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Comments: Please find attached recommendations for DIES by the Northwest Gold Prospectors Association - Clearwater Chapter

ATTACHED COMMENT BELOW

Comments of the Northwest Gold Prospectors Association [ndash] Clearwater Chapter

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For inclusion in FEIS Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest

These comments are made from yet another special interest group that uses the Nez Perce [ndash]Clearwater National Forest. The Northwest Gold Prospectors Association [ndash] Clearwater Chapter would like to submit our opinions and recommendations as to what alternative to the DEIS for the Revised Forest Plan should be considered. Although we have 44 members in the club, not all of the members have responded to requests for comments on the FEIS, but, this is the general consensus of the club.

We would like to commend all of those who worked on this plan. It was a tremendous task to undertake especially having to deal with the public and all of the different special interest groups that utilize our national lands. We are concerned, however, that in the DEIS Executive Summary section 1.9 Issues, it lists the issues the Forest Service is concerned about. The issues of Recommended Wilderness and Scenic Rivers, Recreation and Access Management, Forest Vegetation, and Timber are addressed, but the DIES does not list any issues surrounding the Exploration, Development, and Extraction of locatable mineral resources. Does this mean the Forest Service has no control over the mining on the forest land, are they against the rights of miners, or are there just no issues that are of any consequence that the forest managers can see?

Mining started in 1860 with the discovery of gold by Captain Pierce near the town of Pierce, Id. The discovery of gold in Elk City and Orofino was made about the same time. In 1862, gold was discovered in Florence, and the Buffalo Hump areas. These discoveries were made before Idaho was even officially created as a Territory. These areas are now within the Nez Perce [ndash]Clearwater National Forest. There is a rich history of mining in the Nez Perce [ndash] Clearwater Forest, and we would like to see the interest in mining grow, rather than being further restricted by adding more land to mineral withdrawal. It was this discovery of gold here and elsewhere in the state that drew people to Idaho to settle and make it a State. However, we realizing we must also be good stewards of the land, water, air, plants, and animals within the national forests, thus the need for rules and regulations to protect what we have. The miners of the 1800[rsquo]s new nothing of protecting the resources of the land and water and used them as they saw fit leaving what some consider ugly scars on the land and streams. Some, though, see the scars as historical treasures that remind us of the rich mining heritage that helped create the beautiful state of Idaho.

The Forest Service was created in 1876. The Clearwater National Forest and the Nez Perce National Forest were each established in 1908. At this time miners and prospectors had 4million acres of public lands within these National Forests to explore for, and extract minerals from the land, primarily gold. Now, through various acts and laws such as the Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964, the Wild and Scenic Rivers act, and the Endangered Species Act, there are only a hand full of streams and rivers that are open to very restrictive gold drede mining and millions of acres in the forest are now off limits to even prospecting for the minerals that the land may contain. In February, 2020 congress passed another conservation bill adding another 1.3 million acres of wilderness and creating several more national monuments to lands that are withdrawn from mineral

development. It is a good thing to preserve some of our most wild and scenic areas so a handful of people can enjoy our nations wild places, but don[rsquo]t we have enough. The government can[rsquo]t afford the upkeep on the lands they already have set aside for parks, monuments, wilderness areas, and wild and scenic rivers.

It is opinion of the majority of the members of the Northwest Gold Prospectors Association [ndash] Clearwater Chapter, that the small recreational mining industry has been restricted and permitted to the point that the whole industry is dying and recommends the aspects in Alternative X as the best alternative for not only the mining industry, but for the all aspects of managing the lands and resources the Forest Service has been entrusted to manage. If the Forest Service is going to manage the forest they have left to manage, we feel that no more land or rivers should be recommend for inclusion in Wilderness or Wild and Scenic Rivers for [ldquo]Nature[rdquo] to manage. After the last several years watching wild fires run out of control in the wilderness areas and spread into inhabited areas, maybe [ldquo]Nature isn[rsquo]t doing such a hot job. Only time will tell. We would prefer to see the forest managed for all its resources by professionals. They have the education, scientific knowledge, the years of experience and the lessons learned through past successes and mistakes made by others, for managing the forest lands. We realize budgetary restrictions will probably impede all that needs to done, but Alternative X, in our opinion, seems to fit the management needs of the forest lands and resources the best.

Thank you for your time,