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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Nez Perce-Clearwater NFS Draft Forest Plan Comments attached.

ATTACHED COMMENT BELOW

Comments on the Draft Land Management Plan Revision for the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests.

Introduction to my Recommendations:

At ~70 years old I am new to advocating for our National Lands; but I have been a lifelong visitor and user to our forests, rivers, lakes and oceans. When I was 15 and an Explorer (Boy) Scout my father allowed me to spend two weeks at Philmont Scout Ranch. The Scout Leader taking us convinced my father that two weeks backpacking in the mountains, [ldquo][hellip] would change my life[rdquo]; it did. Two weeks backpacking in the mountains - waking up to a July chill and blue skies, the smell of pine, shared efforts and a degree of solitude had me hooked on the importance to providing the opportunity to all, even if just a dream as a result of a media documentary. I determined that wilderness and wild places are important to our [ldquo]sole[rdquo], likely a genetic remnant of early man. At 70 I can remember my parents[rsquo] and grand parents[rsquo] stories of the forest in their lifetimes. My father had us camping across America as children and I still recall Yellowstone in the early 1950[rsquo]s and 60[rsquo]s.

I think the reasoning, foresight, and expressed rational and emotional support testimony around passage of The Wilderness Act of 1964 demonstrated an uncommon wisdom, but not a surprising one from our citizens. Today, we are not so far removed from a time when anyone could find solitude in the National and State lands; but, we are living at a time when we are the last to remember a time when we could take these areas for granite.

The National Forrest Service has been an excellent steward of the lands; but, remains under intense pressure to balance and preserve /manage the wilderness and Suitable Wild and Scenic areas, and all areas under their jurisdiction due to budget constraints and population growth. Just in the last decade the area surrounding these land has seen substantial population growth.

[See attachment for table for U.S State Population Growth]

Challenges:

Challenges are too numerous to mention here; but, one or two are guiding my decision process.

Human Nature: The vast majority of people will try to follow the rules if they know them; but, there is always a Percent of people that will not. Even if the percent of those who are not compliant with rules; or, who disrespect common property for some reason is small, the Number represented by the percent grows with the population.

Conclusion:

Our lands must be managed, maintained, and designated so that both purposeful and inadvertent damage to our lands will be minimized by virtue of how we structure boundaries, usage guidance, rules, laws, and access at a time when enforcement and monitoring cannot keep pace with visitation.

Given the nexus of population growth, mechanization of recreation, greater free time and affordability of

recreation, the protections afforded by the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers act must be extended to as much land and as many rivers, creeks, and streams as possible, now. Areas not receiving such protections will increasingly take on characteristics that will exclude them from Wilderness and Suitable Wild and Scenic designation in the future (under the current laws), even if just the result of abusive use by the few.

Without preservation of areas meeting the requirements of the various Acts today for Wilderness and Wild and Scenic designation today, we will inevitably reduce forever the availability of Wilderness and Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers as the population and visitation will continue to grow. The pressure to open-up possible or recommended wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers to activities that could lead to improper acts by the few or exclusionary use or development, and thus reduce future possible inclusion and protections due to declassification activities is real.

Areas where mechanized travel is allowed, even if just over the snow, should be minimized and as close to roads providing the initial access to the areas. When possible Wilderness should have buffer areas that are Primitive / Semi-primitive with Semi-Primitive Motorized the farthest out or away from the most primitive. Motorized use should not bisect or abut Wilderness.

The current state of motorized over the snow recreation has brought us motorized "Snow-Bikes". These are for thrill seekers, can go "anywhere", and are often operated by folks who want to go to extreme heights. These can travel without trails or roads and offer a potential threat to crossing boundaries and area designations, with or without the knowledge of the rider.

While I support an all-inclusive maximization of the Wilderness and Suitable Wild and Scenic River designations, I make the specific points below.

Wilderness:

I support another Plan Option that would Maximize Wilderness, "W" combined with "Y" to maximize inclusion of Rivers in the Suitable Wild and Scenic River (Act) system.

Plan "W" recommends a higher Timber output which I would support if we maximize Wilderness and protection of Idaho's Roadless areas.

I support the Idaho Conservation League position that the Great Burn Area should not open any portion of the area to snow machines and that the entire area should be Designated Wilderness. All of the characteristics of Wilderness will benefit including reducing the impact on wildlife to include the area's populations of Mountain Goat, Grizzly Bears, Wolverines, and Lynx.

The Mallard-Larkins area should also be protected as Wilderness for the same reasons.

East and West Meadow Creek area should be designated Wilderness to protect this important fish habitat.

Note: the Idaho Fish and Game department notes that part of the rationale for the Motorized Hunting Rule is that "slow moving vehicles on primitive roads and trails are more disturbing to elk than fast moving vehicles on highways. Slow moving vehicles traveling cross-country have the same effect. Deer and elk often flee from the sound of motor vehicles and may leave the area."

Cross country travel with motor vehicles can create a network of new travel ways that cause erosion, spread noxious weeds, and damage fish and wildlife habitats.*

Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers:

North Fork Clearwater River: the free-flowing portion of this river should be designated as Suitable Wild and Scenic to protect the remaining cutthroat and bull trout from any new water diversion or dams.

South Fork Clearwater River: to protect one of the few B-run steelhead fisheries in Idaho the South Fork Clearwater should be designated as a Suitable Wild and Scenic river.

Given the position I have taken above and the rationale for it, the following rivers and streams should also be Suitable for Wild and Scenic designation:

Little North Fork Clearwater River

Kelly Creek and its forks

Cayuse Creek

Weitas Creek

Fisk Creek

Hungry Creek

Meadow Creek

Johns Creek

*Moose, Bighorn Sheep & Mountain Goat 2019 & 2020 Seasons & Rules idfg.idaho.gov