

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 29, 2007

The Honorable Mary Bomar
Director
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Bomar,

We are writing to convey our deepening concern that you have not as yet upheld a commitment that you made in testimony to Congress earlier this year. Your pledge concerned the momentous decision that the National Park Service will soon make regarding snowmobile use in Yellowstone National Park.

Both you and Interior Secretary Kempthorne have declared that an emphasis on conservation of our national parks is the "heart" of the Management Policies and the "lifeblood" of our Nation's commitment to national park stewardship. \$10 million in taxpayer funded studies have repeatedly shown that conservation of Yellowstone requires the phase out of snowmobile usage. Your decision will either demonstrate a commitment to the 2006 National Park Service Management Policies based on the best science available or a disregard for them.

On March 1, 2007, in your first appearance before the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, you assured Congress of your strong belief in the conservation-first priority embedded throughout the National Park Service Management Policies. You testified that when managers at Yellowstone National Park neared a decision later in 2007 regarding the issue of winter access in the country's first national park, your unequivocal intention was to ensure that these policies would be upheld and that scientific findings bearing on the best available protection of Yellowstone's air quality, natural soundscapes and wildlife would be applied.

Yellowstone's managers recently announced that they have abandoned a "Preferred Alternative" that would have allowed as many as 720 snowmobiles each day in Yellowstone National Park. They acknowledged it was necessary to revise the number of snowmobiles downward to protect Yellowstone's air quality, employee and visitor health, the Park's wildlife, and the opportunity of visitors to enjoy, unimpaired by noise of engines, the subtle sounds of erupting geysers and other wonders in the country's oldest national park.

However, the new proposal by Yellowstone's managers to allow 540 snowmobiles per day in the Park is still more than double the average daily snowmobile use of the past four winters (250 per day). Scientific findings verified by the National Park Service and independently corroborated by the Environmental Protection Agency have demonstrated that adopting this proposal would:

- Undermine improvements in the health and clarity of Yellowstone's air. Both agencies say these air quality improvements have resulted largely from the reduction of snowmobile numbers to an average of 250 per day;

- Add to noise problems which, even with an average of 250 snowmobiles per day, have exceeded Yellowstone's standards and compromised visitor enjoyment; and
- Go in the opposite direction recommended to Yellowstone's managers by the agency's wildlife scientists, who advised that traffic be capped at recent averages or further reduced to protect the Park's animals from increased disturbance and harassment.

We urge you not to accept this new proposal. It explicitly violates these resource protection duties in the 2006 National Park Service Management Policies:

- "The National Park Service will preserve, to the greatest extent possible, the natural soundscapes of parks."
- "...the Service will seek to perpetuate the best possible air quality in parks..."
- "Where such use is necessary and appropriate, the least impacting equipment, vehicles, and transportation systems should be used."
- "NPS managers must always seek ways to avoid, or to minimize to the greatest degree practicable, adverse impacts on park resources and values."

Madame Director, these policies give specific meaning to the conservation emphasis that you and Secretary Kempthorne rightly vowed to uphold. To ignore these policies is to choose inferior protection of Yellowstone's air, quiet and wildlife and to opt for a form of access—snowmobiles—that is not only more harmful to Yellowstone's resources and values and the enjoyment of other visitors, but which also costs visitors substantially more and is less conducive to their learning about the Park.

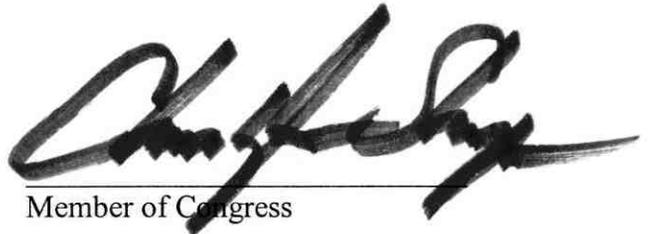
The agency's studies have repeatedly demonstrated that the best way to protect the health and safety of Yellowstone's visitors, staff, wildlife, and national resources while promoting more affordable and educational access, is to phase out snowmobile use entirely and increase public access by modern, multi-passenger, guide-driven snowcoaches. As you know, this form of access has grown strongly in popularity during the past four winters as your agency's studies have verified its multiple benefits.

The Management Policies make clear that this is the choice you should make in Yellowstone to uphold the conservation emphasis that you have said is of paramount importance. We expect you to live up to your commitment.

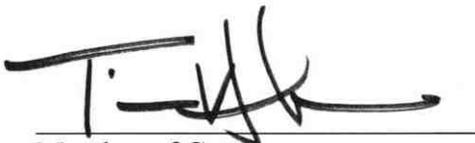
Sincerely,



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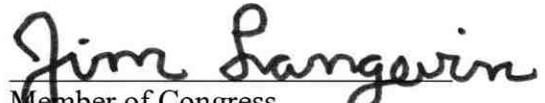


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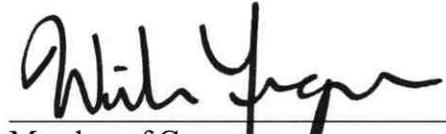


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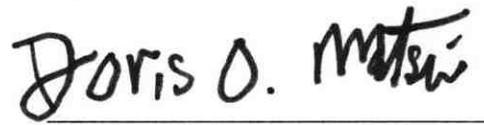

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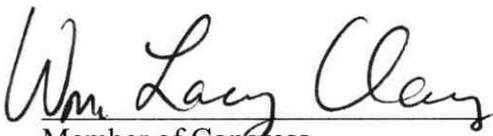

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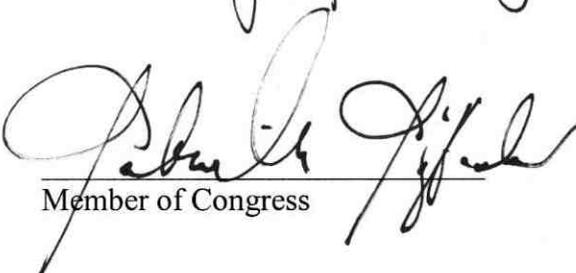

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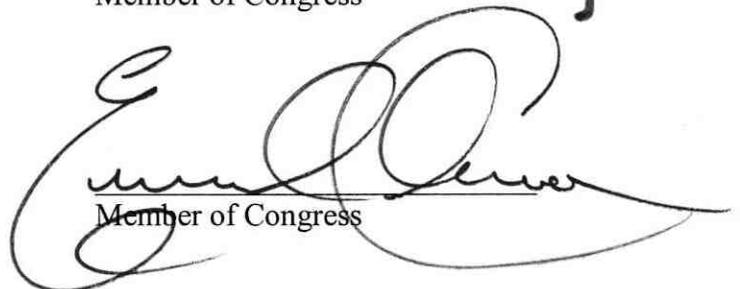

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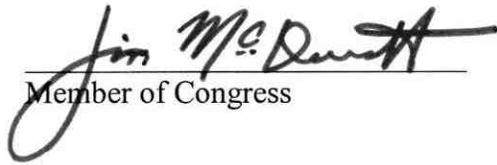
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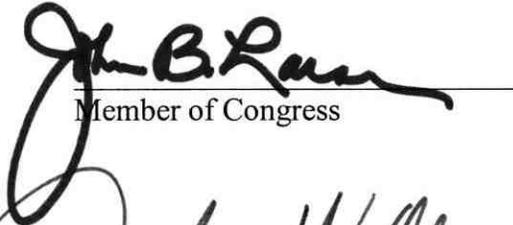
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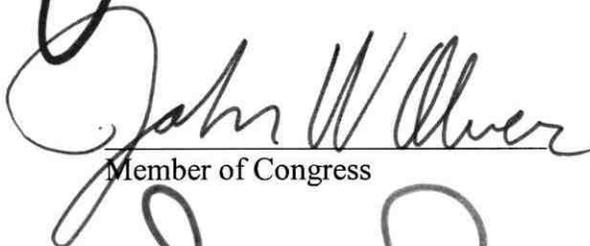
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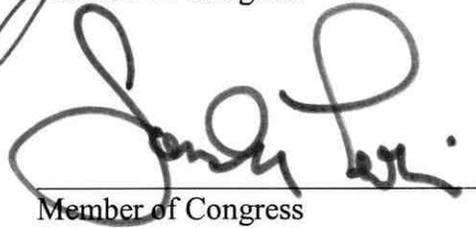

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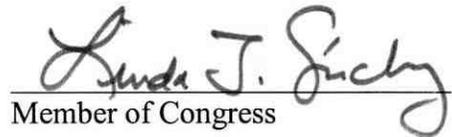

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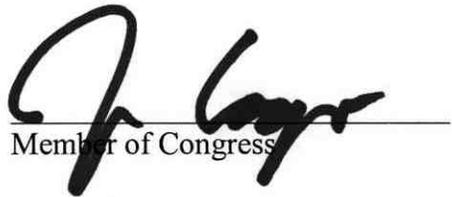

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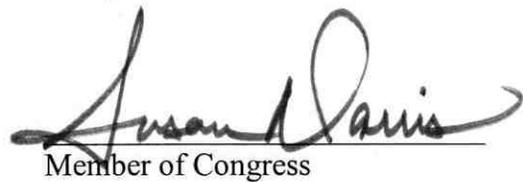

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