4336 Plainfield Ave., NE
Suite F
Grand Rapids, MI 49525

MICHIGAN SNOWMOBILE ASSOCIATION (616) 361-2285 FAX (616) 363-0661

Dear Representatives,

I am writing on behalf of the Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA) in regard to the Huron-Manistee's Notice of Intent to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to assess potential impacts from banning snowmobile use and firearm hunting within Semiprimitive Non-Motorized (SPNM) Management Areas located across the forests. Since we represent the nearly 350,000 registered snowmobiles from across Michigan, as well as approximately 100,000 visitors from surrounding states who snowmobile in Michigan each year, we'll focus our comments primarily on impacts to snowmobiling which would be caused by this proposed management change.

GENERAL INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Snowmobiling is an appropriate recreational use in the semi-primitive areas of the Forests since it is low impact and a dispersed use activity. Since there are few other activities occurring in these areas during winter, conflicts are minimized while recreation opportunities are maximized.

Michigan is a nationwide destination for snowmobilers because of its unique combination of abundant and dependable snow, a good variety of terrain, and an inter-connected trail network that is unique to only Michigan and two other states. The approximately 6,300 miles of designated snowmobile trails in Michigan are dependent upon a multitude of partnerships that involve approximately 50% private lands, 20% Federal lands, 25% State lands, and 5% other local public lands. These many partnerships combine to offer a large system of interconnected snowmobile trails that would not be possible to be provided by any one entity working solely within its own jurisdiction. Therefore continued snowmobile access through all existing areas of the Forests is critical to continued overall snowmobile trail system connectivity.

The snowmobile trails that are located on Huron-Manistee National Forests provide important opportunities for Lower Michigan residents and out-of-state snowmobile visitors alike. These trails are the closest snowmobile systems to Lower Peninsula population centers, as well as to states such as Illinois, Indiana and Ohio from which many non-resident riders travel. It is important they all remain intact to help continue meeting high demands for snowmobile trails in Lower Michigan.

The approximately 600 miles of designated snowmobile trails on these two Forests are very important since they represent nearly 10% of all snowmobile trails in the state. More

importantly, these 600 miles account for nearly 20% of the snowmobile trails within the Lower Peninsula and provide crucial links within the Lower Michigan snowmobile trail networks.

Snowmobiling in Michigan depends upon long distance, inter-connective trails that link communities, services, scenic areas and other destinations similar to the summer-time recreation classification of 'driving for pleasure.' These inter-connective trail systems require extensive coordination between local, State and Federal agencies, as well as between private and corporate landowners, businesses and local trail sponsors. To state that there is not any 'coordination,' let alone extensive coordination, for snowmobile use in recreation planning with the State of Michigan – in which the Forests are deeply involved – is a misnomer.

Further, there is no 'duplication' in providing snowmobile use between federal forests and state forests since each parcel provides an important piece of linkage for the overall snowmobile trail network. If a piece of trail on federal lands is eliminated (or vice versa on state lands) there typically is no alternate replacement route available, which ultimately would lead to breaks in inter-connective trail routes.

Snowmobiling also generates over $500 million in direct annual expenditures statewide, so it is an extremely important activity that helps support state, regional and local economies.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Bill Manson, Executive Director
Michigan Snowmobile Association
4336 Plainfield Ave. NE, Suite F
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
616-301-2743
billmsa@aol.com