

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **FEDERAL COURT ORDERS NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TO EXPLAIN ALLOWING MORE SNOWMOBILES IN YELLOWSTONE**

WASHINGTON (February 17, 2004) – Today in U.S. District Court, Judge Emmet G. Sullivan said he will issue a “show cause” order asking the National Park Service to explain why it should not be held in contempt for allowing more snowmobiles into Yellowstone National Park than were allowed by the court’s order of December 16, 2003. Judge Sullivan chided the government’s “nonchalant” attitude toward his order, and scheduled a contempt hearing for March 9 at 10:30 AM.

Judge Sullivan had ordered in December that only 493 snowmobiles be allowed in the park per day, pending “further order of the court.” Nonetheless, relying on a recent order by another court in Wyoming that simply instructed the NPS to develop “fair and equitable” snowmobile rules, the NPS began last Wednesday permitting 780 snowmobiles to enter Yellowstone per day.

“The Bush Administration has, once again, thumbed its nose at the environment, the American people, and the court system,” said Michael Markarian, President of The Fund for Animals. “The agency will stop at no lengths to allow more noisy, polluting machines into our first and foremost national park, bringing more harm to wild animals.”

“The administration is blatantly ignoring a federal court order,” added Sean Smith, Public Lands Director for Bluewater Network. “Once again, the interests of the snowmobile industry are being prioritized over the protection of Yellowstone.”

The noise and pollution from thousands of snowmobiles destroy Yellowstone’s clean air and quiet, and threaten the health of park rangers who have experienced breathing difficulties, headaches, nausea, dizziness, and hearing loss. The pollution has become so severe that carbon monoxide levels in Yellowstone have exceeded federal air quality standards.

In addition, thousands of Yellowstone bison have died in recent years after using the groomed trail system—created by using machines to pack 25-foot-wide snowroads—to leave the park and enter Montana, where they are slaughtered by federal and state officials. Since 1985, more than 3,200 Yellowstone bison have been gunned down or trucked to slaughterhouses.

The Fund for Animals and others sued the government in 1997, resulting in a settlement agreement that forced the agencies to prepare an environmental study of winter use impacts and led to the planned phase-out of snowmobiles.

The plaintiffs in the case are represented by Howard Crystal of the Washington, D.C. public interest law firm Meyer & Glitzenstein.