
TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM



Subject: East Fork South Fork Restoration and Access Management Plan Draft
Environmental Assessment

IDFG Contact: Brandon Flack, Southwest Regional Technical Assistance Manager

Prepared for U.S. Forest Service, Krassel Ranger District

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The Payette National Forest (PNF) is proposing the East Fork South Fork Restoration and Access Management Plan (hereafter EFSF RAMP) to address motorized travel management and watershed restoration on National Forest System lands on the Krassel Ranger District. The EFSF RAMP is located approximately 22 air miles east of McCall, Idaho in Valley County, Idaho. The project comprises approximately 99,942 total acres of National Forest System lands administered by the Forest Service in the East Fork South Fork Salmon River drainage and the headwaters of the Middle Fork Salmon River drainage, commonly referred to as the Thunder Mountain area. The project area provides excellent opportunities for primitive recreation, habitat for wildlife and fish, and has been long used for tribal subsistence and cultural practices. The eastern portion of the project area is adjacent to the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, however, none of the project area overlaps with designated wilderness.

Resident species of fish and wildlife are property of all Idaho citizens, and IDFG and the Idaho Fish and Game Commission are expressly charged with statutory responsibility to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage all fish and wildlife in Idaho (Idaho Code § 36-103(a)). In fulfillment of our statutory charge and direction as provided by the Idaho Legislature, we offer the following comments and recommendations.

The preferred alternative was developed with input from the Big Creek Yellow Pine Collaborative. IDFG participated in the Big Creek Yellow Pine Collaborative stakeholder group. If selected, the preferred alternative would support IDFG big game management objectives and goals for public access to support fish- and wildlife-based recreation. IDFG recommends the PNF select the preferred alternative.

If another alternative is selected, IDFG provides the following comments for consideration:

- 1) Currently, the Parks Peak trail is the only trail going to Rainbow Ridge that is not motorized. The three other trails accessing Rainbow Ridge are open to motorcycles. Providing both motorized and non-motorized access is important for a variety of user groups. In addition, that area contains good big game security habitat and maintaining non-motorized areas will ensure big game animals have escape and refuge areas. Therefore, IDFG recommends retaining the Parks Peak trail as a non-motorized trail.

- 2) The spur going off the Horse Heaven trail is currently not open to ATVs but has unauthorized use by people driving around signs. If the trail is opened to motorized vehicles <50”, users may continue to add unauthorized sections of trail resulting in additional motorized routes. This area contains good big game security habitat which could be compromised if that route is opened to motorized vehicles. Therefore, IDFG recommends retaining the spur off the Horse Heaven trail as closed to motorized vehicles. This may include rehabilitating the portion that has received unauthorized use and placing barriers so that unauthorized use will not continue.
- 3) Alternative D would open the Sugar Creek loop. Creek crossings in this area could affect spawning chinook salmon and bull trout. If this alternative is selected, IDFG recommends taking appropriate measures to reduce sedimentation and erosion caused by the trail, creek crossings, and motorized vehicles. This could include initially implementing hardened creek bottom crossings and incorporating bridge installations and trail stabilization methods to prevent erosion of the trail surface and shoulders to maintain water quality.