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First name: Doug

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Lolo Forest plan. I have followed the planning process and studied the current Proposed Action carefully.

I am writing in support of permanent protections for the valuable wild country of the Cube Iron and Sundance Roadless Areas. I am very familiar with these areas and this whole part of the forest. I have hiked to most of the major peaks several times, including Cube Iron Mountain, Mount Silcox, Mount Headley, Pricilla Peak and hiked most of the trails and swum in most of the Lakes, including each of the Four Lakes, plus Duckhead Lake, Arrowhead Lake and numerous others.

Protecting these premier wildlands has been a goal of many in our community for a long time. They offer spectacular scenery, opportunities for solitude, and critically important secure wildlife habitat connecting important regional wild country. There is no doubt that the presence of a nearby Wilderness Area would increase the attractiveness of the towns of Thompson Falls and Trout Creek, for visitors and residents alike.

Along with many of my neighbors, I was an active supporter of the 1988 Wilderness Bill that passed both houses of Congress with large majorities, only to be left for dead by Ronald Reagan. I participated in the many meetings and discussions that lead to the Kootenai and Lolo Accords in the late 80's and early 90's. Like many, I was very proud of our agreement and disappointed when these popular bills were never finalized and implemented.

These lands are locally prized both for their excellent big game hunting, and for the wild habitat they provide to a variety of iconic native species.

It is well known locally that the large Cube Iron and Sundance RA's are actually connected in upper Anne Creek and function as one large chunk of wild country. Together with the large Cataract RA immediately to the west, which stretches into the Kootenai NF, these lands serve as critically important wildlife travel corridors and gene mixing zones between the existing Cabinet Wilderness, the Mission Mountains Wilderness, the Bob Marshall Wilderness, the Great Burn Recommended Wilderness and the Bitterroot Wilderness.

The value of this almost connected wild country for native wildlife is dramatically demonstrated by the travels of the Cabinet/Yaak grizzly bear #926, as described by USFWS biologist Wayne Kaysworm. See attached Monitoring Report from 2017. This collared bear made a very large roundtrip of some 160 miles as the crow flies starting in the Scotchman Peaks Recommended Wilderness area, through the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness area and SE to the Cube Iron Roadless Area. He briefly crossed the Thompson River and then headed back towards the Scotchmans.

What is remarkable is that in all this distance, the bear only crossed three roads - Hiway 56 in the Bull River Valley, the unpaved Silver Butte Pass Road and the unpaved Vermillion River Road. This bear's travels show the tremendous value of protecting this mostly connected wild country.

This bear's documented travels also highlight the fact that the CICC area can serve as a vital link between designated recovery areas in the Cabinet Yaak, The Bitterroots, and the Northern Continental Divide area.

I support the recommendation of the Cube Iron Cataract Coalition, to connect the Cube Iron and Sundance Ridge IRAs, and protect them together as a Recommended Wilderness Area in the Lolo Forest Plan. I also support the management of the Deep Creek and Cataract RAs, and surrounding lands, as Non-Motorized Backcountry.

I also support all the elements of the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Agreement, including the additions to the

Bob Marshall and Scapegoat Wilderness Areas plus Wilderness for the Westfork Clearwater and Grizzly Basin.

I support expanding the Carlton Ridge RNA and using the South Fork Lolo Creek Wilderness boundary from the 2006 proposed action.

I support the Recommended Wilderness designations for all the areas identified in the Lolo Proposed Action.

I further support maintaining or increasing the acres of suitable timber in the plan. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Doug Ferrell, Trout Creek, Montana

Attachments: Cabinet Yaak Update 2017 re Griz #926

This comment as a Word doc