

editorial

Snowmobiles and sanity

By The Denver Post

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A bit of sanity finally has been injected back into the longtime saga of snowmobiles in Yellowstone National Park. Hopefully, it will restore the wintertime peace at one of America's most special places.

The only noise more grating than hundreds of snowmobiles whizzing through Yellowstone has been the decade-long bickering over the issue.

The Obama administration now says it wants to allow up to 318 snowmobiles per day into Yellowstone for the next two winters. It effectively restores a plan that Bush officials scrapped late last year, when they instead reinstated a 720-per-day rule.

Before President George W. Bush took office, snowmobiles were on their way out of the park permanently.

Dismissing years of scientific study — sound familiar? — Bush reversed the impending ban, forcing the issue into the courts.

Yellowstone scientists earlier concluded that too many snow machines create "major adverse impacts" in the park. The high-polluting machines undermine the wildlife, air quality and, of course, tranquility during winter in Yellowstone.

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

The National Park Service plans on using the next two years to come up with a long-term solution, and will allow for public comment.

We understand that recent improvements in snowmobiles used in the park have reduced the amount of pollution the machines emit and the noise they make. That's a good step forward.

However, the totality of factors makes it clear they have no place in Yellowstone, or at least should be severely limited.

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