

editorial

## A noisy winter in Yellowstone

**Despite two district court rulings, the Bush administration is returning to a previous maximum of 720 snowmobiles a day.**

By The Denver Post

Posted: 12/15/2008 12:30:00 AM MST



Snowmobilers ride past bison in Yellowstone National Park in this January 2000 file photo. (David Grubbs, Billings Gazette/The Associated Press )

As Yellowstone National Park opens its winter season today, a recent and reckless move by the

Bush administration will be very much on the minds of visitors.

The quiet of the natural setting could be shattered by the roar of 720 snowmobiles a day throughout the season — far more than two separate district courts ruled was acceptable.

How much more irritating can George Bush get before he leaves office?

Until late November, a compromise plan set by the National Park Service would have limited the number of per-day snowmobiles to 318.

District Court justices in Washington, D.C., found in September that a plan to allow 540 of the machines a day was too many. District Court justices in Wyoming concurred.

Further, staff scientists concluded after three years of study that too many machines would create "major adverse impacts" in the park.

Yet Yellowstone's superintendent, Suzanne Lewis, crafted a reading of the courts' rulings that arbitrarily led her to return to the 720 figure that created the controversy.

Before Bush took office, the powerful, speedy machines were on their way out of the park permanently.

The president shrugged off years of scientific study in reversing the impending ban.

Meanwhile, there are hundreds of miles of snowmobile routes just outside the park. And during warm months, all-terrain vehicles aren't allowed at Yellowstone at all.

The park's scientists found that snowmobiles

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undermine Yellowstone's wildlife, air quality and, of course, its tranquility. Winter in Yellowstone is pretty special.

Yes, recent improvements in snowmobiles used in the park have reduced the amount of pollution the machines emit and the noise they make. But the totality of factors makes it clear they have no place in Yellowstone.

We hope Lewis will change her mind. If she doesn't, we urge the incoming Obama administration to return sanity to this situation.

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