



**BlueRibbon Coalition**  
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**Ben Burr, Executive Director**

BlueRibbon Coalition  
P.O. Box 5449  
Pocatello, ID 83202

**October 20,, 2022**

**Brian M. Pentecost, District Ranger**

Attn: Thorne Bay Basin Integrated Management Project  
P.O. Box 19001  
Thorne Bay, AK 99919-0001

Dear Mr. Pentecost,

BlueRibbon Coalition (BRC) is writing to provide feedback for the Thorne Bay Basin Integrated Resource Management 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 U.S. Forest Service. Many of our members and supporters live in Alaska or travel across the country to visit Alaska and use motorized vehicles to access USFS managed lands throughout Alaska. BRC members visit the Thorne Bay Basin area for motorized recreation, sightseeing, photography, wildlife and nature study, camping, 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. Many of our members are individuals and organizations with extensive on-the-ground experience in the Thorne Bay Basin area.

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## **Project Specific Comments**

BRC strongly supports the proposed project and the purpose and need of the project and supports the proposed treatments on the full 91,173 acres of proposed forest land. We support the broad project objectives to keep forests and public lands healthy and viable. The proposed project will not only improve the overall health of the forest but also provide economic value.

BlueRibbon commends the USFS 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. The proposed projects will help protect road access to the forest. Oftentimes we see forest health treatments used as a method to close or decommission roads and we believe these treatments can be implemented without closures and restricting access to all user groups. 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. We strongly encourage the Forest Service to fully analyze and consider keeping the 6 miles of new temporary roads and the 42 miles of reconstructed decommissioned temporary roads that are needed for the completion of the project rather than using them solely as a temporary road. These roads serve a strong purpose and need and should be added permanently to the forest road system for the public to access.

## **Roads and Trails**

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 USFS is not stifling potential economic benefits through road closures. We strongly support the proposed action of maintenance on 104 miles of roads. These roads need to be maintained for public health and safety. Maintenance on these roads also protects their recreational value so local communities can capitalize on this important economic asset.

## **Timber Harvest**

Timber harvest and any sales from forest treatments will also help stimulate the local economy. We believe the USFS should move forward with timber harvest on the full 5,800 acres. 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. Wildfire is the largest threat to habitat loss. One wildfire could cause an entire species to go extinct. We support the Forest Service in properly managing the forests to prevent wildfires that could cause harm to wildlife.

## **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 'B Burr', 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