

MLA Argument Paper (Lund)

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Preserving Yellowstone's Winter Wilderness

Although a few recreational snowmobilers destroy fragile ecosystems and harass animals as they ride through the wilderness, most love and respect this country's natural heritage. That's why they brave the cold to explore what is left of wild America--including Yellowstone National Park. Unfortunately, however, even respectful snowmobilers are unwittingly damaging what they love. Because snowmobiles create both air and noise pollution and because their use in the park strains the already lean budget of our park service, recreational snowmobiles should be banned from Yellowstone National Park.

In 2002, the Bush administration, under pressure from the snowmobile industry, proposed to reverse the National Park Service's 2000 plan that would have phased out recreational snowmobile use in Yellowstone. In addition to reversing the earlier plan, the new policy would increase the number of snowmobiles allowed into the park per day. This policy is a step in the wrong direction.

It may be hard to imagine that 1,100 snowmobiles a day (the proposed limit) could cause an air pollution problem in a park half the size of Connecticut, but in fact they can. The air pollution at park entrances has already become

Lund builds common ground with readers who may disagree with him.

Thesis states the main point.

Background information puts the thesis in context.

Lund introduces his first line of argument.

so bad in winter, according to environmental reporter Julie Cart, that fresh air has to be pumped into the kiosks where snowmobiles line up and park rangers have been forced to wear respirators. Park visitors, including the snowmobilers themselves, have no such protection.

Sources are documented with MLA citations.

The Bluewater Network, an environmental group, reports that the most common snowmobiles, those with two-stroke engines, “discharge up to one-third of their fuel unburned into the environment and are one of the largest unchecked sources of hydrocarbon pollution nationwide” (1). Bluewater Network cites numerous scientific studies linking carbon monoxide pollutants to snowmobiles. One of these studies, which was conducted in the mid-1990s after many rangers complained of dizziness and nausea, found that carbon monoxide levels at park entrances exceeded those allowed by the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (2). Clearly, such a level of pollution is a health risk to the park’s employees and to its visitors.

Lund supports his points with specific evidence.

In addition to polluting the air, snowmobiles are noisy, disturbing the peace and quiet that park visitors have a right to expect. One study cited by Bluewater Network reports that twelve snowmobiles traveling together could be heard as far as two miles away (5). Even a travel writer for Yellowstone Journal, a magazine financed to a great extent by advertising from snowmobile manufacturers and rental services, advises readers about areas in the park free from “the constant hum of the other snowmobiles”

Transition prepares readers for the second line of argument.

(Johnson 7). Whether such noise adversely affects the park's wildlife remains a debated question, but the possibility exists.

Lund counters an opposing argument.

Some who favor keeping the park open to snowmobiles argue that newer, four-stroke machines cause less air and noise pollution than older models. While this is true, the new machines still pollute more than cars, and their decibel level is reduced only slightly ("Snowmobile"). Also, because the newer snowmobiles cost at least \$3,000 more than the older ones, it is unlikely that individuals would choose to buy them or that rental companies could afford to upgrade. At present there are no strict guarantees that only the newer models would be allowed into the park.

Lund presents his third line of argument.

Like most federal agencies, the National Park Service faces serious budget constraints. Funds that should be used to preserve Yellowstone National Park and its wildlife have been diverted to deal with the snowmobile issue. A single environmental impact study of the problem cost taxpayers nearly \$250,000 in early 2002 (Greater Yellowstone Coalition), and the park service estimates that implementing the new plan would cost one million dollars ("Snowmobile"). Also, park rangers are spending an increasing amount of their valuable time policing snowmobilers. In 2002, park rangers issued 338 citations for illegal snowmobiling activity, twice as many as in 2001, in addition to hundreds of warnings (Greater Yellowstone Coalition). Although most snowmobilers remain law-abiding, a disturbing number of joyriders violate speed limits, stray from marked trails, and

pursue animals for the thrill of the chase. Policing such activities was not what most park rangers had in mind when they signed up for jobs as preservers of this country's treasured natural resources.

Opponents of a ban argue that a central mission of the park service is to provide access to national parks-- access not only to the physically fit (such as snowshoers and cross-country skiers) but to ordinary people, including those who are handicapped. Admittedly, winter access is important, but ordinary people can enjoy the park by means other than snowmobiles. Snowcoaches (buses on skis) already take visitors into the park, and one road into the park is plowed and open to cars in winter. Also, the park service's mission is not just to provide access to the parks; no less important is its mission to preserve the parks' pristine natural resources for future generations.

Even with a ban on snowmobiling in the park itself, the Yellowstone area would still earn the title of Snowmobiling Capital of America. Virtually all of the streets of West Yellowstone, the area's major town, are open to snowmobilers, and many trails run out of the town. The Big Sky Trail extends for 110 miles, and the 360-mile Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail offers sledders "groomed trails, spectacular mountain scenery, wide-open spaces, and lots of opportunities to view wildlife" (Johnson 7). Because the Yellowstone area offers so many winter trails, there is no need to allow snowmobiles in the park itself.

Lund counters a possible objection to his thesis.

Lund suggests a reasonable alternative for snowmobilers.

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Conclusion echoes
the thesis without
dully repeating it.

A ban on snowmobiles would give park visitors a quiet, pollution-free experience, and it would allow the park service to devote more of its limited resources to one of its primary missions: the protection of natural resources. Whether on cross-country skis or from the heated comfort of a snowcoach, visitors would still be able to appreciate Yellowstone's beauty--its geysers, its wildlife, and its snow-covered vistas--throughout the park's long winter.

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Works cited page
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