

Facilitator to discuss Sylvan Pass closure

CHEYENNE (AP) — A professional facilitator plans to meet one-on-one with community leaders east of Yellowstone National Park next week to begin a process to resolve a dispute over whether to close the park's east entrance during the wintertime.

Carl Moore, of Santa Fe, N.M., also expected to meet with representatives of Gov. Dave Freudenthal's office and the National Park Service.

In all, Moore planned to interview 20 people Monday through Wednesday to get a feel for whether the issue could be resolved, how that could happen and who would take part.

"Essentially I'm coming in to talk with people, learn what I can, and do an assessment of whether not a process is likely, and who the parties should be," he said Friday.

A winter management plan proposed by the Park Service would close Sylvan Pass just inside the east entrance due to avalanche danger. State and local officials oppose any closure, saying that ending snowmobile traffic over the pass would doom local winter tourism.

A final decision on the plan is due later this fall. Moore said he was hired by Park Service Regional Director Mike Snyder in Denver.

Park Service spokesman Rick Frost wouldn't speculate Friday whether Moore's involvement would lead to keeping the pass open. But Frost held that outcome open as a possibility.

"He's looking to find a way the Park Service and community can work together on Sylvan Pass," Frost said of Moore.

Wyoming's congressional delegation all said the development was encouraging.

"I appreciate this gesture and hope it's more than just a gesture. A mediator willing to listen is an important step," Sen. Mike Enzi, said in a release.

"Area residents and I, as well as the other members of Wyoming's congressional delegation have been vocal about our opposition to closure from the start, but up until now our concerns seemed to have fallen on deaf ears. Hopefully that won't be the case now," Enzi said.