



BlueRibbon Coalition
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Ben Burr, Executive Director

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Character Fire Salvage Project
Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District
2502 East Sherman Avenue
Coeur d'Alene, ID 8381

BlueRibbon Coalition/ShareTrails (BRC) is writing to provide feedback for the Character Fire Salvage and Restoration Project. BRC is a national non-profit organization that champions responsible recreation and encourages a strong conservation ethic and individual stewardship. We champion responsible use of public lands and waters for the benefit of all recreationists by educating and empowering our members to secure, protect, and expand shared outdoor recreation access and use by working collaboratively with natural resource managers and other recreationists. Our members use motorized and non-motorized means of recreation, including OHVs, horses, mountain bikes, and hiking to enjoy federally managed lands throughout the United States, including those of the Forest Service. Many of our members and supporters live in Idaho or travel across the country to visit Idaho and use motorized vehicles to access FS managed lands throughout Idaho. BRC members visit these areas for motorized recreation, sightseeing, photography, hunting, wildlife and nature study, camping, water sports, and other similar pursuits. We would like to add our support to any comment submitted by any other individuals or organizations that advocate for motorized use and increased recreation access overall. BRC members and supporters have concrete, definite, and immediate plans to continue such activities in the future.

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Many of our members hold organized events that include organized rides in this area. A significant portion of the education mission of organizations like ours and the fundraising that supports organizations like ours comes from these organized events, and we see the continuation of these events as an integral expression of protected rights including freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.

Project Specific Comments

BRC strongly supports the proposed project and the purpose and need of the project which the introduction states in the EA, “to recover the remaining economic value and benefit of forest products, reduce hazards threatening human health and safety, and establish more resilient vegetation conditions to capitalize on opportunities to move toward desired conditions.”

We support the broad project objectives to keep forests and public lands healthy and viable. We support the proposed fire salvage project as it will not only improve the overall health of the forest but also provide economic value.

BlueRibbon commends the BLM in their efforts to have a sustainable and healthy forest for all to use without any closures or restrictions to access and roads in the system. Oftentimes we see salvage treatments used as a method to close or decommission roads and we are happy to see that the USFS is using appropriate management techniques to provide use to all users. Primarily because much of this area has strong recreational value and has a higher density of recreation, roads and access for recreational opportunities need to be protected. Not only will protecting these opportunities comply with NEPA but it will also comply with the current forest management plan. We strongly encourage the USFS to fully analyze and consider keeping any new roads that are needed for the completion of the project rather than using them solely as a temporary road.

Roads are crucial for various reasons, not only do they act as a natural wildfire barrier to help protect the forests and protect wildlife and habitat but are also needed for fire treatments and emergency response teams. The Bureau of Economic Analysis showed that in 2019 outdoor recreation brought in \$459.8 billion. Outdoor recreation has only grown in popularity since then. BRC is pleased the BLM is not stifling potential economic benefits through road closures.

The proposed project provides local jobs and brings in local revenue. BRC supports these efforts and supports any comments made by locals and members who approve these projects for local economic benefit.

Conclusion

We would like to close by saying we support “shared use”. As long as overall visitation numbers are appropriate for the affected resources, motorized and non-motorized users can be compatible with one another so long as individual users understand designations and plan their activities accordingly. Indeed, motorized and nonmotorized recreation use often overlap as OHV’s often increase accessibility to non-motorized recreational activities such as hiking, camping, equestrian use, etc. We also hold that responsible recreational use of public lands can exist in harmony with ecosystem needs.

BRC would like to be considered an interested public for this project. Information can be sent to the following address and email address:

Ben Burr
BlueRibbon Coalition
P.O. Box 5449
Pocatello, ID 83202
brmedia@sharetrails.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'BB' followed by a long horizontal line.

Ben Burr
Executive Director
BlueRibbon Coalition

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Simone Griffin'.

Simone Griffin
Policy Director
BlueRibbon Coalition