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Organization: JOCO First

Title: Chairman

Comments:

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February 7, 2023

District Ranger Thad Berrett

Powder River Ranger District

Bighorn National Forest

1415 Fort Street

Buffalo, WY 82834

RE: Pole Creek Vegetation Management Plan

Dear Ranger Berrett:

On behalf of JOCO First, we are writing to express concern with the planned vegetation management work at the Pole Creek Recreation Area. The Pole Creek Recreation Area is a valuable component of Johnson County's outdoor recreation economy. This area is utilized in the winter for skiing, snow shoeing and other recreational activities. During the summer, the trails provide multiple uses for hikers and mountain bicyclists.

We are concerned that the Powder River Ranger District is considering removing the timber around these 12 miles of recreation. The Pole Creek Recreation Area is maintained by a volunteer board, offering locals and visitors alike a family friendly activity in our Bighorn Mountains. The trees offer a wind block and protection for the groomed trails, keeping the snow in place for the users of this winter maintained trails system. In the summer, the trees provide shade for visitors and critical wildlife habitat. Disturbances to the Pole Creek Recreation Area would also cause much duress on the local businesses community that receives shoulder season revenue from the recreational use of Pole Creek. Users buy and rent summer and winter sports equipment. They also patronize local restaurants, hotels, and various other stores in our community. We simply do not want to jeopardize Johnson County's economy or Johnson County's recreational appeal, particularly during some of the leanest months of the year.

For the reasons articulated above, and others, JOCO First requests that the Pole Creek Recreation Area be removed from the vegetative management plan presently being considered by the Powder River Ranger District.

Sincerely, ~

~b

Chairman, JOCO First