

I have submitted these comments electronically. This copy is in case that submission was unsuccessful - GAC 2/29/24

Re: Nez Pearce- Clearwater National Forest Draft of Final Plan: Comments and objections from previous commenter ID#44089-3190-1071; I incorporate that document in these comments and objections.

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JAN 30 2024

Dear Supervisor Probert,

R1 RO MAILROOM

As noted above I have previously commented throughout this process. In my first objection and comments I detailed my general familiarity with the area though my extensive use of the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness Area (SBWA) and Lochia River over the last 40 plus years so I will not recite that here. But let me get to the point. The Draft Final Plan you came up with is deeply flawed. You should be recommending the entire Hoodoo Roadless Area (Hoodoo) , some 150,000 acres, as wilderness. Both its size and range of snow-covered elevation in winter make it critically necessary to protect endangered species and species of concern.

As I previously pointed out, the entire Hoodoo Roadless Area is a known and proven connector zone to the SBWA for the endangered grizzly bear population in northwest Montana. Undoubtedly it serves the same for the endangered wolverine population. Undoubtedly it also serves the same function for species of concern such as the lynx and fisher. The lack of recommendation as wilderness in your proposed Final Plan fails to ensure and protect this connection even though the evidence shows the corridor is currently used by these animals.

Protecting the entirety of the Hoodoo will also provide protection of the iconic mountain goat herd that lives there. The herd is already greatly diminished and under severe stress. Your Final Plan ensures their speedy demise.

Additionally, the protection of the entire area is necessary to the vast majority of the public who prefer ecologically intact wildlands and quiet recreation as opposed to the few snowmobilers and the small segment of mountain bikers who prize thrill seeking over protecting the few remaining wildlands ecosystems in our country. Further, as you are aware, snowmobilers have been using the area illegally for years yet the Forest Service has done nothing to stop it. It is ethically wrong that the you now propose to legitimize this criminal activity that you and your predecessors have allowed. This ethical lapse is compounded by the fact that during the entirety of that time the surrounding national forests lands provided ample opportunities for legal snowmobiling. They still do. This means that despite unfounded claims to the contrary, they are by no means shut out of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest or for that matter, the adjoining national forests.

I also object to the proposed final plan because it in no way protects the many treasured streams of the area with their rich ecological habitat. This failure jeopardizes not only fish populations but the entire aquatic ecosystem necessary to a healthy and sustaining ecosystem of the Great Burn as well as drainages of the Selway Bitterroot and Nez Pearce- Clearwater connected to it. In particular these include the South Lochsa Face, Gedney Creek, Fish and Hungry Creeks and the Upper North Fork.

Another major defect of the proposed final plan is that it fails to include the previously recommended Selway- Bitterroot Wilderness additions around Elk Summit. The Elk Summit area is a hub linking different and distinct ecosystems and drainages in the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness Area. These previously proposed additions help ensure the ecological integrity of the SBWA which

comes with being recommend for wilderness. This would in turn would in turn protect the ecological health of the Nez Pearce -Clearwater NF to which they are connected.

These criticisms are not inclusive of the all the defects of the proposed plan, but I'll end with just two more. The first is the glaring fact that the plan recommends less than 20% of the forest for wilderness at time when the nonhuman and human need for wilderness has never been greater. The second is the lack of measurable and enforceable standards proposed in the plan. Without these any plans are meaningless. A single glance to the W and NW from the summit of Lolo Peak or St. Mary peak makes it apparent the Clearwater- Nez Pearce is part of a whole and should be treated as such.

To sum up, this Proposed Plan is a disaster. It must be completely overhauled. It drastically shortchanges both the ecosystem and future generations. As written now it continues the "ghastly mistake" Elers Koch referred to when writing about the same land in 1935.

George Corn

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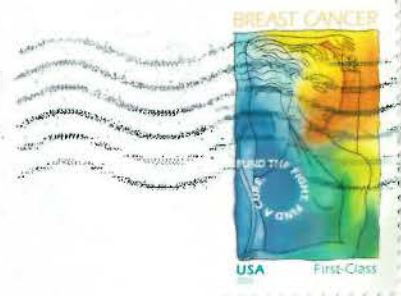
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