

I am pleased to have the opportunity to again comment on the Nez Pierce – Clearwater Final Draft Forest Plan number 44089. I strongly object to the truncation of the previously recommended Great Burn Wilderness. Specifically, I object to the proposed management of the Hoodoo roadless area for the following reasons.

#1. The Hoodoo area is an integral connection, allowing passage of wildlife and especially grizzly bears into and from the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. This fragmentation of the Great Burn will add further difficulties for wildlife, large, and small.

#2. The Hoodoo area is prime habitat for the endangered wolverine and lynx. It is also prime mountain goat habitat. High marking snowmobiles will undoubtedly further endanger the endangered wolverine.

I've been enjoying the Great Burn area since my seasonal employment in the United States Forest Service at the old Lolo Ranger district in 1963-1967. I continue to spend quality time in this magnificent area. Over the years I've noticed that I encounter fewer mountain goats on packing trips. Now the Hoodoo area is the only place in the Great Burn, where I routinely encounter mountain goats.

#3. The draft final forest plan number 44089 demonstrates deference to local Idaho small businesses. The Nez Pierce – Clearwater National Forest is not owned by any business. It belongs to the citizens of the entire United States.

#4 The State Line trail on the east side of the Hoodoo area has been a personal favorite of mine over the years. On several occasions I have packed in with my horse, leading my two mules along the State Line Trail. The trail has numerous steep pitches with significant exposure. The addition of bicycle traffic will negatively affect both hikers and equestrians. The bicycle traffic will greatly increase the danger to equestrian users. A rapidly approaching bike, coming behind the pack string will almost certainly cause problems in some of the areas where the trail is narrow and steep. Hikers and equestrian travel at about 3 mph, whereas bicycles travel much faster and are very quiet. On narrow difficult trails there will be significant safety issues. The safety issues have not been adequately addressed in the Draft Forest Plan.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns. The previously proposed Great Burn wilderness area is indeed a magnificent place with many unique features. The Hoodoo has been an important part of my life for 57 years. The Hoodoo area needs to be recommended Wilderness and managed accordingly.

Sincerely,  
Daniel A Harper, MD  
Past President, Back Country Horsemen of Missoula