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Comments: Leanne Martin Regional Forester

USFS Forest Service Region 1 26 Fort Missoula Road Missoula, MT 59804

Dear Regional Forester,

This letter is the official response of the Back Country Horsemen of Missoula (BCHM) to the Nez Pierce[shy] Clearwater Final Draft Forest Plan number 44089.

This year is the 50th Anniversary of BCHM. During this time BCHM has made several day and pack trips into the Great Burn. A couple members and I rode from Hoodoo Pass to Lolo Pass across several days. A few decades ago, our club took an official Issues Committee pack trip from Clearwater Crossing to Goose Lake, to Fish Lake and back along the West Fork to see for ourselves what the country looked like.

BCHM has found the Great Burn proposed Wilderness Area to be a prime example of what Wilderness should be. We have seen the mountain goats on the State Line Trail, a cow moose and calf in Goose Lake and Siamese Lakes, and numerous elk and deer. The quality of water in this area is pristine.

We also know the Great Burn is home to the endangered lynx and wolverines, with range for wolves and grizzly bears. This area is seen to be an important corridor for animals, especially the grizzly bear.

Snowmobiles will stress mountain goats, lynx, and wolverines during the critical winter months when they are struggling for food sources and maintaining their body weight.

The trails in the Great Burn, especially the State Line Trail, are more challenging than other areas BCHM has ridden, including: the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, Pintler Wilderness, Bitterroot Wilderness, Rattlesnake Wilderness, Teton Wilderness, Wind River Wilderness, Saphi re Wilderness Study Area (WSA), Blue Joint (WSA), East Pioneer (WSA), the Badger Two Medicine and the trails in Glacier Park from West Glacier to Essex. For example, the trail section from Goose Lake to Fish Lake has several steep pitches with drop offs being several hundred feet. To allow mountain bikes, that move fast and quietly, would present a major safety hazard for stock users and hikers, which would include Forest Service employees.

Most importantly, allowing snowmobiles, having motors, and mountain bikes, being mechanized, would make the Great Burn ineligible for the Wilderness status it deserves. There are lots of lands presently available for snowmobiles and mountain bikes, just not in the Great Burn.

Sincerely,

Ken Brown

Vice President and Issues Committee Chairman for the Back Country Horsemen of Missoula