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Comments:

I am blessed to call Red Lodge, MT home. My family immigrated here from northern Italy in the 1890s. They stopped here because there was work in the mines, and because the landscape reminded them of home. Even 120+ years ago, with nothing to their name but a strong back and a sense of ambition, they found the time to appreciate the wonder of our incredible topography as the plains morph into the spectacular mountains.

Five generations later, I am amazed at the wonder of our state and the opportunity of public lands. It has afforded me the opportunity to hunt, fish, hike, bike, ski, snowmobile, and dirt bike in areas where a person can't help but stop and take a look around. I am also lucky enough to farm in the same area, and have a deep connection with the land and animals, both domesticated and wild.

My great-grandfather enjoyed fishing more than most, and hiked many miles until he slowed down a bit, at which point he could be spotted in a hunter orange Ford Bronco, driving backroads and trails to get to his fishing spots around here, Top of the World area, and on to Cooke City and the park. He did that until he couldn't get in or out of that Bronco. As a youngster my father would snowmobile with his grandpa and family in the same areas. By his mid twenties cross-country skiing became his favorite recreational activity, and still is to this day. Slowing him down are multiple surgeries to both knees, one shoulder, and a fancy piece of titanium screwed to his femur. At times, this leads us right back to square one and a throttle, as this can be the only way of getting off the trails and into the high country.

I understand, and in certain instances agree with some of the issues of motorized use. One such issue is noise. I support stock or stock db level exhaust that meets federal requirements. Your phone's ringtone is more obnoxious than a stock snowmobile exhaust. Next on to emissions...No they are not zero, but the emissions from motorized vehicles are at all time lows and will continue that way due to government mandates. There is no escaping this, and it is for the best. Finally wildlife, plant, and erosional damage. Trails will exist even without motorized use, and all parties must, and do, help to maintain them. Wildlife in our state is flourishing, with several near extinct species currently well past target quotas. In my personal experience, and from picking up the paper now and again, wildlife is subjected to more human harassment in Yellowstone than anywhere else. A non hunting, non motorized use national park.

In summarizing what I intended to be a brief, to the point, "share it" rant, I will wrap things up with a few final thoughts to chew on. Not everyone that enjoys, or potentially would enjoy our irreplaceable public lands can physically do so if limited to non-motorized travel. These individuals should not be looked at or down upon as different or inferior, for they are enjoying the same features that bring us all to public lands. In addition, they will help further advocate for this public land, and speak to its worth for those who question its value. Let's not turn this into a skier vs. snowboarder issue. The big picture is we all cherish these areas, and want to enjoy them in our free time. In addition, we must not forget the road that has led us here, and the fact that while tourism and recreation are large economic drivers, we are rooted in agriculture, mining, timber, trucking, and all the other "small town" jobs that are completely essential, and at times, not given the credit they deserve. Let't not forget what makes this the last best place.

Thank you