

September 2, 2020



Erin Phelps, District Ranger
New Meadows Ranger District
P.O. Box J
New Meadows, ID 83654

RE: Rapid River Travel Management Project

Dear Ms. Phelps,

The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation reviewed the Rapid River Travel Management Project Proposed Action Report. The district is considering designating single-track motorized trails in the Rapid River drainage.

Our staff has been involved in this project for at least the past 15 years. We worked with the Payette National Forest in developing the 2009 Payette National Forest Travel Plan decision. We also previously commented on this project in August 3, 2011.

The issue with these trails is that they were designated non-motorized through a special order as the result of a lawsuit. The public never had the opportunity to comment on this decision unlike the 2009 Payette Forest Travel Plan decision. This project gives the opportunity for the public to make suggestions for route designations in the project area.

The Rapid River Wild and Scenic River designation prohibits motorized and mechanized use within the river corridor. The IDPR staff looked for the corridor in ArcGIS Online, but our staff only found line information (river segments). In any case, the planning team needs to expand the planning area, so replacement trail opportunities can be designated.

We prepared a map showing replacement trail opportunities. This map can be found at <https://arcg.is/WDmzH>. We also prepared a swipe story map that shows how many motorized opportunities have been lost in the last 40 years, to include those in the area of discussion. This app is located at <https://arcg.is/bnOWr>. The swipe app reflects the continued erosion of motorized opportunities across Idaho, exacerbated by the fact that participation rates have continued to steadily climb during that same period of time. A copy of the OHV registrations have also been included with our comments to illustrate the point.

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The best way to keep motorcyclists on designated trails is to provide them with looping opportunities. With this in mind, we offer the following replacement opportunities that would get motorized and mechanized uses out of the Rapid River corridor. The project area would need to be expanded to consider these replacement opportunities.

The Rapid River Ridge Trail #178 allows for outstanding views of the Rapid River Drainage and the Hells Canyon Wilderness. It is one of the few ridge top trails in the analysis area. This trail should be designated single-track motorized from its beginning at Lost Creek Trail #258 down to the Fall Creek Trail # 327. It would increase single-track trail opportunities by 2.8 miles.

The Fall Creek Trail #327 was designated non-motorized to avoid conflicts with the Pony Creek Research Natural Area. We proposed to designate this trail as single-track motorized from the end of the trail at Trail #178 to the Cow Camp Trail #181. This designation would avoid going through the Pony Creek Research Natural Area and provide a looping trail opportunity. The total length of this designation is 3.5 miles.

The Cow Camp Trail #181 should be designated as single track motorized from the Fall Creek Trail #327 to the Rapid River Ridge Trail #178. This designation would still leave 5.3 miles of non-motorized opportunities on the Cow Camp Trail and provides an essential loop opportunity for motorcyclists. The total length of this designation is 2.3 miles.

The Cow Camp By-Pass Trail #350 should be designated as single track motorized for its entire length (0.6 miles). This trail connects from the Cow Camp Trail to the Rapid River Ridge Trail #178. It provides another option and another potential loop opportunity for motorcyclists.

The Pollock Mountain Trail #179 should be designated as single track motorized from the Boulder Creek Road #50074 to the Rapid River Ridge Trail #178. It would provide another looping opportunity for motorcyclists and is the first trail that visitors come to from Highway 95. This trail is in good condition and would offer another motorized connection to the Rapid River Ridge Trail #178. Designating this trail as single-track motorized would offer an additional mitigation measure for the loss of trail opportunities in the Rapid River Drainage.

The top of the Lost Creek Trail #358 should be designated as single-track motorized from the Rapid River Trail #179 to the Upper Lick Creek Trail #229. The total length is 0.3 miles long and provides a very important connection to create a looping opportunity.

The last replacement opportunity that we offer is a short extension of the Upper Lick Creek Trail #229 from Trail #358 to Trail #231 Lick Creek Ridge. This short segment 0.3 miles long provides a connection to the Rapid River Ridge Trail #179 and the Lick Creek Ridge Trail #231 and would provide more single-track trail looping opportunities.

The total mileage of these proposed replacement trails is 13.3 miles. The designation of these trails to single-track motorized would replace some of the lost opportunities because of the lawsuit settlement. It would also restore several looping opportunities and get motorized and mechanized use out the Rapid River Wild and Scenic River corridor.

The IDPR looks forward to participating in the planning for this project. We can also help with project implementation through our Trail Ranger Program, Trail Cat Program, or our Grants Program.

If you or your staff has any questions about our comments, please contact me at (208) 514-2483.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Cook". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jeff Cook, Outdoor Recreation Analyst
Recreation Bureau

Enclosures