

January, 29th 2024

Regional Forester, R1
Nez Perce-Clearwater Forest Plan Objection
Electronic submission via CARA webform

MTB Missoula
P.O. Box 8233
Missoula, MT

To The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest Plan Reviewing Officer

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our support during the objection process for the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Draft Record of Decision for the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest. MTB Missoula submitted comments for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on April 20, 2020, giving us standing during the objection process.

MTB Missoula is a non-profit with over 600 dues-paying members in 2023. We seek to represent the interests of mountain bikers and trail enthusiasts across western Montana in our stewardship and advocacy endeavors. We take our role as ambassador of the sport seriously, which means persistent advocacy for a culture of respect, safety, and policy compliance while recreating on public land. Most importantly, like so many others, we draw our inspiration from the numerous benefits made possible through conservation of large, roadless landscapes. That is why we have provided formal support to new Wilderness areas even though it ensures permanent loss of bike travel.

We appreciate the extensive effort made by the planning team to balance best available science with diverse stakeholder input. The plan reflects compromise in many areas including balancing additional recommended Wilderness with our request for limited mechanized use. The draft record of decision indicates we were clearly heard as the Forest Supervisor recommends implementing a 150-foot travel corridor along portions of the Divide Trail #738 (otherwise referred to as the Stateline or Idaho Centennial Trail) to allow for summer mechanized use.

We view this recommendation as a thoughtful and creative management directive that has several positive outcomes, including:

1. The landscape surrounding the trail retains a primitive and wild character whereby broad conservation objectives are immediately upheld without the need for Congressional



action.

2. A clearly defined corridor for non-motorized use along the trail makes it plain to mountain bikers as to exactly where bike travel is permissible. Near Missoula, on the Lolo NF, the Main Rattlesnake Creek trail has a similar mechanized travel corridor that has been successfully implemented.
3. People are afforded the opportunity to enjoy the unique experience of bike travel on a remote, backcountry trail through sublime country. Moreover, Divide Trail #738 creates loop connectivity to the trails surrounding Heart Lake within the neighboring Lolo NF.

We appreciate the challenge of balancing diverse recreational and economic interests while seeking to safeguard the resource in perpetuity. The Preferred Alternative provides robust and significant resource protection in recommending 263,357 acres of Wilderness, including the 108,276 Hoodoo Recommended Wilderness. We support this and recognize that the social and economic needs of nearby communities have been considered. For MTB Missoula and the mountain biking community, this means retaining bike access to Divide Trail #738.

MTB Missoula supports the Draft ROD and requests the plan proceed towards adoption. In closing, we thank the Nez Perce-Clearwater for undertaking this collaborative process and respectfully request to be included as an interested party in objection resolution.

Sincerely,



John Stegmaier
Executive Director