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Comments: Se attached pdf

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LoLo National Forest

Draft EIS Forest Management Plan

Comments

This document specifies my interest and comments on the draft management plan of the LoLo National Forest. These comments are directed to the management of the Maclay Flats recreation area, a part of the Blue Mountain Recreation Area.

As you are no doubt aware, Maclay Flats is a heavily used area and is in dire need of attention from the LoLo NF. My concerns for this area are numbered below and range from simple to complex remedies.

- 1 Public FS toilets are not maintained often enough for the amount of use incurred, which appears to be a scheduling and priority issue on the part of the forest.
- 2 Dog owners continue to foul the area by not cleaning up after their pets, who are frequently not leashed. A weekend visit by authorities would go a long way towards remedying the problem as would additional signage. I note too that by summer, travelers use the area as an overnight camp spot, especially along the river. An evening patrol visit by the Sheriff would end this problem.
- 3 Weed control becomes a major trail problem by July as trail edges become overgrown. One good mowing a year on both sides of the trail, particularly on the east - end would solve the problem.
- 4 The trail tread is badly worn in places resulting in concave depressions that retain water and ice. This leads to walkers going around these areas and creating new paths. Several loads of gravel are needed in these depressions and raising the trail tread would take care of the issue.
- 5 The largest issue facing Maclay Flats is erosion along the south bank of the Bitterroot River on the north side of the park. At this time the park bench and at least 7 trees are not likely to survive next spring's (2025) runoff. The trail in this area is deteriorating rapidly.

While riverbank erosion is recognized as a natural process, continued loss of the riverbank and trees will accelerate the erosion process leading to further trail degradation and the need for continuing repair. A long-term solution is to install riprap for about 200 feet along this stretch, secure the riverbank, and design a couple of rock access stairs to the water. Installation of a pair of riprap eddies would be a good start to slowing the riverbank erosion.

Maclay Flats is an unusual and unique recreation area so close to Missoula and is well worth the financial investment required to repair and maintain the facilities.