



Bonner County

Board of Commissioners

Jeff Connolly

Dan McDonald

Steve Bradshaw

April 2, 2019

MEMORANDUM

BOCC
Item #2

Re: Letter to United States Forest Service, Objection to Bog Creek Road Project Decision

Description:

On July 24, 2019 the Bonner County Commissioners submitted public comment to the USFS regarding the Bog Creek road Project. In February of 2019 the USFS issued a draft decision on this project. In hopes to participate in the objection resolution process the BOCC is submitted this objection letter regarding the draft decision on this project.

Distribution: USFS Agencies (Federal, State, and Local)

A suggested motion would be: **Mr. Chairman based on the information before us I move to approve the objection letter to the United States Forest Service regarding the Bog Creek Road Project decision.**

Recommendation Acceptance: ☒ yes ☐ no


Commissioner Jeff Connolly, Chairman

Date: 4-2-19



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United States Department of Agriculture
Idaho Panhandle National forest
Bonners Ferry Ranger District
Priest Lake Ranger District

Objection - Bog Creek Road Project Decision

To Whom It May Concern,

On July 24, 2018 the Bonner County Commissioners submitted a comment regarding the Bog Creek Road Project as requested by the United States Forest Service and U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The Bonner County Commissioners were agreeable to Alternative #4 presented in the Draft EIS Proposed Action and Alternatives, drafted jointly by the USFS and CBP. Our assumption, at the time that our letter was written and submitted, was that alternative #4 was a viable, well-researched option that fit into the parameters initially set by the USFS and CBP.

The objectives for this project were initially identified as 1) To provide safe east-west access for administrative use to this section of the U.S. - Canada border across the Selkirk Mountains. 2) To meet grizzly bear motorized access standards within the Blue – Grass BMU of the Selkirk Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone in order to comply with the Forest Plan Amendments for Motorized Access Management within the Selkirk and Cabinet – Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones. Considering that one of the two main objectives was compliance within the Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones, the Bonner County Commissioners assumed that the proposed actions and alternatives had been thoroughly vetted by, not only the USFS and the CBP, but also the United States Fish & Wildlife Service, and any other State or Federal Agency necessary, prior to presenting these actions and alternatives to the public for comment. While alternative 1 proposed no action, both alternatives 2 & 3 specifically mentioned bear habitat, with alternative 4 making no mention of specifics regarding habitat. In hindsight this may lead one to ask if this alternative was placed on this draft EIS as a stratagem to make the public feel as though this was, again, a viable well-researched outcome to this decision, when quite apparently it was not.

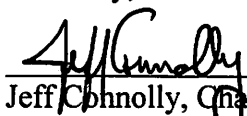
In the Draft Record of Decision on the Bog Creek Road Project put forth by the USFS in February of 2019 (pg 8) states “Alternative 4 does not adequately address the needs of the grizzly bear with respect to maintaining or improving habitat, and it poses the highest mortality risk of all alternatives.” Again, why was this alternative listed as an option if it did not exceed objective 2 as listed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement with grizzly bear impacts being a major issue in the consideration of this project. The elimination of alternatives after the

public comment period is non-sensible, every single option presented to the public should have been ready for consideration.

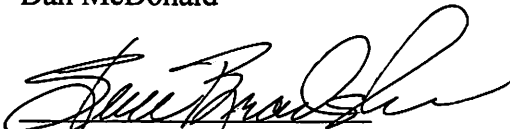
We recognize the requirements/restrictions of the Endangered Species Act, but at the same time feel that adequate measures have been taken in the effort to recover the grizzly bears in these areas and steps to delist the bear and open back up the land that is unavailable to us, should be of utmost importance to all agencies involved.

As you can imagine, the outcome of the project was quite shocking to us. As a government entity transparency to our constituents is top priority, comments, phone calls, lengthy discussions, whatever it takes for the people to feel heard. Bonner County was certainly not heard in this discussion. We are submitting this objection letter in hopes to participate in the objection resolution process. This land should be available to the citizens of North Idaho, no single agency, nor single person should be able to make this decision without appropriate input from the constituents that live, work, and play in Northern Idaho.

Sincerely,


Jeff Connolly, Chairman


Dan McDonald


Steven Bradshaw