motorized recreation.

My name is ___ and I am a long-time Wenatchee resident who is opposed to the plan to open the Stemilt Basin and Clara Lake area to motorized recreation.

I was unable to make the recent public meetings because they conflicted with my work schedule. Nevertheless, I feel very strongly about this and would like my comments to be added to the public record on this matter.

The valley has an acute need for large areas reserved for non-motorized winter recreation. Using the same trails as snowmobilers is intimidating. Even though you can hear them coming, it's annoying and sometimes really inconvenient to get out of the way to let them pass. They do not always slow down and pass you at a respectful speed. I also often find empty cans of beer left behind by snowmobilers, which makes me even more concerned for my safety and really detracts from my own recreation. In addition, I don't go snowshoeing and skiing to listen to the whine of engines.

I strongly support the original, non-motorized proposal and hope you take the needs and wants of all parties into consideration, and not just those of the loudest and most-organized.

Commissioners,

1. Original Non-Motorized Proposal - I am in favor of that.
2. Compromise Proposal - I would accept this proposal if adopted.
3. Motorized Proposal - not in favor, does little for non-motorized winter recreation near Wenatchee.

I am writing this letter to encourage the inclusion of specified areas for non-motorized winter recreation in the Stemilt Basin Land Use Plan. Specifically, I believe the compromise proposal which include non-motorized areas in the vicinity of Lake Clara/Marion and an area near the Upper Wheeler Reservoir is the ideal option at this time.

I reach this conclusion on my experience from two perspectives. First as a user of back country winter recreation and secondly from my experience with administering probably the largest winter recreation program in the State.

From the first perspective, I have used the areas around Lake Clara and Upper Wheeler Reservoir for back country winter recreation since 1970. In fact, my senior english class project was a ski movie shot with super 8 film, most of the footage being shot in the basin above Lake Clara. Clips from this film were included in the recent North 40 production honoring the 50 year anniversary of Mission Ridge. At that time, snowmobiles did not enter that area and it was lovely having the quiet, exhaust free, area in which to ski. As the snow machines have gotten more powerful and sophisticated it is not uncommon to ski that area and find the hill tracked with high marking and smell the exhaust of 2 cycle engines. Not quite the same experience.
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From the second perspective, as chair of the Washington State Parks Winter Recreation Non-Motorized Advisory Committee I helped oversee the administration of the Winter Sno Park program for the State. This is a multimillion dollar program which was established in the 80's to provide winter recreation opportunities and includes around 120 sites scattered throughout the State, 40 of these sites being designated for non-motorized use only. My predecessors in this program had the wisdom and foresight to realize that a better quality experience for winter recreation for both motorized and non-motorized was to be had with this separation. This practice has stood the test of time and will continue to be the land use management plan for the State Winter Recreation program going forward.

The Stemilt Basin is a tremendous asset both for Chelan County and the State as a whole. I am hoping this submitted input will help you make the correct choice to ensure best possible use of this resource.

If this has raised any questions which I can answer please feel to contact me.

Just read in the paper about postponing the vote on the Stemilt plan.

I'm glad you are taking your time, with this.

Just wanted to say a couple of things, on the Winter Wildlands Alliance organization.

In the grass roots part of the website, and you may already know this, but El Sendero is listed as a partner, and lists the Stemilt basin winter recreation plan.

I'm not for the compromise plan, as I have said before at the meeting, as snowmobilers we would be giving up part of the area, the skiers would not be giving up anything. It is all public lands and we should all be able to share it.

If you go with the compromise plan, the skiers will not give up until they have it all.

They probably will not give up either way,

I'm not sure why there is such a push to break up public lands, to each user group, when we can all share it.

People that are connected to Winter Wildlands Alliance will not stop until all motorized recreation is gone, if they can't do that they want to regulate snowmobiles. { go through their organizations web page to see what they are really about}

In conclusion thank you for all your hard work, and I hope you will vote for public lands to remain public lands for all of us, not just a select few.

I am writing to you today in support of the original non-motorized Stemilt Basin Winter Recreation Area. I did not attend the recent public meeting as I was not aware it was occurring. I would ask that these written comments be included in the public record.

In a culture where busyness and multimedia seem to rule our lives, the quiet and solitude of the mountains are more important now than ever before. The Stemilt Basin provides close access for those that might escape the noise and chaos for even half a day to snowshoe or ski in peace. With an epidemic of obesity, we should be encouraging people to engage in bipedal aerobic activities. These sports are good for the body, mind, and soul.

I am certainly not against motorized snow sports. However, we also need to carve out accessible areas where people can also enjoy peace and solitude in our winter wonderlands without the sound and smell of snowmachines.

Please support the original proposal for a non-motorized area for winter recreation in the Stemilt Basin.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Stemilt Recreation Plan. I regret that have not been able to attend the recent hearings, and ask that my comments be included in the official record. Even though I am associated with an entity in the Partnership, this comment is my own.

Even though I didn't attend the hearings, I feel reasonably well informed as the result of attending (almost) every Stemilt Partnership meeting for ten years. I have gone in dual capacity: partially on behalf of the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust, a partner with Chelan County and the Trust for Public Land in the original Stemilt-Squilchuck Community Vision and current member of the Steering Committee, and partially because I live on Jump off Road at the eastern edge of the study area. I also attend because the continued involvement of the community in the Stemilt Partnership has been extraordinary – always overflowing the Malaga Fire Station and having reasonably civil discussion for several hours each meeting. And I attend to honor the commitment by Chelan County throughout this process to establish a vision for water, wildlife and recreation in the basin, to put together a varied portfolio of funding and purchase the property, and now to plan and manage diverse uses to meet those objectives. I am proud of the County's actions and feel you are doing a good job – literally one that no other entity could do as well. cont.

cont. From our perch at 3,600 feet and over 12 years there, my husband and I personally experience what is going on in the basin outside of meeting rooms. Just yesterday, I had a close encounter with 3 bull elk crossing the road after drinking from a spring near my home. However, substantial amounts of wildlife habitat have been lost to agriculture at ever higher elevations. When we moved in 2007, Stemilt was in the process of the development on DNR Section 10 of orchard and reservoir (water pumped from the Columbia to 3,000 feet), including the first orchard above the Loop Road. Since then they have expanded into Sections 9, 15 and 21 (I may have some numbers wrong, but the idea is generally correct) and of course have designs on WDFW's Section 16. Below my home, another large reservoir and orchards in Section 13 have replaced ever dwindling wildlife habitat. In short, the AG portion which is bereft of habitat and full of people, vehicles, chemicals and noise 10-12 months a year has grown immensely. Semi trucks and trailers daily populate the Loop Road moving soil, compost, equipment, cherries, people and supplies from one side of the basin to the other.

At the same time, motorized recreational access seems to have similarly exploded. There are ever more types of vehicles – not just snow mobiles and dirt bikes, but also tracked vehicles and ATV's (assuredly, I do not know the names of all the variations), and they are brought to the area on and in large trailers, all of which fill up narrow road and need places to park. Some use the public right-of-way, and one wonders if there is an absence of parking or if they are just trying to avoid the appropriate fees. Use in low snow times produces mud and ruts. In the summer, use of motorized vehicles during high to extreme fire risk is extremely concerning. Gun shooting out of hunting season is a concern for safety and fire. With all due respect to people enjoying different sorts of recreation, the amount of motorized activity I see seems to overshadow the hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, horseback riding and wildlife viewing discussed in the Community Vision. My personal preferences go to hiking, biking, skiing and snowshoeing, and it is becoming increasingly hard to engage in those activities without motorized vehicles nearby. cont.

cont. To get to the point, I encourage you to adopt the Stemilt Recreation Plan with as large as possible of an area restricted to non-motorized use. I do not think it at all unreasonable to stop off-trail snowmobile riding. Looking ahead, I think we will much more regret the loss of space for wildlife and quiet recreation than we will regret the loss of some snowmobile play areas. Perhaps more importantly, more citizens can use a non-motorized area than can own expensive vehicles towed by expensive toy haulers. Our public lands should be available to as much of the public as can use them, and many motorized sports have less barriers to entry.

Thank you for your consideration and continued good work.

As I was unable to voice my opinion at the public hearings concerning the Stemilt Basin Recreation Proposal, please accept this statement for your consideration and add it to the public record.

My wife, Irene, and I are avid non-motorized winter sports enthusiasts - cross country skiing and snowshoeing every winter weekend. We are not 'anti-snowmobilers', but we do enjoy escaping the hustle and bustle (and noise) of everyday life to the beauty and peace and quiet offered outdoors in the winter.

As participants for many years in the Hog Loppet cross country skiing event from Mission Ridge to Blewett Pass, we very much appreciated the support of the Apple Valley Snowmobile Club, U.S. Forest Service, Kittitas Search and Rescue, Chelan County Sheriff's Department and the Chelan Posse. All of these great organizations supported the Hog Loppet on snowmobiles, and the event could not have happened without their help.

On a snowshoe trek a couple of years ago to Clara Lake, we witnessed several snowmobilers high-marking on the high ridges above the frozen lake. This is a common but dangerous practice, especially on unstable snowpack. Besides the noise when they were there, they left the entire basin smelling of fuel.

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cont. The Stemilt Basin is a relatively small geographic area compared to the other local areas currently open to snowmobiling. The Blewett Pass-Beehive Lake-Liberty area in Kittitas County offers extensive snowmobiling trails, as does the Entiat Valley-Lake Wenatchee-Trinity-Plain area.

The proposed expansion of Mission Ridge Ski Area includes new trails for cross country skiing and snowshoeing, both of which are growing exponentially in popularity. Your decision on the Stemilt Basin Recreation Proposal is critical to the future of the already limited local nonmotorized winter outdoor recreation opportunities.

I urge you all to ask the same question the Chelan County PUD board asks itself when they are considering an important decision like this. That is, "How could we create the best value, for the most people, for the longest period of time?"

For the winter health and enjoyment of our entire community and future visitors, please approve the Original Non-Motorized Proposal.

Thank you all for your service to Chelan County.

Hello Commissioners,

TREAD would like to reach out briefly on behalf of our recreation partners and Ex-Officio members. Our board supports the Compromise Plan. We represent all users (motorized and non-motorized). We believe the compromise allows for the most use, by the most user groups, and really represents our mission of "Trails for all."

Thank you and your staff for taking on this daunting task. After attending many of the meetings, your staff deserves huge kudos. There was grace and tact displayed by all; to a group that quite often did not demonstrate the same.

I look forward to meeting with you all soon to discuss TREAD and our partnership throughout Chelan County!

I am writing to urge you to adopt the Original Non-Motorized Proposal for the Stemilt-Squilchuck Recreation Plan. For over 25 years I have back-country skied in both the Stemilt Basin and in the Clara Lake area, an area bounded in the north by the Liberty-Beehive road, in the south by the Mission Ridge Ski Area, in the east by the abandoned road leading from the Liberty-Beehive Road to the old Mission Peak Lookout site, and in the west by the abandoned spur road that commences from the parking area at the last horseshoe turn on the road to the Ski Area. Both the Stemilt Basin area and this Clara Lake area have very good slopes for backcountry skiing. Allowing snowmobile activity in this area would detract from my skiing experience. It is difficult and not enjoyable to ski a slope crisscrossed by multiple deep ruts caused by snowmobiles running up and down the hill. And when those ruts freeze and become rock-hard, attempting to ski those slopes can be dangerous.

Stemilt Basin and the Clara Lake area, being immediately adjacent to the Ski Area, are readily accessible for a day outing by backcountry skiers. In a day, snowmobilers can easily reach locations some distance from the Ski Area. Thus, there is much more terrain available to them for a day trip than skiers have. For this reason, adopting the Original Non-Motorized Proposal would still preserved for snowmobilers a significant amount of land for them to enjoy.

Thank you for considering this request.