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First name: Tom
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: Dear Supervisor Davis

On behalf of the Central Idaho Mountain Bike Association (CIMBA), I am submitting this formal objection to specific elements of the Granite Goose Plan. This objection addresses two primary concerns:

* Proposed logging and thinning activities that would directly and indirectly affect the Brundage-to-Bear Basin Trail, and

* The omission of recommended trails from the Bear Basin Trail System that were submitted during the planning process by CIMBA, but not included in the final decision.

Objection 1: Impacts to the Brundage-to-Bear Basin Trail from Proposed Logging and Thinning Activities

The Brundage-to-Bear Basin Trail is widely regarded as one of the premier mountain bike trails in central Idaho and, by many accounts, one of the highest-quality mountain bike trails in the state. The trail was professionally designed and constructed and runs approximately six miles from Brundage Mountain Ski Resort to the Bear Basin trail system. It receives extraordinarily high use from local residents as well as visitors who travel to the region specifically to ride this trail during the riding season. The trail's design, character, and setting are fundamental to its recreational value.

The Granite Goose Plan identifies two thinning units that occur on or immediately adjacent to the Brundage-to-Bear Basin Trail. One of these locations is where Forest Service Road 1090 crosses the trail at approximately 44.96446, -116.14701. South of this crossing, CIMBA understands that the proposed thinning activities are likely to be commercial in nature. Based on plan documents and field review, it appears that access to this thinning unit would utilize the existing Brundage-to-Bear Basin Trail, which in this area closely follows an old roadbed.

CIMBA formally objects to any use of the Brundage-to-Bear Basin Trail as an access route for logging or thinning operations. Use of the trail for access would result in closure of the trail for an undetermined period of time and would fundamentally alter or destroy the existing tread, character, and riding experience. While post-operation rehabilitation may be required of the logging contractor, the current quality of the trail is the result of intentional, professional design and construction. We do not believe that post-harvest rehabilitation would restore the trail to its existing condition or character.

CIMBA is formally requesting that all access to thinning units in this area be rerouted to alternative locations that do not utilize or cross the Brundage-to-Bear Basin Trail.

In addition, a second non-commercial thinning unit is proposed just northeast of this same location and runs parallel to the trail on FS Road 1090. CIMBA requests clear assurance that this operation will not cross the trail, utilize the trail for access, or otherwise damage the trail corridor or its setting. Preservation of the trail's character and uninterrupted access during operations is critical.

The Granite Goose Plan also includes multiple thinning units accessed from or adjacent to Forest Service Roads 451 and 488. While thinning operations are not proposed on areas of these roads that directly intersect the Brundage-to-Bear Basin Trail, the roads are frequently used by recreationalists as loop routes and access points to the upper portions of the trail. These road routes are commonly used as safer alternatives to uphill travel on the Brundage-to-Bear Basin Trail itself.

If Forest Service Roads 451 and 488 are closed to recreational use during logging operations, potentially for extended periods over the next five years, recreational access and experience in the area will be significantly diminished. Active logging traffic on these roads also increases safety risks for recreational users who may encounter logging vehicles traveling at high speeds. Closure of these roads may push more users onto the Brundage-to-Bear Basin Trail for uphill travel. While uphill travel is allowed on the trail, it is not recommended due to high downhill bicycle speeds and frequent use, creating serious safety concerns.

CIMBA strongly believes that alternative access solutions must be identified to maintain recreational access and user safety during periods of active logging. Without such solutions, the proposed activities would result in substantial negative impacts to recreation, user safety, and one of the region's most important trail assets.

Objection 2: Omission of Recommended Trails from the Granite Goose Plan

The draft Granite Goose decision includes approximately seven miles of new trail construction within the Bear Basin Trail System, including flow, cross-country, and connector trails to be constructed in the coming years. CIMBA greatly appreciates the inclusion of these trails and recognizes that they reflect a portion of the trail system recommendations submitted by CIMBA during the planning process.

However, CIMBA formally objects to the omission of several additional trails that were recommended but not included in the Granite Goose Plan. While we understand that not every proposed trail can be included in a single planning effort, the exclusion of certain key trails represents a missed opportunity to better meet demonstrated recreational demand and to create a more complete and balanced trail system in Bear Basin.

Specifically, CIMBA is formally requesting that two additional flow trails, identified as F2 and F3 in our submitted trail proposal, be added to the Granite Goose Plan. As shown in the submitted maps, CIMBA's formal request identified proposed trails using the designations "XC" for cross-country trails and "F" for flow trails. Trails F2 and F3 are located within the core Bear Basin trail area and are consistent with the terrain, character, and recreational focus of the existing and proposed trail system.

These proposed flow trails would generally run parallel to existing and already-approved flow trails and would expand trail diversity without introducing new or incompatible uses. From our understanding, these trail alignments do not present known environmental or heritage resource conflicts and would fit squarely within the scope and intent of the Granite Goose Plan.

There is significant demand from the recreation community in central Idaho and across the state for additional purpose-built flow trails in Bear Basin. Including Trails F2 and F3 would improve user distribution, reduce congestion on existing trails, and provide a broader range of riding options for mountain bike users of varying skill levels.

CIMBA is also formally requesting that these trails be designated as downhill-only mountain bike trails with no horse use. This designation is consistent with existing flow trail management in Bear Basin and is important for maintaining rider safety, trail sustainability, and the intended trail experience.

For these reasons, CIMBA respectfully requests that Trails F2 and F3 be incorporated into the Granite Goose Plan as part of the final decision.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide formal comment. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to continued dialogue on how best to balance forest management objectives with the protection of high-value recreational resources.

Sincerely,

Tom Helmer

Executive Director

Central Idaho Mountain Bike Association (CIMBA)