



State of Idaho

Department of Parks and Recreation

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November 25, 2023

Attention: Andrew Skowlund, District Ranger
Nez Perce Clearwater National Forests, North Fork Ranger District
Via Project Portal

RE: Sourdough Sheep Vegetation Management Project, comment period, Proposed Action for activities within a 842 acre project area on the North Fork Ranger District
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=65076>

Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) is the duly-established executive department under State of Idaho Code, with the stated mission of improving the quality of life in Idaho through outdoor recreation and resource stewardship. Acting under the supervision of the Idaho Park and Recreation Board, IDPR carries out recreational policies and programs of the State. Consistent with its statutory authorities, the Department participates in federal land management planning and project planning to further the public interest in recreational, scenic, and historical/archeological values.

IDPR staff is responsible for managing off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation throughout Idaho through the Motorized Trail Program. IDPR's Trail Ranger and Trail Cat Programs provide maintenance and construction, and its OHV Education Program provides OHV training and environmental education. Through IDPR's Off Road Motor Vehicle and Motorbike Recreation Funds, grants are awarded to fund trail building and maintenance, and law enforcement activities. The Trail Program's partnerships with the Forest Service results in the maintenance and improvement of hundreds of miles of National Forest Trail each year.

Regarding this current Scoping process, following a pattern that has become consistent throughout Idaho's portion of USFS Region 1, it appears the opportunity to utilize this NEPA process to include *recreational trail improvements* has not been leveraged in the Scope enumerated by the Proposed Action. Before setting the PA into EA stone, IDPR strongly encourages the District to explore and advocate for ways to include recreation trail additions and improvements within the Scope. Please consult IDPR Trail Program staff and its stakeholders, and recommendations of the Forest collaborative for such advice.

Notably, OHV access is proposed to be allowed on the combined new and reopened 11.7 miles of temporary road (Recreation Report, pages 2 & 7). Where investments are made to create new temporary roads or taking existing prism out of closed-and-stored status, IDPR requests of the Forest to carefully consider, before closure/storage or obliteration post-project, whether such investments in temporary routes may afford new, permanent recreational trail connectivity and looping opportunities to further disperse use. Trail additions to the existing MVUM system, of interest to our constituents, include single-track (motorcycle), <50" (ATV, small UTV), through to full-width trail prism for full-size UTVs which are growing in popularity.

Thank you for identifying and planning for protection from and mitigation of Project impacts to the 5.7 miles of existing designated-OHV trail in the Project scope, which trails will be concurrent with routes proposed to be used for Project activities. If these concurrences remain in the Scope to Decision and Implementation, please consult with IDPR Trail Program staff if collaboration will help protect and restore these valuable trail miles. (Recreation Report, page 2, Table 2.)

Document touch-ups: In the Recreation Report, page headers and a paragraph in page 3 reference "Dead Laundry" instead of Sourdough Sheep. Grammar, page 2 "...within the project area and *there* appropriate use..." should be "their".

Thank you for the opportunity to comment during the Scoping process. IDPR looks forward to further participation in the ongoing NEPA process and welcomes the Forest to explore utilization of IDPR Program resources for recreation during Project Implementation. The Department's base goal remains serving recreationists' interests by helping the District and Forest in maintaining, improving, and finding new opportunities for increased recreational access to the public's lands.

Regards,

Land Access Coordinator
IDPR – Recreation Bureau