Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/24/2023 7:00:00 AM
First name: Anon
Last name: Anon
Organization: BlueRibbon Coalition
Title:
Comments: Please see attached comment.

Dear Mr. Berrett,

BlueRibbon Coalition(BRC) is writing to provide scoping feedback for the Tensleep Climbing Management Plan. 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, and hiking to enjoy federally managed lands throughout the United States, including those of the Bighorn National Forest. Many of our members and supporters live in Wyoming or travel across the country to visit Wyoming and access USFS managed lands throughout Wyoming. BRC members visit the Bighorn National Forest and the Tensleep Canyon for climbing, motorized recreation, snowmobiling, 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.

General Comments

We support any additional comments that encourage the USFS to designate the maximum number of routes in this area as open as well as the maximum amount of area available for dispersed camping. BRC also supports improved parking and staging areas to accommodate the growing need of recreational access within Bighorn National Forest.

The 16 climbing routes in the Twomey Town and Haunted Wall climbing areas should remain open. USFS should analyze the closure of each individual route and create an alternative that not only keeps these routes but analyzes additional routes within the planning area to accommodate the growing need. If any route is closed as a result of this planning process, the USFS should open a similar route in order to not lose overall route opportunities for the public.

Bighorn National Forest is an incredibly popular area for climbing and dispersed camping. This management area is completely surrounded by land managed with aggressive restrictions on motorized recreation, dispersed camping, and other forms of outdoor recreation, USFS should work to maximize recreational use in this area. Bighorn National Forest recently analyzed new camping restrictions. New camping restrictions should not be implemented as a result of this plan.

Dispersed Camping

We have already seen an increase in closing dispersed camping within Bighorn and Wyoming in general. The need for free, dispersed camping continues to grow. The desire and need for outdoor recreation has grown tremendously the past few years with no end in sight. The USFS should recognize the value that connecting with nature through dispersed camping and recreation brings. Restricting this form of recreation and limiting areas of use will only increase impact. We recommend adopting dispersed camping standards within this plan to require

public input for any dispersed camping closures. Because 30 dispersed campsites were inventoried, 30 campsites should still be available to the public. USFS should also analyze additional camping opportunities. Many campsites were not able to be analyzed because users practiced leave no trace principles. If there are any areas truly deemed unsuitable for dispersed camping, additional areas should be made available for the public[rsquo]s use in order to keep current opportunities available. In order to comply with NEPA, USFS should also create an alternative that expands current dispersed camping opportunities and recreation opportunities in general. Allowing dispersed camping should also be seen as a management tool for offsetting the socioeconomic inequities that are taking root as ultra-wealthy residents displace lower- and middle-income individuals and families from the Tensleep area. Instead, the USFS has indulged the elitist attitudes of local residents for the alleged [ldquo]conservation benefits.[rdquo] The agency[rsquo]s National Visitor Use Monitoring data reports that there are now more than 1 million people living within 50 miles of the forest, which represents a 30 percent increase since 2000.

If the USFS decides to implement dispersed camping closures or length of stay restrictions the agency should adopt policies to provide education materials, and outreach performed to publicize the new restrictions should also include information on how to qualify for and participate in the exempted extended stay permits contemplated by Agency CFRs.

Conclusion We would like to close by saying we support [ldquo]shared use[rdquo]. 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[rsquo]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:

Ben Burr

BlueRibbon Coalition

P.O. Box 5449 Pocatello, ID 83202

brmedia@sharetrails.org

Sincerely,

Ben Burr

Executive Director

BlueRibbon Coalition

Simone Griffin

Policy Director

BlueRibbon Coalition