



Lolo National Forest  
24 Fort Missoula Road  
Missoula, MT 59804

Re: Lolo NF Plan Revision Draft Wilderness Inventory

May 11, 2023

To the Lolo Forest Plan Revision Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Wilderness inventory portion of the Lolo Planning Process.

We are writing to represent a local citizens group, the Cube Iron Cataract Coalition. We are a five-year-old organization committed to protecting an area of existing wild country near Thompson Falls, between the Vermillion and Thompson Rivers, including the IRAs named Sundance Ridge, Cube Iron, and Cataract. Our members have extensive experience and familiarity with this area. For information, see [cubeironcataract.org](http://cubeironcataract.org).

We have reviewed the various Wilderness Inventory documents and map with care. We appreciate the thorough presentation and explanation of this material. We also appreciate the planning team's openness to questions and input during this process. We are most interested in the polygons #09 and #10 on the Draft wilderness Inventory Map. In general, we believe these polygons do include the areas suitable for consideration as Recommended Wilderness under the Lolo Forest Planning Process.

#### A Specific Comment on Certain Dark Blue Areas in Polygon #10

We would like to make a specific comment on the several areas shown in dark blue along the southwestern edge of the Cube Iron polygon # 10, including the larger dark blue area in the Squalthkwum creek drainage. We understand the dark blue marking means these areas may possibly be excluded from wilderness consideration, based on past management activities, depending on the history and current characteristics of these areas.

We believe all these areas should be included in the Wilderness Inventory and Evaluation, and we hope and expect that will be the recommendation of the Plains District Ranger and local FS officials, and the FS Supervisor. These areas were treated

with prescribed fire a couple decades ago to improve big game habitat, and they remain in a natural condition today. Based on our personal knowledge of these areas, and on our reading of the Wilderness Process Step 1 document, Appendix B, Sec. 1.4 , none of the previous management actions in these areas should be considered as “Potentially Substantially Noticeable” today.

#### Agreement on Exclusion of Certain White and Black Areas

We agree that the areas marked as excluded from the Wilderness Inventory within the Cube Iron polygon # 10, shown as white and black, appear to conform to conditions on the ground, based on existing older road systems in these areas, and on their potential suitability for timber management. These areas include:

- The area south of Four Lakes Creek
- The areas in the North Fork and West Fork of upper Thompson River
- The area around Liver Peak, located west of the lower Thompson River

In addition, the white and black area located northeast and outside of the Cataract polygon # 09, in the Irv’s Creek tributary of upper Graves Creek, appears to be properly excluded from the Wilderness Inventory, based on an existing road system and potential suitability for timber management.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to participating in the Wilderness Evaluation and Analysis portions of the planning process.

*Mark Sheets*

**Chairman,**

*John Errecart*

*Doug Ferrell*

*Renee Hofeldt*

*Doc Milham*

*Kayla Mosher*

*Chad Sivertsen*

*Juli Thurston*

*Scott Tuxbury*

**Board Members, THE CUBE IRON / CATARACT COALITION**