

Valley County Board of County Commissioners

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Payette National Forest
Krassel Ranger District
C/O Caleb Zurstadt
500 N. Mission Street
McCall, Idaho 83638

July 18, 2017

Re: Scoping Notice Proposal for the South Fork Salmon River Restoration and
Access Management Plan

Dear Caleb,

The Valley County Commissioners are responding to the concerns of access that are being considered in the Plan. Primarily we see consensus on many areas that are controversial in nature however there is some confusion in Private Property Access with this plan in our opinion.

The Davis Ranch Road (aka Willey Ranch Road) was historically a trail used by travelers into the South Fork of the Salmon River region. Historical recordings of the Calvary chasing the Native Americans along the South Fork date into the late 1800's well before the creation of the National Forest. Valley County has spent time and expense to determine the travel routes used in this region and found where the trails existed historically. This research was provided to the Big Creek/Yellow Pine group early on when we first met. The Davis Ranch Road was only one route the research commented on as it included many historic routes.

Wayne and Karen Forrey, relatives of the Fritser homestead also provided a history of the use of this route.

The proposal in the plan calls for a non- motorized route suitable for ATV use with access only for the Private Landowners and the Public can only use as a non- motorized route. However I must point out that, two private landowners utilized this route for years. In fact the Forest Service allowed the landowners the right to create a high clearance road which improved the access from the prior trail system that could accommodate smaller full size vehicles and the private landowners maintained the route for years all while the Public had unrestricted access.

In the 1980's the Savage Fire burned much of the vegetation and trees on the east side of the South Fork of the Salmon River and then in later years a heavy rain storm caused debris to flow down the watercourses and destroyed many if not all the stream crossings. Both of these incidents were an act of nature and not human caused by any means and no fault of the private landowners or maintenance they had performed on the roadway.

We also understand that this motorized route was closed to access by a Special Order from the Forest Service for safety reasons. Even though this area is being considered as "Recommended Wilderness" the Management Guidelines allow motorized access if it had existed. Now with this route being considered Non-Motorized to the Public funding to rebuild this route is a concern as limited available resources exist however if the, Special Order was rescinded, and the route were to be re-constructed to the original allowed travel way multiple funding resources are more available to maintain the route including the public who could use the route as it was in the original condition.

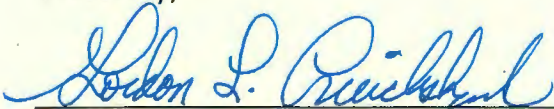
We encourage the Forest Service to re-evaluate this prior Motorized Route which will provide access to Private Landowners and the Public's enjoyment to see their Public Lands. Valley County is willing to assist if funding is available to find solutions to re-construct as a motorized high clearance travel way.

Valley County would also like to see the 3-Mile Road (aka Hamilton Bar Road) gate removed and return the access to the Public. Valley County maintained this route for several years prior to the Payette National Forest installing the gate essentially closing this area to motorized access. We understand that the Forest Service entered into an agreement in part of the South Fork Road re-construction and paving project however no communication of this closure was ever held with the Valley County Commissioners when the agreement was completed. Idaho Code provides that only County Commissioners or Highway District Commissioners have the ability to authorize closure of County Maintained Roads which this was at the time of the gate closure. The 3-Mile Road is also a Historic Route as the town of Surprise had mail delivered to it from Warren using the South Fork trails. Mail can only be delivered along a public route. The town of Surprise was there before the creation of the National Forest so this is a historic route and maintained by the users themselves. In the Plan this road is to be decommissioned however this also provides a limited access to the private landowners and the public to this region. We encourage the gate to be removed and maintenance by Valley County to resume.

Many old logging roads exist in the South Fork Drainage that could provide some recreation loop trails. With the Public expressing the desire to find areas to explore the Forest Service should consider routes recommended by the Big Creek/Yellow Pine group to create some additional opportunities.

The Valley County Commissioners respectfully submit our comments to the Payette National Forest for consideration.

Sincerely,



Gordon L. Cruickshank, Chairman
Valley County Commissioners



**Valley County Clerk,
Recorder and Auditor**

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SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE

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