

# Victims or Victors: Yellowstone and the Snowmobile Capital of the World

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In December 2003, with barely twelve hours remaining before the National Park Service opened Yellowstone's gates to hundreds of people wanting to tour the park by snowmobile, Judge Emmet Sullivan in Washington, D.C., struck down the agency's winter use program. Ruling upon an environmentalist lawsuit, he declared the snowmobile program to be in violation of two federal laws, and ordered the Service to implement an earlier, but discarded, snowmobile phase-out. For the winter to come, only half the average number of snowmobiles previously allowed could enter the park, and in another year they would be banned entirely.<sup>1</sup>

Two months later, Sullivan's decision was put on hold by another federal judge. Responding to a different, industry lawsuit, Judge Clarence Brimmer in Wyoming Federal District Court issued a very different ruling, one that increased the daily snowmobile limit by about 60 percent from the number permitted under Sullivan's decision.<sup>2</sup> The decisions opposed each other in most ways, but had the same result of cutting historic snowmobile numbers.

Caught in the middle and forced to deal with the consequences of these decisions were some residents and merchants in nearby West Yellowstone (Figure 1), the formerly self-professed "Snowmobile Capital of the World." Over the last thirty years, residents in this town of 1,200 had built a winter economy based largely upon renting snowmobiles to Yellowstone-bound tourists, who also usually spent more money on accommodations and meals in the town. Sullivan's decision dropped winter visitation dramatically, causing some businesses to cut back and others to contemplate closure. Brimmer's decision helped only momentarily and cast further confusion upon an issue that had been embroiled for years.<sup>3</sup> Collectively, these decisions not only threatened the town's economy, but its very identity.

The seeming victors in this debate, depending on one's perspective, were the environmentalists or industry who had filed separate lawsuits, the National Park Service (NPS) which (despite, or perhaps as a result of, the lawsuits) succeeded in reducing snowmobile numbers (the agency's



**Figure 1.** Yellowstone National Park area. Source: Spatial Analysis Center, Yellowstone National Park.

original intent), or either of the judges. This story, then, may present the typical victim-victor situation that recent scholars suggest national park creation and continuing National Park Service management create. Karl Jacoby, Mark Spence, and Louis Warren all suggest that national park creation disenfranchised local Native American or EuroAmerican residents, and imply that park management continues to ignore locals' needs.<sup>4</sup> Other scholars like Lary Dilsaver and William Tweed, and C.W. Buchholz suggest that a broader interpretation is needed, because the

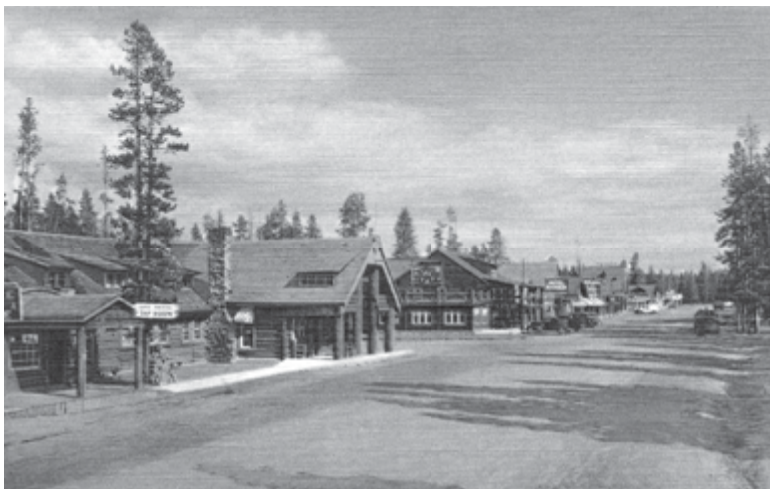
greatest promoters of many national parks' creation were local residents, who then profit from tourist opportunities.<sup>5</sup> Still, writers and politicians commenting upon the snowmobile situation argue that the Service continues to ignore the needs of park neighbors.<sup>6</sup> Although some in West Yellowstone celebrated the decreasing snowmobile numbers, it is clear that others were victimized financially.

A closer examination of the snowmobile controversy's history, however, suggests that West (the town's local nickname) and park administrators cooperated for decades in developing the geography of winter tourism in Yellowstone. While such efforts were not always amicable or successful, they did succeed in protecting the park while encouraging visitation, until recently. As such, their relationship exemplifies a good gateway community-federal relationship, as suggested by gateway scholars Machlis and Field; Glick and Alexander; Eagles and McCool; Mitchell; Power; and Howe, McMahon, and Propst. In the last fifteen years, however, escalating snowmobile use has threatened treasured park resources such as its clean air and winter quiet, an excessive tourism scenario unfortunately too common in the gateway tourism world, as the same scholars repeatedly suggest.<sup>7</sup> However, more recent events suggest that neither West nor the NPS is the dominant player in determining future visitation. Rather, in developing a lucrative (if unstable) industry, West entrepreneurs opened their economy to what Mitchell describes as "outsiders who may not have the community's best interest at heart."<sup>8</sup> In West Yellowstone, it appears that industry and politicians are increasingly the true victors, with the industry seemingly using West as a pawn in a larger game of retaining symbolic access to the nation's trend-setting national park, while some politicians do their best to assist the industry. History suggests that the National Park Service is as much a victim – and victor – as West is, and that some in West built a house of cards that began tumbling in the winter of 2003.

### Snowmobiles Arrive in the Yellowstone Area

In 1908 the Union Pacific rails arrived at Yellowstone's west boundary. Six years later Gallatin County, Montana completed a direct road linking the railroad terminal to Bozeman (although the road was not graveled for another eighteen years). Almost immediately the town of West Yellowstone (Figure 2) developed to provide the arriving and departing visitors with necessary services. Until 1936, when the state began plowing the road to Bozeman, the fifty or so resident households were literally snowbound for the long northern Rockies winter.<sup>9</sup> Winter in West – 6,666 feet above sea level – was no laughing matter, lasting at least six months, with bitter cold and 150 to 200 inches of snowfall each year.<sup>10</sup>

Such long snowy winters fostered a sense of shared hardship and



**Figure 2: West Yellowstone, 1930s.** The back of the above postcard read "Street Scene at West Yellowstone, Montana, Picturesque Western Entrance to Yellowstone National Park. West Yellowstone is one of the most picturesque towns in the West. Set in dense pine; with huge rustic buildings; with great spacious streets it is a unique and different spot." Historic hand-tinted postcard published by the Sanborn Souvenir Company, found in the personal collection of Ruth and Leslie Quinn, Gardiner, Montana.

independence. Town residents in fall laid in a "grubstake" of food – a food cache adequate to last the winter. Without electricity or running water, firewood for woodstove heat was another important essential. Through the long winter, residents socialized together, gathering at potlucks and their (two-room) school functions. On their skis fashioned from one-by-fours heated in a park hot spring and given the proper bend at the tip, they went to the local hills at "the Barns," just inside the park. For all overwintering residents, the one open grocery store ran a tab that could be decreased or increased through one's skill at the regular grocery poker games.<sup>11</sup>

The isolation diminished when the state began plowing the road, but the communal struggle for survival did not. Residents began to realize the potential benefits of winter tourism, calling upon the National Park Service (NPS) as early as 1940 to plow the roads into Yellowstone Park. After World War II, though, they began to adapt to the eternal winter in a new way, taking advantage of the park's unplowed roads. They built "snowplanes," the first motorized vehicles capable of traveling on snow-covered roads in the Yellowstone area. These were loud contraptions consisting of a one- or two-person cab set on three skis (only one in front, for steering), with an airplane engine and propeller mounted on the rear (Figure 3). In January 1949, thirty-five West Yellowstone residents blew into Yellowstone (without ever becoming airborne) on such vehicles.



**Figure 3: Snowplane, 1943.** Snowplanes were the first oversnow motorized vehicles used in Yellowstone, shown here near the park's Norris Geyser Basin area in February 1943. In some places like Norris, geothermal heat warms the ground, melting snow and making steering by ski impossible. The driver of this vehicle solved the problem by retrofitting with small wheels that flipped down to provide steering on the bare road. Courtesy National Park Service, Yellowstone National Park.

They were thus the park's first motorized winter visitors.<sup>12</sup>

In 1955 a new kind of oversnow vehicle joined the snowplanes: the snowcoach.<sup>13</sup> Snowcoaches were larger vehicles made by the Bombardier Company of Quebec, Canada, capable of carrying ten people in a heated interior (Figure 4). Calling them a "good tourist gimmick," West entrepreneurs Harold Young and Bill Nicholls took up to 500 visitors per winter through the park in their snowcoaches in the 1950s, with NPS permission. The modern snowmobile, first mass-produced by Bombardier in 1959, arrived in West four years later to become the third kind of oversnow vehicle touring Yellowstone.

West's creative entrepreneurs promoted winter visitation in other ways, too. For example, in 1964 Young contracted with the Northern Pacific Railroad to bring two tours per week from Chicago into the park. Despite the dawning economic opportunity, though, there were still only a few hotels open in winter in West in 1966.<sup>14</sup>

Events from 1966 to 1971 would prove crucial for the development of Yellowstone's winter tourism and West's snowmobile economy and identity. Ongoing pressure from regional politicians to plow park roads culminated in a congressional hearing on the matter in Jackson Hole,



**Figure 4: Harold Young's Bombardier Snowcoach, 1966.** Harold Young and Bill Nichols of West Yellowstone operated the "Snowmobiles of West Yellowstone:" from 1955 to 1966. Tours on these "good tourist gimmick[s]" were popular, and the men evidently employed some creativity in their vehicle decorations. Courtesy National Park Service, Yellowstone National Park.

Wyoming on August 12, 1967, chaired by U.S. Senator Gale McGee (D-Wyo.). At that hearing, virtually every chamber of commerce in the Greater Yellowstone area (and some from as far away as Utah and Texas) sent a representative or statement in favor of plowing, all reasoning that it would stimulate tourist traffic with consequent economic benefits.<sup>15</sup>

West Yellowstone's Chamber of Commerce statement at that hearing is of particular interest. The day before the hearing, the chamber's board of directors voted against plowing, but changed their mind on the day of the hearing (perhaps to be in sympathy with the other chambers). Howard Kelsey, representing West's chamber, indicated the reason for West's initial position in his testimony:

[Two] years ago ... we had, through the west gate, 994 passengers in the large snowmobiles. ... Only 64 people went

into the park through the west gate on the small machines. ...

Now, this last winter – and I think this is quite significant – there were 4,009 passengers on the large snowmobiles, there were 1,823 on the small snowmobiles, representing a total of 5,332 people that came to West Yellowstone who spent an average of two and a half nights. ...

Now, ... transforming this into dollars and cents, in 1965, the people who came up for snowmobile rides spent \$64,488. This last year they left \$296,000 in the community.

... if ... the roads are plowed, this means that the West Yellowstone snowmobile business is a thing of the past, and it's just starting.

I mean, any time you can take a recreational industry and in 2 years project it five times what it was, it is a pretty important index of what can happen.<sup>16</sup>

Kelsey's statement indicates that, by this time, the realization that a new winter economy was possible was dawning on some town residents. His words would prove to be prophetic.

Between 1968 and 1971, Yellowstone's administrators formalized their park's oversnow policy. Snowmobiles, not automobiles, would be the primary vehicle allowed into the park. Managers reasoned that wildlife would get trapped on the plowed roads, which would resemble linear trenches through the snowscape. Such trenches additionally would be difficult for automobile passengers to see out of, and would trap blowing snow. To foster oversnow visitation, they began grooming the snow-covered roads for smoother touring and allowed their hotelier, the Yellowstone Park Company, to open a lodge at Old Faithful in 1971 (both services continue today). Park managers saw the snowmobile as the solution to the thorny dilemma of how to accommodate winter tourism without incurring the impacts of plowed roads (Figure 5). Snowmobiles allowed people to see the park's wonders, satisfied those pressuring the agency to open the park, and protected it from automobile impacts.<sup>17</sup>

Administrators were swayed by the increasing importance of snowmobile-related income to West residents. Park superintendent John S. McLaughlin told the NPS director in 1967 that "there is considerable sentiment around Idaho Falls and West Yellowstone against further opening....[O]versnow vehicle business is more beneficial for these communities" than plowing roads would be. An internal NPS report from 1968 revealed the park's concern about impacts on West as well: "Who would suffer [from plowed Yellowstone roads]? The townspeople of West Yellowstone who have seen the advantages of oversnow travel in the park, who have encouraged this use, and who have watched the steady growth of travel by this means."<sup>18</sup> Clearly, the snowmobile income West merchants were already realizing was influential in their decision-



**Figure 5: Visitors at Old Faithful, 1971.** Old Faithful has always been the most popular visitor destination in Yellowstone, and winter visitors were no exception. Here a group enjoys an eruption of the famous geyser.

making, just as protecting the park from plowing impacts was.

Town residents took another action in the same era, which also served to develop their economy and identity. Montana state law banned snowmobile use on plowed roads unless an incorporated village passed a law permitting it. West incorporated in 1966 and within two years had passed a resolution allowing snowmobiles on the city's alleys. All city streets (except the two U.S. highways in the town) became legal snowmobile routes in 1973.<sup>19</sup> Clearly, incorporation furthered the town's identity as a snowmobile Mecca.

Thanks to these town and government decisions, the town's new snowmobile economy took off. The first snowmobile rentals in West opened between 1965 and 1970, mostly subsidized by competing manufacturers attempting to develop consumer markets. A measure of how successful the early rentals were comes from the First Security Bank of West Yellowstone, which opened in 1966. President Dean Nelson hoped to build his bank's total footings to \$1 million in two years, but realized that goal in less than three months. Nelson knew that "the winter economy *is* the snowmobile" (emphasis in original), with 75 percent of its economic returns coming from snowmobile rentals. By 1982, the bank's footings had grown to over \$10 million, in part due to other important events soon to follow.<sup>20</sup>

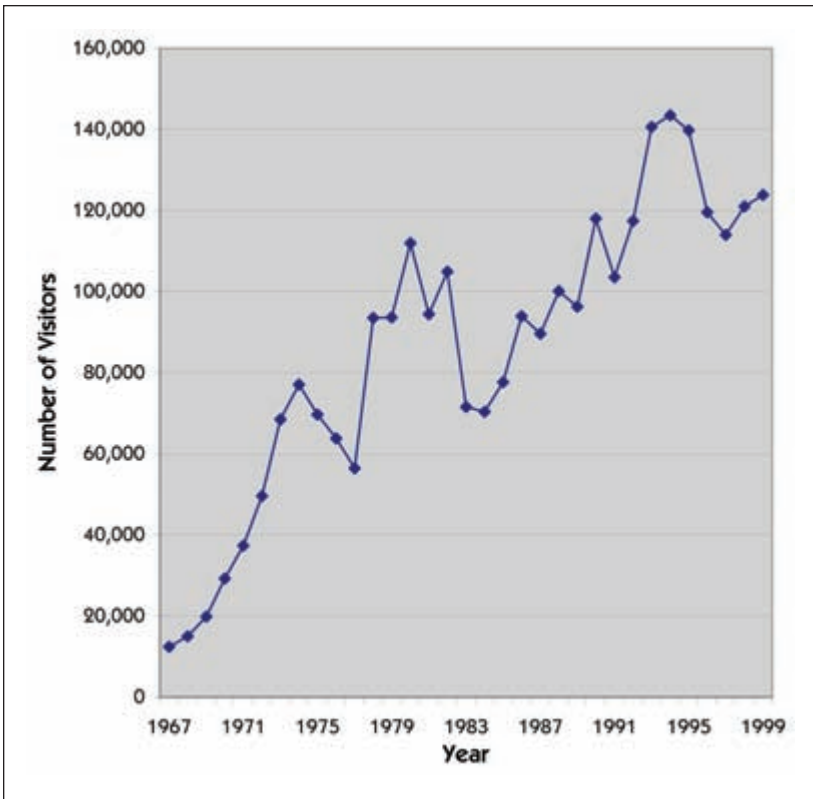


Figure 6. Yellowstone winter visitation, 1967-1999. Source: See note 59.

In the early 1970s, the Big Sky Ski Resort opened fifty miles north of West, bringing thousands of new tourists into the area. Many such skiers took a day off from skiing to tour Yellowstone on rented snowmobiles. Further, the resort attracted guests from all over the country; no longer were local and regional residents the typical winter visitors. By the 1990s, only about a third of Yellowstone's winter visitors were from the three local states, with most visitors coming from the Upper Midwest and the country's more populous states like California, Washington, New York, and Florida.<sup>21</sup> Figure 6 illustrates the exponential growth in Yellowstone's winter tourism in this time period; many of those visitors entered the park through West.

Also, in 1972 the West Snowmobile Club created and began grooming 125 miles of snowmobile trails on U.S. Forest Service land to the west and south of town. These trails, groomed cooperatively with the Forest Service and State of Montana since 1979 and later expanded to 212 miles, continue to be a major draw for West's visitors.<sup>22</sup> They offer access to backcountry areas where off-trail snowmobiling (along with its associated thrills) is allowed, something Yellowstone does not offer. Similarly, manufacturer

improvements in snowmobile reliability facilitated continued growth of West's snowmobile industry in the 1980s.

Another factor instrumental to West's success was advertising emphasizing the new activity's thrill, freedom and independence, along with its masculine prowess, control, and camaraderie. Other ads even compared snowmobilers to modern-day cowboys, clearly drawing upon Old West mythology to promote the vehicles. The advertising was broad-based, also targeting middle-class families who would be attracted to the package tours that West entrepreneurs developed in the early 1970s. Still, most of the advertising emphasized the thrills, freedom, and masculinity of the activity, as it still does today. Bars in town proliferated as well, encouraging some of the same things. Surveys in the 1990s revealed that "having fun" is still a prime motivator to snowmobile, and that 66 percent of Yellowstone's winter visitors are male and younger than all other visitor groups.<sup>23</sup>

By 1983, West's snowmobile-related income employed 426 residents, who staffed twenty-nine hotels, eleven restaurants/bars, thirteen gift shops, six service stations, two lumber or hardware stores, and four real estate agents. Clearly, by that time West's economy no longer slumbered in the long winter; it had arrived. It had become so lucrative that some merchants derived more income in February than in any other month of the year, including the busy summer months.<sup>24</sup>

West's experiences with snowmobiles during this time period, as well as the advertising associated with them, gave the vehicles a rich symbolism. West grew up with snowmobiles, making them an expression of the town's sense of shared hardship and entrepreneurship. Snowmobiling became a cherished part of West's identity, the reason that West residents claimed with pride to be the snowmobile capital of the world. Since snowmobiles made it possible to explore previously closed terrain, they also came to signify independence of mind and the freedom to explore, two symbolisms drawing upon core American values. The machines became to winter what the auto is to the rest of the year. The town's dependence on the machines, however, would soon come to haunt it and park managers.<sup>25</sup>

## Modern Challenges

As the number of winter visitors entering Yellowstone grew throughout the 1980s and 1990s, concerns over those numbers and associated snowmobile impacts multiplied. The growing numbers of snowmobiles created four significant problems that park managers grappled with four times between 1989 and 2004: air pollution, noise pollution, conflicts with other park users, and effects upon wildlife.

The two-cycle snowmobiles used in the park through 2003 mixed oil with gas for combustion, an inherently dirty process. Each snowmobile



**Figure 7: Two-cycle snowmobile air pollution.** The two-cycle snowmobiles in use in Yellowstone through 2003 emitted large amounts of air pollution because they mixed oil with gas for combustion. In this photograph, a cloud of exhaust can be seen hovering over the West Entrance Road. Courtesy National Park Service, Yellowstone National Park.

emitted many times the pollutants of a typical car, with carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxides, and particulates being the pollutants of greatest concern (Figure 7). The large number of snowmobiles entering Yellowstone – an average of 66,619 per winter, peaking over 77,000 in 1992-93 – caused near violations of the federal Clean Air Act at the west entrance by West Yellowstone in the late 1990s.<sup>26</sup>

Two-cycle snowmobiles also produced high levels of noise. A 2000 study found that Old Faithful visitors could not escape snowmobile noise during the daylight hours, and backcountry skiers frequently reported hearing snowmobile noise as far as ten or even fifteen miles from the closest road.<sup>27</sup> Snowmobiles, then, disturbed the park's winter silence.

Noise and air pollution problems led to conflicts with other park users, notably cross-country skiers and snowshoers, who generally desire quiet conditions. By the mid-1990s, more than a hundred park visitors sent written complaints annually to Yellowstone administrators. Some of the letter writers and local environmentalists claimed to have been displaced from Yellowstone by snowmobile noise and air pollution.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, snowmobiles and other oversnow vehicles, by using hard-packed roads, had conflicts with wildlife. Park bison learned that such hard-packed roads presented energy-efficient travel routes and consequently used them at times to travel from one grazing area to another. This habit brought them into conflict with snowmobilers attempting to pass them: The loud machines would at times frighten them off the road, a conflict that led to concerns about snowmobile effects on bison health, numbers, behavior, and distribution. Research into this problem produced

conflicting results until 2005 when a massive study on the issue attempted to resolve the confusion. That study suggested that snowmobile use began and grew at the same time that bison populations were naturally growing within the park. Had hard-packed snowmobile routes not existed, the growing bison population would have expanded its range anyway via natural bison corridors. The groomed roads facilitated that expansion but did not alone make it possible (although one road segment might have).<sup>29</sup> Still, the obvious conflicts witnessed by park visitors and illustrated in the media produced great concern among people interested in this issue. Moreover, such conflicts led to a key lawsuit against the NPS, filed in 1997 (see below).

Most of these issues first surfaced in the 1970s, but magnified with the increasing numbers of snowmobiles in the 1980s and 90s.<sup>30</sup> Yellowstone Superintendent Bob Barbee first attempted to address them in the 1990 *Winter Use Plan Environmental Assessment*. This plan was a comprehensive summary of the existing policies that directed the park's winter management; it made few changes therein. Park staff felt the plan did not adequately address the growing concerns with winter use, but felt they needed an altered political climate and additional funding to make major changes. Through the mid-1990s, managers continued to express concerns about snowmobile impacts, and completed the second planning effort, a collection of some relevant research that reinforced earlier conclusions on noise, air pollution, and visitor and wildlife impacts.<sup>31</sup>

West Yellowstone merchants, watching their livelihood being questioned, began to take what steps they could to solve the air and noise problems (the two most persistent concerns at the time). Service station owners there began selling ethanol in December 1997, which slightly reduced carbon monoxide and particulate emissions by burning more cleanly. More importantly, between 1996 and 2000 snowmobile manufacturers and mechanics (including West resident Ron Gatheridge) unveiled four different cleaner and quieter snowmobile prototypes. Most of these machines reduced emissions and noise by using four-cycle engines, similar to those used in automobiles. Manufacturers marketed some of these models in fall 2000, with some West entrepreneurs acquiring them for rental the following winter.<sup>32</sup>

Natural and social events then combined to produce the first of two climaxes in the extraordinary winter of 1996-97. Near record snowfall combined with unusual winter rain to produce an icy snowpack that was impervious to even the largest bison. To obtain food, the bison began migrating out of the park (partly using the snowmobile roads) in search of lower elevations and grass with less snow cover. Some of the bison carry brucellosis, a disease that, if transmitted to cattle, can cause an expectant cow to abort its fetus (the disease is fairly harmless in bison). To prevent that transmission from occurring when they came into cattle

range outside the park (along with associated negative economic and political consequences), the state of Montana shot or sent to slaughter 1,084 bison by spring 1997. This number represented about a fourth of the park's herd and was the largest control of bison departing Yellowstone in its history.<sup>33</sup>

Yellowstone's bison are the only U.S. herd that has continuously ranged freely in the wild. Their numbers dropped to only 23 before the U.S. Army (administering Yellowstone before 1918) and early conservationists saved them through eleventh-hour efforts around 1900. Today they are powerful symbols of nature's wildness and of the wisdom of conservation. Seeing them slaughtered called to mind the guilt feelings that many Americans still have over the national nineteenth century slaughter and motivated them to protest the killing and its perceived cause: snowmobiling.<sup>34</sup> The Fund for Animals, a wildlife advocacy group, led the way with a lawsuit in May 1997 alleging that the NPS had failed to follow its "Organic Act" and several other laws regulating park management when the agency developed its winter visitation program. The Service settled out of court by agreeing to write a new Winter Use Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).<sup>35</sup>

As this third planning process unfolded, park managers initially proposed plowing the road from West to Old Faithful. Yellowstone's superintendent at that time, Mike Finley, saw this as a way to weaken the snowmobile industry's influence on park policy-making, but found little support for the idea, even in the environmental community. Because he linked that proposal with continued snowmobile use elsewhere in the park, Bozeman's Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC), an influential regional environmental group, instead developed its own EIS alternative, the "Citizen's Solution for Winter Access to Yellowstone," which proposed to ban snowmobiles entirely and restrict winter traffic to snowcoaches with no additional plowing (this was very similar to Alternative G of the Draft EIS). When the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced in February 2000 that all EIS alternatives except G would fail to protect Yellowstone's air quality, Finley found more support for a snowmobile ban from the Clinton administration. People commenting upon the EIS lent further support, as a majority favored a snowmobile ban. By spring 2000, Finley had formally proposed banning snowmobiles from the park by adopting Alternative G, but the final decision would wait until late that fall.<sup>36</sup>

By this time, West's position as the Snowmobile Capital of the World was secure. Winter visitors spent around \$18 million in the community annually, finding almost 1,500 motel rooms available for their use, including many national chains such as Holiday Inn and Ramada Inn. A third of the park's winter visitors entered through West on 70 percent of the total number of park snowmobiles. As much as 85 percent of the town's winter economy was based on snowmobiling tourism, with as

many as 1,400 snowmobiles available for daily rental.<sup>37</sup> Clearly, a ban on snowmobiling in Yellowstone threatened not only West's economy, but also the town's very identity (according to some, at least).

Some in the West and the region responded predictably to the proposed ban. Glen Loomis, owner of a snowmobile rental, responded by saying that banning snowmobiles was akin to "a meteor falling on West Yellowstone." Gallatin County (in which West Yellowstone sits) joined with the four other regional counties in developing another EIS alternative that guaranteed continued snowmobile use of Yellowstone, by cleaner and quieter snowmobiles. Finally, Montana and Wyoming politicians responded by introducing riders on the Interior Department appropriations bills that would overthrow the NPS's decision (the riders were not successful) and by holding a field hearing to probe the reasoning behind the possible ban.<sup>38</sup>

But other West residents responded differently. Jackie Matthews, a fly-fishing store owner there, felt that "Yellowstone National Park is not responsible for providing us an income," and encouraged townspeople to look at other alternatives. Another town resident, Doug Edgerton, joined with her to argue that banning snowmobiles from Yellowstone would present a significant economic *opportunity* for the town, since merchants there could then become the exclusive providers of Yellowstone winter tours (few people own a snowcoach, so visitors would have to tour the park on vehicles owned by West merchants). Edgerton later traveled with two other West business owners to Washington, D.C., to deliver a petition containing the signatures of 150 town residents advocating the removal of snowmobiles from Yellowstone. The petition noted that a healthy economy in West depended upon a healthy ecology in Yellowstone, and "West Yellowstone is a resilient community able to adapt and take advantage of changes."<sup>39</sup>

Divisions among West residents over the issue ran deep. In 2001 town voters again revealed such conflict in a referendum intended to implement a town snowmobile curfew between the hours of 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. It lost by six votes, 149 to 143. The split in the town is emotional, too. Supporters of snowmobiling have at times ostracized or harassed those who oppose the activity's continuation.<sup>40</sup>

Still, despite the division, those in favor of snowmobile use dominated the discussion in town. A small group of men owned a large portion of the snowmobile-dependent businesses there, and often spoke out to defend their livelihoods. These men had significant personal efforts, investments, and paid staff to protect. For example, Clyde Seely has lived in West since 1958, and has promoted snowmobile tourism since 1970. In part through these efforts, he built or acquired numerous properties, including the largest motel in town (the Holiday Inn) and a fleet of 275 rental snowmobiles (also the largest in town, originally opened in 1971) and several other properties. Seely understandably takes some credit for

developing the town and its economy, along with his business partner Bill Howell and friend Glen Loomis.<sup>41</sup>

Local snowmobile boosters, however, increasingly found the voices of industry speaking louder. Between 1995 and 2003, corporations from Texas and South Dakota opened four new state-of-the-art hotels in town, forcing many local hotel owners to update theirs.<sup>42</sup> Such recent investments reveal the year-round strength of West's economy and introduced industry representation to the controversy's table. As events would soon reveal, the snowmobile industry and its advocacy groups would come to play an even larger role in the snowmobile controversy than the lodging industry.

Environmental groups have also taken increasing interest in the issue. For example, the Bluewater Network, a national environmental organization, formally requested the NPS in early 1999 to ban snowmobiles from all U.S. national parks. After studying the matter and surveying those areas that allow snowmobiling, NPS and Interior authorities confessed "years of inattention to our own regulatory standards on snowmobiles" and then proposed banning them from all national parks except the Alaskan national parks, Voyageurs National Park, and Yellowstone/Grand Teton in April 2000, which were exempted because they either had snowmobiling factored into their charters as a traditional use or, in Yellowstone's case, were already dealing with the issue in a formal manner.<sup>43</sup> Despite these intentions, the NPS backed off from its proposed ban after the George W. Bush administration took office.<sup>44</sup>

Once the Florida election events had played out in fall 2000, Yellowstone administrators realized they would soon be facing a dramatically different political climate. In the final weeks and hours before George W. Bush's inauguration, they went to great lengths to publish the regulations implementing the snowmobile ban. They were published on January 22, 2001, the last Clinton regulations to be published. The Bush administration put them on hold one week later, and the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association (ISMA, the primary trade group for the industry) challenged them in court at about the same time. Under the new administration, the Department of Justice, which represents National Park Service lawsuits, never consulted with Yellowstone Superintendent Mike Finley in that lawsuit. Instead, it settled with the ISMA in June 2001 by agreeing to have the NPS write a Supplemental EIS that would focus on the air and noise impacts of new four-cycle snowmobiles, which became commercially available after the previous study ended (this, then, initiated the fourth planning effort).<sup>45</sup>

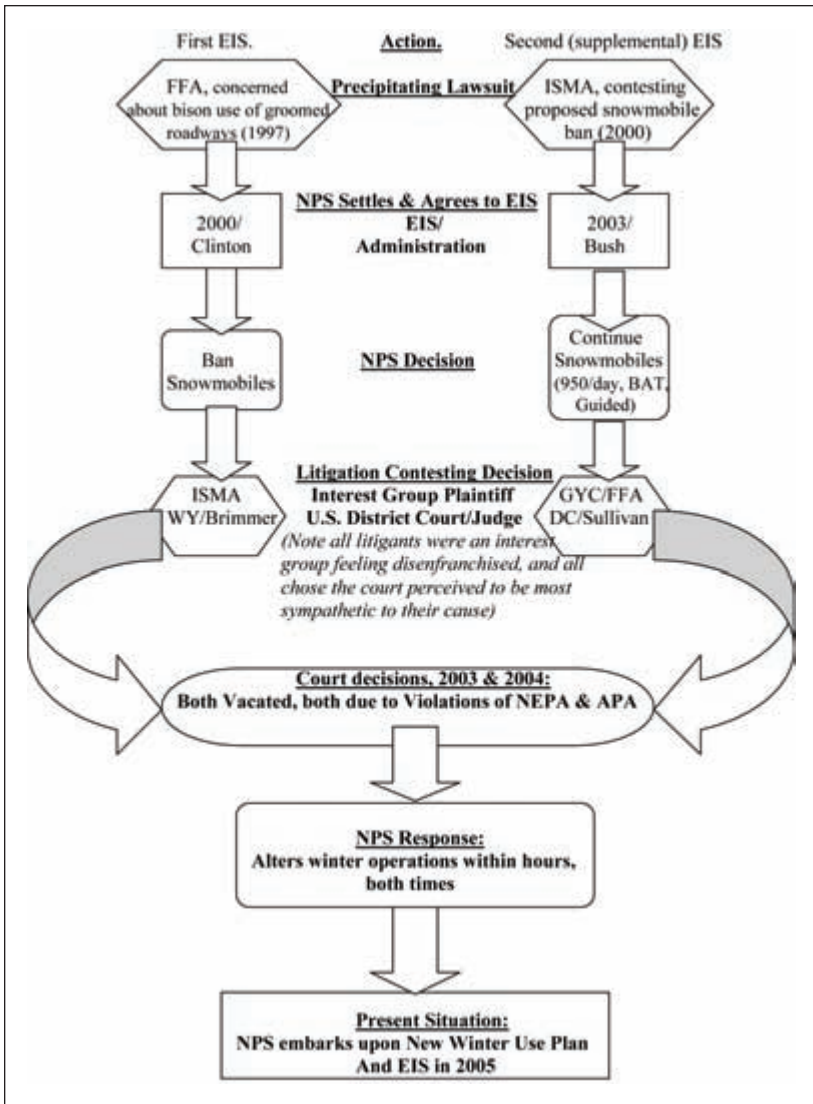
Note that the ISMA lawsuit came from a national industry trade group rather than the West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce, who was asked to join the suit, but declined, knowing town residents were divided on the issue.<sup>46</sup> Certainly, snowmobiling in Yellowstone was by this time no longer an issue of importance only to West and the park. The issue

had acquired national prominence, making the industry fear that loss of snowmobile access to Yellowstone would result in diminished access to other national parks and federal lands across the country. The snowmobile advocacy group BlueRibbon Coalition, which receives funding from the ISMA and many other snowmobile groups, repeatedly articulated this concern, and also joined the ISMA in its suit against the NPS.<sup>47</sup>

In 2003, Yellowstone's new Superintendent Suzanne Lewis announced the results of the Supplemental EIS: snowmobile use would continue under three conditions. First, the agency would restrict the number of snowmobiles allowed into the park to approximate average daily usage (for example, 550 daily from West). Second, all machines would have to use "best available technology," which uses four-cycle engines to reduce air and noise emissions. Finally, all visitors touring the park on snowmobile would have to be guided, primarily to ease the wildlife concerns.<sup>48</sup> Such restrictions went against the majority commenter opinion on the SEIS, which saw more than 300,000 people from all 50 states file comments, 80 percent of them favoring a snowmobile ban. Even among the three local states, the majority opinion still favored snowmobile elimination by about the same percentage. Still, EISs are not put to a vote; rather, federal managers must consider the substantive comments raised by the public. They claim that they did address the major concerns.<sup>49</sup>

As mentioned in the introduction, the second climax came in the winter of 2003-04, when two different federal judges struck down both EISs. In short order, the two different federal judges ruled that both EISs violated the same laws, the National Environmental Policy Act and the Administrative Procedures Act. The judges ruled on two different lawsuits, each filed by that interest group feeling most disenfranchised by an NPS decision; in both cases, those interest groups chose that court venue perceived to be most sympathetic to their cause. Environmentalists contested the Bush administration's Supplemental EIS allowing continued snowmobile use in the park, while ISMA and the BlueRibbon Coalition contested the Clinton administration's EIS proposing to ban the machines (see Figure 8 for a schematic flow chart of these two EIS histories). Both judges argued that the EIS they struck down was a change in federal policy so abrupt that it was not adequately justified in the relevant EIS, with Judge Sullivan also specifically noting that the decision to do a Supplement EIS was "conspicuously timed with the change in administrations."<sup>50</sup>

With both EISs overturned, park authorities were unsure what rules would regulate winter visitation, making future winter visitation to Yellowstone uncertain at best. Consequently, in late 2004 they released temporary rules to guide such visitation for the next three winters. During that time period, they plan to prepare yet another EIS on the issue, which will result in permanent rules that address the deficiencies of the previous two decisions (this, then, will be the *fifth* planning effort on this issue).



**Figure 8.** Schematic history of the two Yellowstone snowmobile EISs. Abbreviations are as follows: APA-Administrative Procedures Act; BAT-Best Available Technology; EIS-Environmental Impact Statement; FFA-Fund for Animals; GYC-Greater Yellowstone Coalition; ISMA-International Snowmobile Manufacturer's Association; NEPA-National Environmental Policy Act; SEIS-Supplemental EIS.

The temporary rules were immediately litigated by still another industry group, the Wyoming Lodging and Restaurant Association, upset over the drop in business that its members in the Jackson Hole area had suffered. The Greater Yellowstone Coalition and Fund for Animals also filed motions or suits contesting the temporary rules.<sup>51</sup> Again, West Yellowstone did not join any suits, and it again, like the NPS, seemed to

be caught in the middle between competing interest groups.

Political involvement continued on several fronts as well. In the U.S. Senate, Montana Senator Conrad Burns inserted riders into the Interior Appropriations bills in 2004 and 2005 mandating that the temporary rules be operational for the upcoming winters, thereby circumventing other last-minute judicial decisions while ensuring some certainty for local businesses and continued snowmobile access. In the U.S. House, Denny Rehberg of Montana helped persuade his fellow representatives to defeat two different bills introduced by eastern Congressmen (in 2003 and 2004) that would have banned snowmobiles in Yellowstone. And in the executive branch, Interior Secretary Gale Norton paid a personal visit to Yellowstone in February 2005, to promote snowmobiling, as she had done in the press already. Primarily touring by snowmobile, she took a five-mile ride in a snowcoach just developed by West Yellowstone entrepreneur Randy Roberson, pronouncing it “not as special as a snowmobile,” and “a much more ordinary kind of experience.” Clearly, Yellowstone administrators operated under a political microscope, as did the business operators in West Yellowstone, who saw park snowmobile use remain flat that winter, at about 33 percent of historic usage.<sup>52</sup>

As of this writing, the controversy continues on some fronts, while other fronts seem to be pointed toward resolution. The two federal judges are still duking out their conflicting decisions, both of which have been appealed. All parties seem to be tiring of the fight, however, lending momentum toward a potential compromise, which two different signs suggest is possible. First, recognizing that the various interest groups involved in the issue are indeed major players, Yellowstone’s administrators hired a neutral facilitator to more effectively consult and engage them as it began the new EIS and permanent decision-making. Although the results of the facilitator’s efforts are unknown as of this writing, the agency’s decision clearly suggests the power that such interests have come to wield in this issue. A second sign of a thaw in the debate is that the winter of 2004-05 and 2005-06 saw quiet, orderly, clean, and generally delightful touring conditions, thanks to continued reduced snowmobile numbers and mandatory usage of professional guides and best available technology (BAT) machines. The winter suggests that a compromise may be visible, one allowing continued, but further reduced numbers of BAT, guided machines and increased snowcoach usage – a solution that could preserve West Yellowstone’s economic and historic integrity while protecting park resources. Time will tell, of course, whether all parties, including the increasingly powerful ones, will concur.<sup>53</sup>

## Discussion

“Collaborative conservation” is promoted by a variety of authors as a means of making stronger decisions in federal land management by

empowering local residents and concerned stakeholders. In addressing the concerns of all as much as possible, fewer interest groups are tempted to contest final decisions through litigation or protests. Collaborative conservation efforts have become common in the West, with several successful examples such as the well-known Quincy Library Group of Quincy, California. While most of these actions have involved U.S. Forest Service lands, Interior Secretary Gale Norton has directed national park managers to embrace her idea of "communication, consultation and cooperation, all in the service of conservation," a vision very similar to collaborative conservation. Although those involved in Yellowstone's snowmobile history might not have seen it as collaborative conservation, it arguably exemplifies some collaborative principles in that different parties worked together toward a common goal that addressed mutual concerns, at least in the first half of the story.<sup>54</sup>

As such, the snowmobile story demonstrates some successes. Throughout its history, both the National Park Service and West Yellowstone have been crucial in defining the winter visitor experience. Yellowstone Park staff and town residents have had a long, evolving relationship that reflected their basic humanity; the relationship has wandered from support to distrust, from collaboration to shouting, and back again. Most constructive have been the periods of support and collaboration, but growth and learning occurred during the difficult times as well. Snowmobiles in West Yellowstone today support a thriving winter economy and have become nearly synonymous with the town, a part of its identity. In winter, the visitor can enjoy the fabulous sights and experiences of Yellowstone thanks to the various snow vehicles traveling the park's snow-covered roads.

However, failures are also evident. Local residents developed their economy under the assumption that Yellowstone could accommodate unlimited numbers of snowmobiles. Not realizing that nature and the paucity of open winter park facilities could only handle a limited number of machines before snowmobile noise, air pollution, crowding, and wildlife impacts became overly distracting (Figure 9), a tragedy of the commons ensued as some local merchants squeezed as many machines into the park as possible. Faced with real limits for the first time, some in the town seemed reluctant to embrace new modes of transportation and entrepreneurial thinking. Seely and his partners desired continued snowmobile access, not recognizing the growing tragedy. In placing all their eggs in the snowmobile basket, they illustrate that collaboration is only as effective as the vision of its participants.<sup>55</sup>

Increasingly evident in this story is the influence and power that industry, its advocacy groups, and certain politicians bring to national park management and collaborative conservation efforts. The snowmobile industry has made winter tourism in Yellowstone possible, and helped to remake the face of West Yellowstone. It now has large investments



**Figure 9: Snowmobiles parked behind Old Faithful Inn, late 1990s.** By the mid-1990s, such crowded scenes became commonplace at Old Faithful, the destination of a majority of Yellowstone's winter visitors. Peak days, usually on President's Day weekend, would see around 1,800 snowmobiles enter the park, with around 1,300 from West Yellowstone. Photo by the author.

to protect and, with the BlueRibbon Coalition, believes that access to Yellowstone confers an implied legitimacy on other federal lands. The two have gone to great lengths to protect all of those, and politicians like Gale Norton have shown a clear desire to cooperate. Their actions may be viewed by some as manipulation of both West and the park for industry and political purposes, placing them at odds with the needs of park managers and at least some local residents. West and the park are to some degree pawns in industry's larger quest for legitimacy and power.

This study, then, provides specific evidence that the NPS is highly, and increasingly, politicized, an assertion made by several ex-NPS directors and independent scholars. Park managers are more and more constrained in their decision-making by the pro-industry atmospheres created by certain politicians, as are the local residents involved in collaborative decision-making models. As such, the story also conflicts with the assertions of well-known NPS critic Alston Chase, who in 1987 accused the agency of being captured by environmentalists, whom he alleges assert a quasi-religious management philosophy that eschews rational science findings. The snowmobile story suggests instead that environmentalists have not so much captured the National Park Service as have some politicians and industry, especially when existing forms of public access and economic enhancement are threatened.<sup>56</sup>

Who, then, are the victims and who are the victors in Yellowstone's

snowmobile management? This story certainly suggests that the National Park Service is as much a victim as some merchants in West are, because it is similarly caught in the middle between opposing interest groups. But both the NPS and some West merchants enjoy some victory as well. The NPS has succeeded in at least partially restricting snowmobile use, which protects park resources more than the near free-for-all that prevailed prior to 2003. And West merchants have succeeded in developing an active year-round economy based upon snowmobiling and other forms of Yellowstone winter touring. While recent decisions threaten that economy somewhat, the assurance that Yellowstone will remain open for some form of winter tourism suggests that some income will continue to flow in the town.

Today, all West residents face a choice that gateway community scholars state often comes before such towns: either become a faceless resort community subject to the whims of a single industry or, using the input of all local interests and by partnering with the adjacent federal agencies, develop a unique gateway community built upon its special natural and cultural resources. Between the town's legacies of railroad and oversnow vehicles and its proximity to Yellowstone's natural resources, it has no shortage of distinctive heritages to emphasize. Similarly, its collaborative history with Yellowstone and Forest Service managers suggests it has the ability to partner with them in envisioning a creative future. Challenging the town's ability to move in that direction, however, is its dominance by snowmobile advocates. Only the future will tell whether those voices allow others to be heard and to cooperatively pilot the town toward a new, more sustainable future.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, the snowmobile story suggests another possible victim: all people. If, as celebrated landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and legal scholar Joseph Sax argue, national parks are places of contemplative, reflective recreation for all peoples, the efforts by industry and politicians to override the desires of both the NPS and the public in Yellowstone's winter use management threaten to disenfranchise those same people.<sup>58</sup> Although national park management has certainly victimized some constituents at times, this story suggests that industry and its complicit politicians may make victims of us all by expropriating gateway communities, the public, and even the NPS itself from national park decision-making.

## Notes

1. *Fund for Animals et al. v. Gale Norton et al., and Greater Yellowstone Coalition, et al. v. Gale Norton, et al.*, Dec. 23, 2003, Civil Action #02-2367, Memorandum Opinion, 294 *F. Supp. 2d* 92 (D.D.C. 2003).
2. *ISMA et al. and State of Wyoming v. Gale Norton et al. and Greater Yellowstone Coalition et al.*, Feb. 10, 2004, Civil Action #00-CV-229-B, Order, 304 *F. Supp. 2d* 1278, 1293 (D. Wyo. 2004), 21-29.
3. Effects of Sullivan's decision from Scott McMillion, "Park snowmobile visits plunge," *Bozeman*

- (Mont.) *Daily Chronicle* (hereinafter *BDC*), Feb. 4, 2004; and Steve Lipsher, "The brink of beauty, the edge of ruin," *Denver Post*, Jan. 11, 2004.
4. Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Louis S. Warren, *The Hunter's Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth-Century America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).
  5. Lary M. Dilsaver and William C. Tweed, *Challenge of the Big Trees: A Resource History of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* (Three Rivers, CA: Sequoia Natural History Association, Inc., 1990); and C.W. Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1983).
  6. Roger Koopman, "Snowmobile flap is the real air pollution in Yellowstone," *BDC*, Feb. 21, 2003, and Clyde Seely, "Park plan must include preservation, access, and economics," *BDC*, March 27, 2004.
  7. Gary E. Machlis and Donald R. Field, eds., *National Parks and Rural Development: Practice and Policy in the United States* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2000); Dennis Glick and Ben Alexander, "Development by Default, Not Design: Yellowstone National Park and the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem," in Machlis and Field, 2000; Paul F.J. Eagles and Stephen F. McCool, *Tourism in National Parks and Protected Areas: Planning and Management* (Wallingford, Oxon, UK: CABI Publishing, 2002); Thomas Michael Power, *Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies: the Search for a Value of Place* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1996); and Jim Howe, Ed McMahon, and Luther Propst, *Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1997).
  8. Ross E. Mitchell, "Community Perspectives in Sustainable Tourism: Lessons from Peru," in Stephen F. McCool and R. Neil Moisey, eds., *Tourism, Recreation and Sustainability: Linking Culture and the Environment* (Wallingford, Oxon, UK: CABI Publishing, 2001) (quote p. 158).
  9. Richard A. Bartlett, *Yellowstone: A Wilderness Besieged* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), 63; Janet Cronin and Dorothy Vick, *Montana's Gallatin Canyon* (Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1992), 58-59; Mary Shivers Culpin, "The History of the Construction of the Road System in Yellowstone National Park, 1872-1966," Historic Resource Study Vol. 1, Yellowstone National Park Library; and Aubrey L. Haines, *The Yellowstone Story: A History of Our First National Park*, rev. ed., (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1996), 2:314. Note that a lengthier road connected the two towns via Ennis, Montana, early on.
  10. In fact, Yellowstone's Riverside Ranger Station, about a mile inside the park from West, held the country's all-time recorded low temperature (outside of Alaska) for 21 years: -66° F. (Frank H. Anderson to Superintendent, January 31, 1949, loose file in Box N-158, Yellowstone National Park Archives, Yellowstone National Park Heritage & Research Center, Old Yellowstone Trail S, Gardiner, MT 59030 (hereinafter *YNPA*)). The -66° record stood from 1933 to 1954, when it was displaced by a -72° reading at Rogers Pass, Montana.
  11. David Warner, "West Yellowstone: Those Good, Bad Old-Time Winters," *Montana Magazine*, 57 (Jan.-Feb., 1983), 9-11.
  12. Arno Cammerer to Senator Joseph O'Mahoney, Feb. 8, 1940, in File "868 Winter Sports," Box L-46, *YNPA*, and Michael J. Yochim, "Snowplanes, Snowcoaches and Snowmobiles: The Decision to Allow Snowmobiles into Yellowstone National Park," *Wyoming Annals* 70 (Summer 1998), 6-23.
  13. Snowcoaches were known until the mid-1960s as snowmobiles, and as "big snowmobiles" until the mid-1980s, when the "snowcoach" label was coined.
  14. Yochim, "Snowplanes, Snowcoaches and Snowmobiles," 13, and George Remington, "West Yellowstone Plans Projects To Make Area Big Winter Resort," *Livingston (Mont.) Enterprise*, Feb. 3, 1966. The Northern Pacific's nearest terminal was in Bozeman, MT. Snowplanes were banned from the park in the early 1970s due to concerns over their unshielded propellers.
  15. Yochim, "Snowplanes, Snowcoaches and Snowmobiles," 7-16, and Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, on Winter Operation of Roads in Yellowstone National Park*, Ninetieth Congress, Second Session, 1968.
  16. *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.
  17. Yochim, "Snowplanes, Snowcoaches and Snowmobiles," 17-22; and Dick Ludewig, former Director of Marketing and Sales for the Yellowstone Park Company, personal interview by

- author, Mammoth Hot Springs, July 2, 2005.
18. John S. McLaughlin to Director, July 6, 1967, in File "D30: Roads & Trails 1967 – Winter Travel in Yellowstone," Box D-166, and "Disadvantages to Winter Road Opening – Yellowstone;" in File "D30: Roads & Trails 1968 – Winter Travel in Yell. Snow Removal," Box D-164, both at YNPA.
19. Town council minutes of council meetings for dates Nov. 16, 1966; Nov. 14, 1967; Jan. 4, 1968; Oct. 8, 1968; and Dec. 20, 1973; and Town of West Yellowstone Resolutions 38 (December 1968) and 62 (Dec. 20, 1973), all at the Yellowstone Historic Center archives, West Yellowstone, MT; Paul Shea, archivist, Yellowstone Historic Center, personal communication with author, e-mail, July 15, 2005.
20. Darcy L. Fawcett, "Colonial Status: The Search for Independence in West Yellowstone, Montana," (professional paper, Montana State University, 1993), 21, 27 (source of quote), and Calvin W. Dunbar, "Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands and National Parks," [May 1983], "Winter Use Plan EA" Box, Loose, Management Assistant's Office Files, National Park Service, Yellowstone National Park (hereinafter MAOF).
21. Phyllis Smith, *Bozeman and the Gallatin Valley: A History* (Helena, MT: Two Dot Press, 1996), 290-292, and Margaret Littlejohn, *Yellowstone National Park Visitor Study*, 1996 (University of Idaho Visitor Services Project Report 75, Cooperative Park Studies Unit, Moscow, ID), 9, MAOF. Note that the Jackson Hole, WY, ski resort opened at about the same time, further boosting Yellowstone's winter tourism.
22. Jean Arthur Sellegren, "Blue Haze: Multi-Use Issues Come to a Head in the Land of the Buffalo," *Backcountry* (January 1996), 52-54.
23. Advertising and package tour from Fawcett, 21-27; other snowmobile ads or pictures featured in these *BDC* articles: Nov. 20, 1997; Jan. 11, 1998; March 11, 1998; and March 18, 2000. Camaraderie also mentioned in McMillion, "West Yellowstone packs 'em in for the ... Snowmobile Expo," *BDC*, March 18, 2000. Bar information from John Miller, "West Yellowstone: Montana's biggest little town," *BDC*, February 28, 1999. "Having fun" from James T. Sylvester and Marlene Nesary, "Snowmobiling in Montana: An Update," *Montana Business Quarterly* (Winter 1994), 3-8 (quote from p. 7). Male statistic in U.S. Dept. of the Interior/National Park Service, *Winter Use Plan Environmental Impact Statement*, 2000, 1:91. Youth statistic in Littlejohn, *Yellowstone National Park Visitor Study*, 1996, A-1.
24. Dunbar, "Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands and National Parks," [May 1983], and Darryl Harris, "Winter Season Extension Needed At Yellowstone," *Snowmobile West* (September 1985), 63-64.
25. James A. Jurale, "History of Winter Use in Yellowstone National Park," (master's thesis, University of Wyoming, 1986), 135. See also Randy Roberson, "Data supports continued use of snowmobiles in park," *BDC*, Nov. 5, 1999.
26. Scott McMillion, "Snowmobiles 'Extremely Dirty,'" *BDC*, January 9, 1994; U.S. Department of the Interior-National Park Service, "Air Quality Concerns Related to Snowmobile Usage in National Parks," (unpublished report), February 2000, 1-2, MAOF; and "Ambient Air Quality Study Results, West Entrance Station, Yellowstone National Park, Winter 1995," (unpublished report), MAOF.
27. Greater Yellowstone Coalition, "Yellowstone National Park Sound Survey," President's Day Weekend, 2000, File "Greater Yellowstone Coalition," MAOF; and Michael J. Yochim, "The Development of Snowmobile Policy in Yellowstone National Park," (master's thesis, University of Montana, 1998), 140.
28. Greater Yellowstone Winter Visitor Use Management Working Group (G. Yell. WVUM Group), *Winter Visitor Use Management: A Multi-Agency Assessment*, March 1999, 9-12; Hope Sieck, "West Yellowstone Business Owners Go to Washington, D.C.," *Greater Yellowstone Report* 17 (Summer, 2000), 22 (the quarterly journal of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, P.O. Box 1874, Bozeman, MT 59771); David Cowan, "Yellowstone Park: Speedway or Sanctuary?" *Greater Yellowstone Report* 14 (Fall, 1997), 1; and Robin Heyer, "When snowmobiles are banned, more skiers will come," *BDC*, Dec. 31, 2000.
29. See Mary Meagher, "Winter-recreation induced changes in bison numbers and distribution in Yellowstone National Park," 1993, Unpublished Report, MAOF; Daniel D. Bjornlie and Robert A. Garrett, "Effects of Winter Road Grooming on Bison in Yellowstone National Park," *Journal of Wildlife Management* 65 (2001), 560-572; and C. Cormack Gates, Brad Stelfox, Tyler Muhly, Tom Chowns, and Robert J. Hudson, "The Ecology of Bison Movements and Distribution in and Beyond Yellowstone National Park: A Critical Review with Implications for Winter Use and Transboundary Population Management," April 2005, available at

- <http://www.nps.gov/yell/technical/planning/gates/index.htm> (accessed on June 16, 2005).
30. When these concerns first surfaced in the 1970s, Superintendent Anderson attempted to address them. In short, remedies to noise and air pollution were out of his control, and his research biologist Glen Cole found that snowmobiles and their noise did not displace wildlife. See Yochim, "The Development of Snowmobile Policy," 67-75.
  31. UDSI/NPS, *Winter Use Plan Environmental Assessment*, December 1990; Yochim, "The Development of Snowmobile Policy," thesis, p. 144; and Chris Turk, personal interview by author, Denver, Colo., June 4, 2003. Second planning effort in G. Yell. WVUM Group, *Winter Visitor Use Management*, 9-12.
  32. "Marketing gasohol in West Y. a savvy move," *BDC*, December 11, 1997; Scott McMillion, "Clean Machine," *BDC*, March 1, 1996; McMillion, "Lean, Mean, and Green Machine," *BDC*, March 20, 1996; "In search of a clean ... machine," *BDC*, February 25, 2000 (abbreviation, emphasis, and ellipses in originals as quoted).
  33. Doug Peacock, "The Yellowstone Massacre," *Audubon* 99 (May/June 1997), 42.
  34. See Paul Schullery, *Yellowstone's Ski Pioneers* (Worland, WY, High Plains Publishing Company, 1995), for a heartening account of these early conservation efforts. The ideas on their symbolic values and the guilt idea are from Dave Price and Paul Schullery, "The Bison of Yellowstone: The Challenge of Conservation," *Bison World* (Nov/Dec. 1993), 18-23.
  35. *Fund for Animals et al v. Bruce Babbitt et al*, May 20, 1997, and Settlement Agreement, *The Fund for Animals, et al., v. Bruce Babbitt et al.*, Civil No. 97-1126 (EGS), Sept. 23, 1997, U.S. District Court, District of Columbia, MAOF.
  36. Michael V. Finley, telephone interview by author, June 24, 2003; Ron Tschida, "Enviros offer plan to limit Yellowstone snowmobiles," *BDC*, Oct. 13, 1999 (Under National Environmental Policy Act regulations, citizens are allowed to develop their own management alternatives for federal agencies to consider); Scott McMillion, "Winter use plan: EPA gives cold shoulder to all options but snowmobile ban," *BDC*, Feb. 24, 2000; and McMillion, "Snowmobiles in Yellowstone may well become ... A vanishing breed" (ellipses in original), *BDC*, Mar. 14, 2000. Public comment summary and release of final decision from National Park Service, "Executive Summary" [of public comments], undated, MAOF; and USDI/NPS (Intermountain Regional Director Karen Wade), "Record of Decision: Winter Use Plans for the Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks and John D. Rockefeller Jr., Memorial Parkway," Nov. 22, 2000, 11-15, MAOF.
  37. West Yellowstone Chamber, "Sleep," available at <http://westyellowstonechamber.com/lodging/index.htm>, accessed on June 16, 2005; National Park Service, *Winter Use Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement Volumes 1 & 2*, ("Winter Use Plan Draft EIS"), July, 1999, 1:198, and Sellegren, 54.
  38. Meteor quote from McMillion, "Snowmobiles in Yellowstone may well become ... A vanishing breed," *BDC*, Mar. 14, 2000; Will Rizzo, "Counties agree on Yellowstone winter use plan," *Livingston Enterprise*, Sept. 17, 1999; Todd Wilkinson, "Politicians play fast and loose with the law," *BDC*, Mar. 28, 2000, and Michael Milstein, "Winter debate over park use turns political," *Billings (Mont.) Gazette*, March 25, 2000.
  39. Matthews quote in Ron Tschida, "Enviros offer plan to limit Yellowstone snowmobiles," *BDC*, Oct. 13, 1999; Doug Edgerton, "Snowplowing plan could actually benefit West Y.," letter to the editor, *BDC*, Sept. 14, 1999; and petition information in Sieck, "West Yellowstone Business Owners Go to Washington, D.C.," *Greater Yellowstone Report* 17 (Summer, 2000), 22.
  40. Ray Ring, "Move Over!" *High Country News*, April 1, 2002, 11-14, and Finley interview, June 24, 2003.
  41. Ring, "Move Over!" 10; and from the menu at the Three Bear Restaurant in West, owned by Seely, June 12, 2005.
  42. Ring, "Move Over!" 14.
  43. James Brooke, "A Move to Rid Parks of Snowmobiles," *New York Times*, Feb. 7, 1999, and Douglas Jehl, "National Parks Will Ban Recreation Snowmobiling," *New York Times*, April 27, 2000.
  44. Mike Stark, "Agency refuses to ban snowmobiles," *Billings Gazette*, Feb. 19, 2004.
  45. 66 *Federal Register* 7260-7268, January 22, 2001. Effort to publish them quickly from Yellowstone Management Assistant John Sacklin, personal interview with author, Feb. 13, 2003. Bush administration delay in 66 *Federal Register* 8366-8367, January 31, 2001. DOJ's failure to consult with Finley from his "Remarks, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, June 9, 2001," remarks at GYC's annual meeting, MAOF. Note that the winter use planning efforts by this time included Grand Teton National Park, so that snowmobiles were to be banned there

as well.

46. Bob Furu, "West Yellowstone weighs snowmobile suit," *BDC*, Dec. 5, 2000.
47. The following *BlueRibbon Magazine* (the group's periodical) articles all articulate the fear that banning from Yellowstone will mean banning from other federal lands: "BlueRibbon Supporters in 1998" (January 1999) 8-11; "Help Save Snowmobiling on our Public Lands" (July 1998), 14; Jack Welch, "Fund for Animals Sets Snowmobiling in National Forests as their Next Target" (November 1998), 3; Clark Collins, "Green Advocacy Groups Unmasked at Last" (March 1999), 2; Viki Eggers (who was Executive Director of the West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce at the time), "Recreationists Draw a Line in the Snow" (November 1999), 8; and "Park Service Announces Snowmobile Ban" (June 2000), 6. The group continues to articulate this same concern.
48. Mike Stark, "Parks reverse snowmobile decision," *Billings Gazette*, June 26, 2002.
49. Public comment summary from North Wind Environmental, Inc., "Public Comment Database Summary," Oct. 2, 2002, MAOF; and Steve Iobst, personal interview by author, Mammoth Hot Springs, April 4, 2003.
50. *Fund for Animals et al. v. Gale Norton et al.*, and *Greater Yellowstone Coalition, et al. v. Gale Norton et al.*, Dec. 16, 2003, Civil Action #02-2367, Memorandum Opinion, 294 *F. Supp. 2d* 92 (D.D.C. 2003); and *ISMA et al. and State of Wyoming v. Gale Norton et al. and Greater Yellowstone Coalition et al.*, Feb. 10, 2004, Civil Action #00-CV-229-B, Order, 304 *F. Supp. 2d* 1278, 1293 (D. Wyo. 2004), 21-29; and "Federal judge strikes down snowmobile ban," *BDC*, Oct. 16, 2004.
51. NPS-USDI, "Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks Temporary Winter Use Plans Draft Environmental Assessment, August 2004," MAOF; Scott McMillion, "Park gates open to snowmobiles, for now," *BDC*, Nov. 21, 2004; "Snowmobile plan draws 2 more challenges," *Billings Gazette*, Nov. 13, 2004; and Carole Cloudwalker, "New lawsuit challenges sled rules," *Cody (Wyo.) Enterprise*, Nov. 3, 2004.
52. Burns's riders: McMillion, "Burns' rider ensures snowmobiling in park," *BDC*, Nov. 23, 2004; and Dan Berman, "House appropriators give green light to snowmobiles in Yellowstone," *E&E Daily*, May 11, 2005, accessed on same day at <http://www.eenews.net>. Rehberg's efforts from McMillion, "U.S. House defeats halt to killing bison, snowmobile ban," *BDC*, June 18, 2004. Norton's visit from Felicity Barringer, "A 3-Day Yellowstone Tour in Support of Snowmobiles," *New York Times*, Feb. 17, 2005. Visitation statistics in T.R. Reid, "for Norton, Yellowstone Close-Up: Interior Chief Takes A Snowmobile Ride," *Washington Post*, Feb. 17, 2005. See also Norton, "Gale Norton: parks exist for people to enjoy, even on snowmobiles," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, Sept. 26, 2004.
53. "Summary, First NPS Team meeting with Cadence," April 27, 2005, MAOF.
54. Norton's quote has often been repeated in the press; see <http://www.doi.gov/news/021205.htm> for an example (accessed July 14, 2005). Scholars promoting collaborative conservation include Daniel Kemmis, *This Sovereign Land: A New Vision for Governing the West* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2001); Philip Brick, Donald Snow, and Sarah Van de Wetering, eds., *Across the Great Divide: Explorations in Collaborative Conservation and the American West* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2001); and Matthew McKinney and William Harmon, *The Western Confluence: A Guide to Governing Natural Resources* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2004), as well as most of the gateway community scholars cited herein.
55. In developing a one-industry town, West committed the mistake that many scholars caution gateway communities against doing (Howe, McMahon, and Propst, *Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities*, 1997; Power, *Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies*, 1996; and Machlis & Field, *National Parks and Rural Development*, 2000).
56. Alston Chase, *Playing God in Yellowstone* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1986), 295-370. Ideas by ex-NPS directors include George B. Hartzog, Jr., *Battling for the National Parks* (Mt. Kisco, NY: Moyer Bell Limited, 1988), 113-138; 249-276; James M. Ridenour, *The National Parks Compromised: Pork Barrel Politics and America's Treasures* (Merrillville, IN: ICS Books, Inc., 1994), 77-96; and William C. Everhart, *The National Park Service* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983). Scholar William R. Lowry asserts the NPS is increasingly politicized in *The Capacity for Wonder: Preserving National Parks* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1994), 51-64, 193-201; Daniel L. Dustin and Ingrid E. Schneider also argue that NPS is highly politicized, compromising its ability to conduct impartial science ("The Science of Politics/The Politics of Science," *Environmental Management* 34 (2005): 761-767). While environmentalists have indeed filed lawsuits to compel the NPS to ban snowmobiles, and have thereby influenced the issue's history and the town of West Yellowstone, their suits largely wish

- to compel the agency to do what it had planned to do originally – ban snowmobiles. Industry, by contrast, originally sued in opposition to the agency, and would profit financially from continued snowmobile use.
57. Howe, McMahon, and Propst, 1997; Glick and Alexander, “Development by Default, Not Design,” in Machlis and Field, 2000; Eagles & McCool, *Tourism in National Parks and Protected Areas*, 2002; McCool and Moisey, *Tourism, Recreation and Sustainability*, 2001; and Mitchell, “Community Perspectives in Sustainable Tourism,” in McCool and Moisey, 2001. Note that Meyer argues that snowmobiles are inappropriate in Yellowstone because they conflict with the quiet sense of place the park possesses, but this article illustrates that some form of motorized winter use has been around for a long time and can therefore be seen as part of its winter sense of place (Judith L. Meyer, “Nature Preservation, Sense of Place and Sustainable Tourism: Can the ‘Yellowstone Experience’ Survive?” in McCool and Moisey 2001, pp. 91-104).
  58. Joseph L. Sax discusses Olmsted’s national park thinking, as well as his own ideas, in *Mountains Without Handrails: Reflections on the National Parks* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980), 18-37.
  59. Figure is developed from data in Summary Record of Snowmobile Use, Yellowstone National Park, 1966 through April 1978, File “Winter Activities,” Box K-57, YNPA, and “Seasonal Visitation Statistics,” flyer available from the Visitor Services Office, National Park Service, Yellowstone National Park, WY. Data for 1998 and 1999 is downloaded from the official Yellowstone National Park website, <http://www.nps.gov/yell/stats/index.htm>, accessed on July 14, 2005.