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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Nez Perce-Clearwater Forest Plan Revision Input

Dear Forest Planning Team,

Please confirm this correspondence is able to be entered into the Nez Perce-Clearwater Revised Forest Planning record as input for the recommended wilderness designation of the Great Burn, otherwise known as the "Hoodoo" roadless area.

It was my sincere wish to provide this input during the "Coffee with the Planners" sessions, but I was unable to attend given I currently reside in Ohio. However, having spent 15 years living in Missoula, MT and spending a significant amount of time recreating in the Great Burn both in Idaho and Montana, I am personally vested in seeing the entire Hoodoo roadless area being recommended for wilderness designation in the final revised forest plan decision.

During my time in Montana, I volunteered with an organization committed to protecting the Great Burn's wilderness character and potential for wilderness designation. Unfortunately, up until the Clearwater Travel Plan decision, agency direction was to allow over-snow vehicle travel in the Idaho portion of the Great Burn, while the Lolo National Forest managed its portion as non-motorized. The difference in management direction created a conflict of uses leading to snowmobiles illegally riding into the protected areas of the Lolo National Forest, including Heart Lake and Irish Basin, among others. Part of my volunteer efforts to protect the Great Burn included documenting this illegal activity through back country ski patrols and aerial monitoring. Attached you will find two reports summarizing just some of the illegal snowmobile use in the Great Burn Recommended Wilderness as well as other protected areas.

In addition to creating a conflict of uses, the Clearwater National Forest allowed, and in cases, encouraged, winter motorized recreation in an area determined as suitable for wilderness designation. By doing so, the Forest Service fostered a constituency of snowmobile proponents and allowed them to build a presence in an area that should have been protected from winter motorized use. In other words, were it not for the Forest Service previously allowing a nonconforming use in a recommended wilderness area, there would likely be fewer comments and calls for the Great Burn to be open to snowmobiles today. That is why I urge the forest planning team to designate the entire Hoodoo roadless area as recommended wilderness. Doing so would acknowledge and correct the agency's role in helping build the so called "social need" to establish special management areas open to winter motorized recreation in the Great Burn.

Protecting the entire Great Burn/Hoodoo roadless area from winter motorized use is not only crucial for preserving the area's wilderness character and potential for Wilderness designation, it is also necessary in order to minimize harassment of wildlife and the significant disruption of wildlife habitat as required under Executive Order 11644. This is especially true for species such as wolverine and mountain goats that can experience increases levels of stress and alter their behavior when exposed to the disruptions from motorized recreation. The Clearwater Travel Plan protects wildlife from the harmful effects of motorized recreation, and I strongly urge the forest planning team to retain the recommended wilderness designation for the entire Hoodoo roadless area in its preferred alternative and in the final revised forest plan decision.

Sincerely,

Adam Rissien

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