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Ben Burr, Executive Director

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U.S. Forest Service

11 Casey Rd.
P.O. Box 180 Hwy 93 North
North Fork, ID 83466

BlueRibbon Coalition (BRC) is writing to provide scoping feedback for the Freeman Gold Exploration proposal. BRC is a national non-profit organization that champions responsible recreation and encourages a strong conservation ethic and individual stewardship. We champion responsible use of public lands and waters for the benefit of all recreationists by educating and empowering our members to secure, protect, and expand shared outdoor recreation access and use by working collaboratively with natural resource managers and other recreationists. Our members use motorized and non-motorized means of recreation, including OHVs, horses, mountain bikes, snowmobiles, and hiking to enjoy federally managed lands throughout Idaho, including those of the U.S. Forest Service. Many of our members and supporters live in Idaho or travel across the country to visit Idaho and use motorized vehicles to access USFS managed lands throughout the state. BRC members visit these areas for motorized recreation, sightseeing, photography, rockhounding, hunting, wildlife and nature study, camping, observing cultural resources, and other similar pursuits. BRC members and supporters have concrete, definite, and immediate plans to continue such activities in the future.

Roads and Trails

BRC supports the broad objectives of the proposed exploration project. As long as no current recreational trails are closed through this process. This area is primarily used by locals to

explore. Current trails need to remain open. If for any reason current routes need to be temporarily or permanently closed due to this project, roads within the same district need to be opened as to not lose any recreational value. BRC acknowledges that many times it is mining operations that maintain and even create the roads that our members now use for recreation. For this purpose we urge the USFS to create an alternative that analyzes keeping the 7.4 miles of temporary roads and permanently adding them into the Forest Service road system as well as the 11.7 existing/non-system roads. We want to ensure that this project is beneficial for all users.

Explore Act

The USFS must comply with the EXPLORE Act's mandate to expand and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities, including motorized use, rather than restricting access through road and area closures. The Act emphasizes increasing recreational access across federally managed lands, streamlining permitting processes, and improving infrastructure to support diverse recreational uses, including off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation. Any effort by the USFS to close existing motorized routes or restrict access contradicts the spirit of the EXPLORE Act, which directs federal agencies to facilitate and expand motorized recreation opportunities. Instead, the U.S. Forest Service should focus on maintaining and designating sustainable routes that align with the Act's goals, ensuring public lands remain open and accessible for multiple-use recreation. Adding the temporary roads into the road system permanently will be the best way to comply with the Explore Act.

Economic Benefits

Roads are crucial for various reasons. The Bureau of Economic Analysis showed that in 2021 outdoor recreation brought in over \$1 trillion. Outdoor recreation has only grown in popularity since then. BRC supports restoring access to the forest to benefit local economies.

BRC supports these efforts and supports any comments made by locals and members who approve these projects for local economic benefit.

Conclusion

We would like to close by saying we support "shared use". As long as overall visitation numbers are appropriate for the affected resources, motorized and non-motorized users can be compatible with one another so long as individual users understand designations and plan their activities accordingly. Indeed, motorized and nonmotorized recreation use often overlap as OHV's often increase accessibility to non-motorized recreational activities such as hiking, camping, equestrian use, etc. We also hold that responsible recreational use of public lands can exist in harmony with ecosystem needs.

BRC would like to be considered an interested public for this project. Information can be sent to the following address and email address:

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P.O. Box 5449
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brmedia@sharetrails.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature consisting of stylized, overlapping letters 'B' and 'B' followed by a long horizontal line.

Ben Burr
Executive Director
BlueRibbon Coalition

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Simone Griffin'.

Simone Griffin
Policy Director
BlueRibbon Coalition