



June 27, 2001

U.S. Senator Mark Dayton  
346 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Dayton:

We are writing to urge you to affirm the laws that protect our public lands by opposing a Senate Appropriations bill rider that would overturn the long-standing prohibition of snowmobile use in the wilderness core of [Denali National Park](#). Our concern in Minnesota is that this rider potentially sets a precedent for inappropriate snowmobile use in our state's protected areas, such as [Voyageurs National Park](#).

Last June, Denali National Park concluded years of public involvement and issued a regulation (36 CFR §13.63(h)) that solidifies the long-standing National Park Service position to safeguard the wilderness core of Denali National Park from snowmobiles and protect the air, quiet and wildlife that make this park so special.

Shortly after the regulation became effective last year, the snowmobile industry sued the National Park Service to overturn the rule. But rather than letting the Court decide if the regulation was legal, the snowmobile industry decided to dismiss its case and change the underlying law instead. This occurred after several weeks of closed-door negotiations with the Bush Administration from which the conservation interveners were excluded.

The snowmobile industry's legislative solution is most likely to take the form of a backdoor appropriations rider that would not be subject to normal public and Congressional debate. If the snowmobile industry succeeds with its rider, an exhaustive public process will be nullified, and the proposal would override the Wilderness Act and authorize recreational snowmobile use inside Congressionally-designated Wilderness.

In Minnesota, similar efforts are taking place in Voyageurs National Park, where recent snowmobile use has been inconsistent with the park's core values. Last February, Voyageurs National Park Superintendent Barbara West denied a permit for a radar race on Kabetogama Lake, thereby holding fast to the principles and values of our National Park System.

Superintendent West's decision angered the snowmobile industry and local county officials who argued that regional economic development depended upon the ability to hold snowmobile races within the park. Radar runs, however, increase noise, air pollution, and safety hazards to levels that disrupt quality visitor experiences. Races may actually cause visitors seeking winter quiet and solitude to travel elsewhere, thereby erasing any overall economic benefit.

The Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness is committed to responsible use of snowmobiles on our public lands. If we engage in activities that negatively affect any visitor's experience, we will have failed in upholding our commitment to wilderness for the benefit of all visitors.

We thank you for opposing a rider that would overturn the Denali regulation.

Best regards,  
Melissa Parker Lindsay  
Executive Director