

# ACROSS THE WEST, HELPING TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR FORESTS

**HILARY EISEN**

**RECREATION PLANNING AND POLICY MANAGER**

**FROM LATE SPRING** all the way into fall, in winter travel and forest planning processes from the Northern Rockies to the Southern Sierra Nevada, we've been neck-deep in Forest Service policy. It's an exciting time to be an advocate for human-powered winter recreation on public lands. And with all of the developing winter travel plans coming down the pike across the West, plus forest planning and other important advocacy work to protect public lands and at-risk landscapes, it doesn't look like things will be slowing down any time soon.

## Shoshone National Forest

The Shoshone National Forest, located in northwest Wyoming, was the first forest outside of the northern Sierra to begin winter travel planning under the 2015 Over-Snow Vehicle Rule, kicking off its travel planning process just as the snow began to melt in the spring. We began our local outreach and engagement with a "Party on the Pass" to connect with people enjoying spring corn on the Beartooth Pass (one of the Shoshone's two major backcountry ski destinations) and to help them comment on the Forest Service's proposed winter travel plan. In particular, we urged skiers to support the Forest Service's proposal to prohibit over-snow vehicle (OSV) use within designated Nordic ski trail systems and to implement winter motorized use seasons. Given that skiers only ski the pass in the spring and most motorized use occurs in the winter, this proposed winter motorized use season would virtually eliminate user conflict on the Beartooth Pass. Implementing season dates would also align OSV use on the Shoshone with the way it's managed on the neighboring Bridger-Teton. We are also advocating for a minimum snow-depth restriction to help protect soils and vegetation, and against designating a historic ski trail as an OSV route. We are also insisting that the Forest Service ensure that the agency is appropriately managing the high-elevation wilderness study area (WSA) on the Shoshone to protect its wilderness qualities in all seasons.

## Lassen National Forest

This fall as the snow began to accumulate in the West's higher peaks, the Lassen National Forest published its final Environmental Impact Statement and draft plan – the second-to-last step before finalizing its new winter travel plan. We are particularly interested in the Lassen plan because it was the first to start writing a winter travel plan after the OSV Rule was



*"If you listen carefully, the silence is beautiful."*

*Location: Red Slate - Sierra Nevada, CA; Skier: John Morrison, Photo by Christian Pondella*

published and is the test case for how winter travel planning will occur across the country. As it stands now the draft plan isn't perfect, but it's pretty good. The Forest Service heard most of our recommendations about important non-motorized recreation areas, and the draft plan prohibits winter motorized use in these areas. The plan also prohibits OSVs in important conservation areas like recommended wilderness and Research Natural Areas. All the same, there is room for improvement. The draft plan would allow OSVs on one of the few official cross-country ski trails on the Lassen National Forest and does not go far enough in protecting quiet non-motorized recreation experiences on and around an important cross-country ski trail network adjacent to Lassen Volcanic National Park. Most troubling, however, is that the Lassen's draft plan misses the mark when it comes to thoughtfully designating specific areas where OSV use is appropriate (as required by the OSV Rule) and instead relies on the old paradigm of allowing OSV use everywhere except specific areas where it's prohibited. Low elevation areas that rarely receive snow, including 50% of the forest's mule deer winter range, remain open to OSVs in the draft plan. The draft also fails to provide provide protections for rare and threatened wildlife species such as the Sierra Nevada red fox. Of course, we're not quite finished – it's only a draft plan right now – and we are continuing to work with the Forest Service to improve the plan.

*Continued on page 2*

## Northern Sierra Forests

Looking ahead, we expect the Tahoe, Eldorado, Stanislaus, and Plumas National Forests to each publish draft winter travel plan Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) over the next few months. Each draft EIS will describe and compare a range of Alternatives, or possible winter travel plans. We look forward to seeing how winter travel planning continues to develop in the northern Sierra and how these later forests learn from the planning process the Lassen has almost completed. Throughout the process we will continue to engage with our local grassroots groups, such as the Tahoe Backcountry Alliance and Friends of the Plumas Wilderness, to explore and develop new capacities for the backcountry community in the region.

## Inyo/Sierra/Sequoia National Forests

Our policy shop hasn't been purely focused on winter travel planning; we've also been spending quite a bit of time working on long-range forest planning. The Forest Service is in the midst of a big push to revise all of its forest management plans, which plans are the foundation for everything that happens on any given forest. A forest plan dictates where certain activities may be suitable and is the blueprint that shapes future travel planning and infrastructure and resource management. With three National Forests in the southern Sierra – the Inyo, Sequoia, and Sierra – among the first in the nation to revise their forest management plans, we teamed up with the Outdoor Alliance to ensure that these plans set a good precedent for sustainable human-powered recreation opportunities and access nationwide. We spent much of the summer gearing up for, and then writing comments on and helping our members and supporters comment on, the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and draft plans. This included participating in numerous recreation stakeholder meetings and Forest Service meetings on the east side of the Sierra and hosting stakeholder workshops in the greater Los Angeles area.

## Flathead National Forest

Once we wrapped up our comments on the southern Sierra forest plans we turned our attention to the Northern Rockies, where another early adopter, the Flathead, is also revising its forest plan. The Flathead National Forest borders Glacier National Park and includes part of the vast Bob Marshall Wilderness complex. It's no surprise that this forest is a critical refuge for animals that require big wild places – like the grizzly bear and wolverine — and protecting habitat, especially areas that provide connectivity for wide-ranging wildlife, is a focus of our efforts on the Flathead. The Flathead is also a winter recreation paradise and we are working to ensure that the revised Forest Plan builds a good foundation for recreation management on the forest and sets the stage for future winter travel planning.

## BACKCOUNTRY FILM FESTIVAL REPORT

*KEILI "BUB" BELL  
OUTREACH AND  
EVENTS COORDINATOR*

**AFTER AN OFF-SEASON OF HARD WORK** by staff, board members, sponsors, filmmakers and athletes from around the globe, we are thrilled to be going into presentation mode on the 12th Annual Winter Wildlands Alliance Backcountry Film Festival.



The lineup this year features filmmakers and athletes driven not only by the allure of deep powder but also by social mission and a desire to tell authentic human stories. Films include 11-year-old Lilliana Libeck's expedition to ski Antarctica with her father, Jon Miller's thoughtful grappling with a near-fatal backcountry accident, and beautiful scenes from Jordan Manley's China, A Skiers Journey.

Every year we collaborate with sponsors and hosts who genuinely care about uniting the winter backcountry community for an evening of stoke and camaraderie. When you attend a screening in your town, the funds raised stay in your community to support recreation and conservation efforts and to raise awareness of winter management issues, avalanche training workshops, and youth environmental education programs.

From November 17th to late March 2017, the Backcountry Film Festival will tour over 100 cities in North America. Come out, join the community, and also be sure to grab a new multi-colored 20" Voile ski strap or other Winter Wildlands Alliance schwag to brandish your support of our mission in the backcountry this winter.

For complete festival lineup and a screening near you visit [backcountryfilmfestival.org](http://backcountryfilmfestival.org)

**GRASSROOTS SPOTLIGHT**

**NEW GRASSROOTS GROUP:  
GRANITE BACKCOUNTRY  
ALLIANCE**

*HILARY EISEN  
RECREATION PLANNING AND POLICY MANAGER*

**WE'RE EXCITED TO WELCOME** to the national Winter Wildlands Alliance our newest grassroots group: Granite Backcountry Alliance, based in North Conway, New Hampshire. Representing skiers in New Hampshire and Western Maine, Granite Backcountry Alliance strives to promote and advocate for backcountry skiing by building off of the region's rich ski history and culture.

Formed in September 2016, Granite Backcountry Alliance is a proactive response to the rapid growth of backcountry skiing in northern New England. "Backcountry skiing and riding is a measurable, undeniable force in the industry and is the fastest growing segment of the sport," notes Jake Risch, a founding board member. "The demand is strong, but the terrain in New Hampshire and Western Maine is limited by the natural density and legal access to the forests and mountains. We can change that."

The Alliance plans to work with private landowners and the U.S. Forest Service to improve skiing access and opportunities in New Hampshire and western Maine – both through glading projects like those accomplished by their neighbors, the Vermont Backcountry Alliance, and by restoring the region's historic ski trails. These trails were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s but have largely fallen into disrepair and abandonment. Restoring and reviving these historic trails is important for Granite Backcountry Alliance because the trails are as much a part of the region's ski history as Mt. Washington's Tuckerman Ravine.

The Alliance's goals go beyond glading and trail projects, however. As the unified voice for skiers in the region, the group hopes to create a culture of safety and respect for the land within the local backcountry ski community. Granite Backcountry Alliance will provide educational opportunities for ecological awareness, avalanche and general winter safety. The Alliance also represents and advocates for the local backcountry ski community in the policy arena. Although the group is brand new, it already has the ear of local managers on the White Mountain National Forest and plans to continue to build relationships with state and federal land managers, as well as private landowners.



*Granite Backcountry Alliance making it happen in New Hampshire!*

**INYO WINTER TRAILHOST PROGRAM**

Winter trails and trailheads in the Eastern Sierra experience a variety of recreational uses: Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, backcountry skiing and splitboarding, snowmobiling and even, increasingly, fat biking. With mini-grant support from Winter Wildlands Alliance, our grassroots partner Friends of the Inyo is excited to roll out a new Winter Trail Host program for this coming season that will provide a friendly face to ensure the public enjoys their trails.

Hosts will be present at trailheads and trails on holiday weekends and some mid-week days through the winter, beginning in December. They will provide interpretive information, answering visitor questions, and will also gather observational information to help inform forest managers, Friends of the Inyo, Winter Wildlands Alliance and other organizations for future collaborative winter travel management and recreation planning on the Inyo.

A Bishop, CA-based non-profit working for the preservation, exploration, and stewardship of public lands in the Eastern Sierra, Friends of the Inyo is looking for friendly, outgoing volunteer hosts to help make this new program a success. If interested, please contact [ben@friendsoftheinyo.org](mailto:ben@friendsoftheinyo.org). We look forward to seeing you on trails this winter!

**TAKE ACTION**

FOR YOUR BACKCOUNTRY EXPERIENCE

**JOIN US**

KEEP WINTER WILD

[winterwildlands.org/join/](http://winterwildlands.org/join/)

**2017 GRASSROOTS  
ADVOCACY CONFERENCE:  
SAVE THE DATE!**

Winter Wildlands Alliance’s 7th Biennial Grassroots Advocacy Conference will be held on November 9-12, 2017 at the historic Clair Tappaan Lodge on Donner Pass, just west of Truckee, California.

The conference is open to Winter Wildlands Alliance members, partners, and others who are passionate about protecting winter wildlands and sustainable human-powered recreation on public lands. It’s a terrific opportunity to gather, network, share successes, to hear the latest on policy issues, and meet with land managers.

For more information and to sign up, please visit [winterwildlands.org/grassrootsconference](http://winterwildlands.org/grassrootsconference)

**TAHOE BACKCOUNTRY ALLIANCE**

As the voice for human-powered backcountry recreation in the Lake Tahoe area, the Tahoe Backcountry Alliance is committed to advocating for and informing the community about critical issues affecting winter backcountry recreation in the region.

For this coming winter 2016-17, the Tahoe Backcountry Alliance is partnering with the Tahoe Rim Trail Association to work on counting winter users at popular BC trailheads. There is a major lack of data on dispersed winter use in the greater Tahoe area. This volunteer effort will produce valuable information that can inform future planning.

Additionally, TBA is also participating in the Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership. This collaboration is facilitated by the National Forest Foundation, and supported by CA State Parks, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, and the California Tahoe Conservancy. These groups represent the major land managers and primary regulatory body on the West Shore of Lake Tahoe. The goal is to restore the resiliency of the west shore’s forests, watersheds, and recreational opportunities. Since the loss of the majority of the winter parking in this area was one of the Tahoe Backcountry Alliance’s original issues, this is a valuable opportunity to inform future projects in the area.

For more information or to jump on board: [tahoebackcountryalliance.org](http://tahoebackcountryalliance.org).

**BACKCOUNTRY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT**



**ALPENGLOW SPORTS BUILDS  
COMMUNITY IN TAHOE**

Alpenglow Sports, located in the heart of Tahoe City, California, has been a cornerstone for backcountry and outdoor enthusiasts since 1979. The store’s mission has always been to provide a one-stop resource for locals and visitors, with a strong emphasis on community. Building on this passion, Alpenglow Sports has built a natural partnership with Winter Wildlands Alliance by hosting the Backcountry Film Festival in Tahoe City.

Beyond the annual Backcountry Film Festival, Alpenglow Sports also brings in world-class athletes to present images and storytelling adventures with its Winter Film Series. Hosting athletes like Tommy Caldwell, Jeremy Jones, Lynn Hill and dozens of others not only inspires the community but also raises important funds for local non-profits.

Five years ago, owner Brendan Madigan created a nine-day-long long celebration of human powered mountain activity called the Winter Mountain Festival, which offers dozens of events and gatherings to celebrate Tahoe’s winter recreation opportunities. Due primarily to this event and its community leadership, Alpenglow Sports was recently awarded the 2016 Adidas Outdoor Inspiration Award, and will be featured alongside the country’s most innovative outdoor retailers on the upcoming SNEWS Innovation Project.

**Trail Break** is published two times a year by Winter Wildlands Alliance.

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**NEWS FROM WINTER WILDLANDS ALLIANCE**

**WINTER WILDLANDS ALLIANCE WELCOMES NEW DIRECTORS**

Over the past summer, Winter Wildlands Alliance has been pleased to welcome five new members to our Board of Directors, further increasing the board's diverse range of personal, professional and geographical experience. For full board and bios please visit [winterwildlands.org/BOD](http://winterwildlands.org/BOD)

**KATIE STRONG ANCHORAGE, AK**



Hailing from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Katie is an endurance runner and a long-distance skier who also works as an attorney at Trustees for Alaska, a public interest environmental law firm based in Anchorage. She holds a J.D. from Lewis & Clark Law School and an M.S. in Environmental Policy from Michigan Technological University.

**JEN MILLER, BOULDER, CO**



A mountain guide, ski patroller, medical student and educator, Jen has worked for Outward Bound, NOLS Wilderness Medicine Institute, and for a variety of university outdoor programs. She believes in time spent outside and in supporting those who are advocating for and protecting wild spaces.

**JENNIFER BOCK STEAMBOAT, CO**



Jennifer didn't learn to ski until she moved to Colorado after college, and is still catching up, but very lucky to continue learning in Routt County's beautiful backcountry. She is the Staff Attorney at the City of Steamboat Springs, and has a background of working in organizing, policy and law for non-profits and local and state government. Jennifer holds a J.D. from UC Berkeley School of Law and a B.A. in American Studies from Georgetown University.

**SAM ROBERTS MAMMOTH LAKES, CA**



A native Californian, Sam is a photographer and climbing guide whose adventures have taken him from Yosemite and J-Tree to the summit of 24,580-foot Noshaq in Afghanistan. He is also on the Board of Directors of Friends of the Inyo, a Winter Wildlands Alliance grassroots organization based in the Eastern Sierra where Sam skis upwards of 100 days each season.

**LAURA YALE REVELSTOKE, BC**



A community organizer and film producer, Laura grew up on the Colorado Front Range and earned a BA in Journalism from the University of North Carolina. She works to preserve the special character of ski communities in Colorado and British Columbia through the protection of surrounding public lands.



**Winter Wildlands Alliance is a national nonprofit organization promoting and preserving winter wildlands and a quality human-powered snowsports experience on public lands.**

**SNOWSCHOOL SPOTLIGHT**



**FROM INSPIRATION TO IMPACT: SNOWSCHOOL STORMS INTO NAAEE CONFERENCE**

*KERRY MCCLAY, ED.D.*  
**NATIONAL SNOWSCHOOL PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

Winter Wildlands Alliance was invited for the first time ever this past fall to present at the annual North American Association of Environmental Education International Conference. Leading educators, scientists, land-managers, federal agency officials and even a few celebrities gathered for a week in Madison, Wisconsin to share the latest research and ideas on what works in environmental education. While much is already known about what constitutes meaningful learning experiences for young people, the major challenge facing the conference attendees was how to create such experiences and measure impacts amid the ever-shifting landscape of political initiatives, funding priorities, curriculum requirements, technological innovations and cultural trends.

The invitation to present at NAAEE was both an honor and, in a way, symbolized a crystallizing moment in the evolution SnowSchool. Presenting outcome data from our recently piloted SnowSchool Weather Station project, WWA demonstrated quantitatively how underserved students learned significantly more about science when the field trip was accompanied by online snowpack data and classroom learning. The pilot study — as well as our work to replicate this project at sites across the SnowSchool network — was a perfect illustration of the 2016 conference theme, “From Inspiration to Impact,” and provided the audience with a clear vision for national dissemination.



*Kerry McClay, National SnowSchool Director, is all smiles at the NAAEE conference!*

Having grown from small but inspiring beginnings as a snowshoe outing program, **SnowSchool has grown to be a recognized and proven national model for cultivating a new generation of ecologically literate citizens.** As the 2016-17 winter approaches we look forward to another season of SnowSchool innovation and to engaging new groups of kids and teens across our snow covered winter wildlands.

**Help us reach our SnowSchool goals!**

- **Enhance kids’ learning at SnowSchool sites across the country with our new weather station project!**
- **Establish 3-6 new SnowSchool sites nationwide, bringing the experience to kids and communities that need it most!**
- **Engage over 30,000 participants nationally- 50% underserved and 50% first-time snowshoers!**

**Get involved! Participate, volunteer, start a SnowSchool site or donate at:**

**[www.snowschooll.org](http://www.snowschooll.org)**

## SNOW SCIENCE CONTINUES THROUGH SUMMER

**DR. HANS-PETER (H.P.) MARSHALL**  
 ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF GEOSCIENCES, BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY  
 DIRECTOR, CRYOSPHERE GEOPHYSICS AND REMOTE SENSING (CRYOGARS) GROUP  
 WINTER WILDLAND ALLIANCE AMBASSADOR

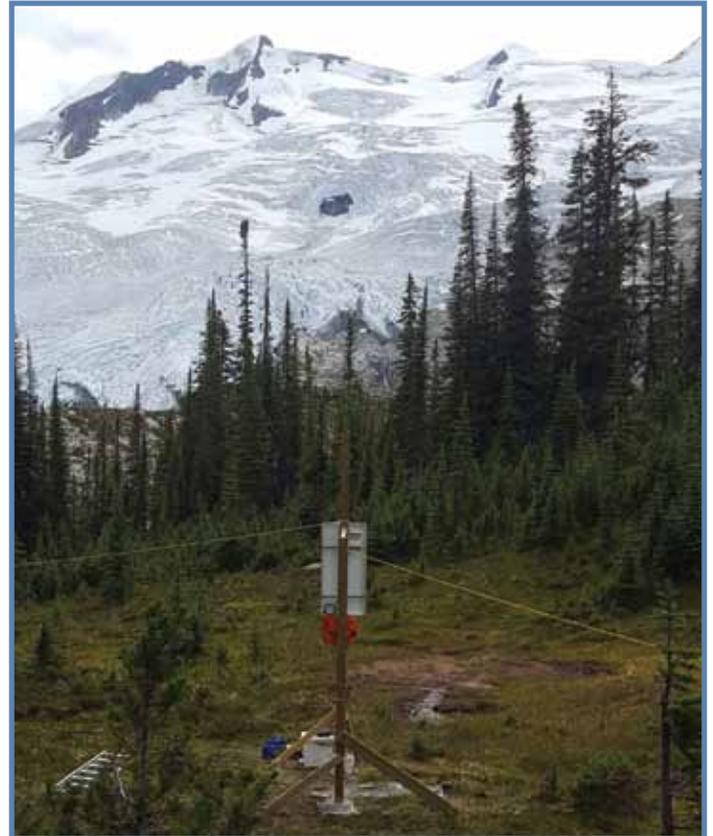
Snow science has to take place where and when there's snow, which fact does tend to concentrate our fieldwork into the colder parts of the year. But work continues year-round.

Winters are full of schlepping around the alpine, with big packs full of high-tech snow instruments that we use to measure snow properties, to study how they are changing, and to develop remote sensing tools to monitor snow from aircrafts and satellites. Summers are typically filled with the much less glamorous aspects of the job – database management, analysis and publication of results, and writing proposals to NASA, the National Science Foundation (NSF), transportation departments and other industry partners for funding on the next round of projects

This past summer I was able to stretch out the winter a bit by traveling north in May, to the Wolverine Glacier on the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska. This interdisciplinary project led by Dr. Shad O'Neel, the director of the USGS Alaska Glaciology program, involves studying how changes in the glacier and seasonal snow are affecting the ecosystem. I spent a week skiing with one of my radar systems to measure the spatial patterns of the seasonal snow adjacent to the glacier, and installed a continuous radar on the glacier to monitor the snow and ice melt throughout the summer.

Measuring the contribution of snow and glaciers to water supply is also of interest in the headwaters of the Columbia River, in the Selkirk Mountains of British Columbia. In collaboration with the Sorcerer Lodge backcountry ski lodge near Golden, we installed another radar system to monitor snow water equivalent, snow density, and liquid water content. This information, combined with models and glacier mass balance observations by the University of Northern B.C., will help quantify the relative contributions of seasonal snow and melting glaciers to the Columbia River.

Continuous automated measurement sites are not only of great benefit to scientists and practitioners, but also provide a valuable resource for education that allow students to connect to place-based instruction. SnowSchool's new Snow Weather Station at Bogus Basin is an exciting step in this direction, and is clearly making a positive



*Measurement sites are an important resource for scientists, practitioners, and students. Photo by Dr. H.P. Marshall*

impact on local students. We hope to continue to help WWA SnowSchool develop snow science curriculum, help train volunteers, and in the near future provide some of our new instrumentation for SnowSchool weather stations.

**SNOWSCHOOL**

WINTER ADVENTURE AND HANDS-ON SCIENCE EDUCATION

[www.snowschoool.org](http://www.snowschoool.org)



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Join, become a member or donate to be a part of the Winter Wildlands Alliance backcountry community. Visit [winterwildlands.org](http://winterwildlands.org), or call Program Administrator, Brittany Jones, at 1.208.343.1630 and help protect your winter backcountry.



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