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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Comment - Nez Perce Clearwater Forest Plan

Attached is my comment regarding the Nez Perce Clearwater Forest Plan.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

ATTACHMENT BELOW

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:I am writing this comment on the Nez Perce Clearwater Forest Plan to express my opinion on your decision. My areas of concern are the Hoodoo [ndash] Great Burn and the White Sands areas. My preferred alternative would be no action with changes to allow winter motorized use. Historic use of these areas makes the closures a hard pill to swallow. There is no impact of over-the-snow travel on the land, [ldquo]our tracks don[rsquo]t last.[rdquo] My experience in backcountry like these areas in the winter whether on snowmobile, snow shoes or skis, Cooke City to Canada, is the animals have migrated to lower ground to winter. I have only seen mountain goats in winter in lower wintering areas, such as Land Owner Mountain near Hoodoo Pass. As scarce as wolverines are, I have seen a few tracks, and two sightings along a state highway at lower elevation. It seems they followed their food to lower country. Again, I would say the conflict with snowmobiles is minimal.My history with this country goes back about fifty years, camping trips over Hoodoo Pass to fish Kelly Creek, backpacking the state line divide and snowmobiling in the winter. Unquestionably, this is some of the most beautiful backcountry of our area to experience. It should remain that way and yet be accessible, but not without effort. Our busy lives don[rsquo]t always allow for an extended vacation, but a day trip or a weekend into a local area is surely appreciated.Lastly, as special and beautiful as the Great Burn area is, it is not without scars. A century plus history of these lands have seen it all. Fires, of course, natural and man-made, opening the country with trails and then roads to fight the fires, trappers, hunters, game preserves, miners, outfitters, loggers, forestry management, railroads, highways and Lewis & Clark trails. And yet, the land has changed, endured, healed, and thrived. And, I am confident it will continue to do so no matter the management practices. This 20 year forest plan is a drop in the bucket of time, and as it shall pass, a new forest plan will be developed according to that time. I encourage you looking forward to be careful, not with blinders on, but on middle ground with something for all, a flexibility to change if needed, and the science and wisdom to see the reverence in your duty.

Matt Whetzel