



July 9, 2024

Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests  
Attn: Brandon Knapton, District Ranger  
Lochsa-Powell Ranger Districts  
502 Lowry Street  
Kooskia, Idaho 83539

RE: Comments on Indian Grave Creek Confluence Realignment, Mike White Culvert and Channel Relocation, and Lochsa River GAOA Access Project Fish Creek

Dear District Ranger Knapton,

American Rivers appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on these projects.

Founded in 1973, American Rivers works to protect wild rivers, restore damaged rivers, and conserve clean water for people and nature. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., American Rivers has offices and members in every region of the country, including in the Northern Rockies where the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest is located.

American Rivers supports the Indian Grave Creek Confluence Realignment, Mike White Culvert and Channel Relocation, and Lochsa River GAOA Access Project Fish Creek outlined in the Forest Service scoping package. We enthusiastically support river recreation improvements, where environmentally appropriate, and restoration of endangered fish species habitat through removal of impediments to accessing tributaries and headwaters. It is critical to undertake these types of projects in partnership with Tribes.

We support plans to restore Mike White Creek to its historic channel and remove migration barriers for Snake River Basin Steelhead.

Realignment of the Indian Grave Creek confluence takes place within the corridor of the Lochsa Wild and Scenic River, which has numerous outstandingly remarkable values (ORV), including one for steelhead trout and bull trout. We acknowledge that the long-term benefits to the fish ORV outweigh any short-term, localized impacts to recreation, water quality, or scenery, but recommend the following measures to reduce impacts to these other values. We recommend reducing traffic delays April-August on Highway 12 during the spring boating and summer recreation seasons, especially on weekends and holidays. We recommend specifying measures, such as silt fences or perimeter controls, to reduce sedimentation at excavation areas. Finally, we recommend that necessary construction equipment be stored close to Highway 12, rather than near the riverbank, to reduce impacts to the scenic quality of the floating experience on the Lochsa River. Overall, American Rivers supports the Indian Grave Creek confluence realignment project and views this project as a great example of where endangered species restoration activities are compatible with and can enhance Wild and Scenic River values.

American Rivers also supports the Lochsa River GAOA Access Project at Fish Creek River Access. As a recreational river, roads and recreational facilities are allowed within the Lochsa Wild and Scenic River corridor. Visitor use at Fish Creek remains high, making well-built, lasting infrastructure an important characteristic of this river access point. Given the degree to which the Lochsa River fluctuates during spring runoff, replacing wood stairs and boat slide with metal equivalents is a sensible and safe choice that contributes to the recreational ORV for the Lochsa Wild and Scenic River. We recommend selecting a metal color that blends into the surrounding environment to maintain the primitive and unobtrusive overall nature of facilities within the Lochsa River corridor.

American Rivers enthusiastically supports these projects, and we appreciate the opportunity to comment.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa A. K. Ronald".

Lisa Ronald  
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