



August 11, 2021

Payette Forest Coalition
P.O. Box 10
McCall, Idaho 83638
SteeringTeam@payetteforestcoalition.org

Erin Phelps
New Meadows District Ranger
Via email: erin.phelps@usda.gov

RE: Scoping comments for Lost Ant Recreation Management Project and Aquatic Organism Passage Management Project

Dear Ranger Phelps:

The Payette Forest Coalition (PFC) wishes to express our continued appreciation to you and the Payette National Forest for the opportunity to submit scoping comments on the Lost Ant Recreation Management Project and Aquatic Organism Passage Management Project.

In a letter from the steering team dated June 9, 2021 regarding the Cold July Environmental Assessment the Coalition commented that:

“The PFC understands the rationale for focusing primarily on vegetation management in this project. However, we encourage the ID Team to look for opportunities to include watershed restoration, such as removing or blocking unauthorized routes, and recreation improvements, such as creating new trails or hardening dispersed camping sites, within the project area.”

Again, in a supplemental comment letter for Cold July dated August 11, 2021 the Coalition stated that:

“We also believe it is appropriate to include a brief outline of the Forest’s intent to conduct projects following the Cold July Restoration Project that have a focus on watershed restoration or recreation within the former Lost Creek-Boulder Creek (LCBC) project landscape.”

With that in mind, the Coalition was pleased to see the release of both the Lost Ant Recreation Management Project and Aquatic Organism Passage Management Project at the end of July. Watershed health and improved recreation management have long been a core priority for the PFC and we are glad to see watershed restoration components from the Lost Creek Boulder Creek Restoration Project reconsidered for implementation.

Detailed comments on the components for these two categorically excluded projects can be found in the project record dating back to 2013 when the Coalition initially engaged on restoration priorities for this landscape. While some conditions on the ground have changed over the past 8 years, the PFC still supports the restoration and recreation improvements in both of these proposed projects.

Regarding the Lost Ant Recreation Management Project, the PFC supports the proposed project with the following comments on specific aspects of the proposal:

- **Ant Basin Trail #324 and Ant Basin Trailhead:** Trail #324 goes through open country, so ensure effective closure of trailhead and trail with both physical structures and signage directing users to Ant Basin South Trailhead.
- **Corral Creek Area:** The Forest Service should consider access and parking for users, especially stock. If they haven't already, they should clarify where they want the trail access to occur. Consider potential trail conflicts between mountain bikers and stock with Class 1 trail design and development (the lowest standard trail class for construction and maintenance). Install adequate signage and barriers to prevent unauthorized motorized activity, especially if the Northern edge of the trail meets a seasonal road.

Regarding the Aquatic Organism Passage Management Project, the PFC supports the proposed project with the following comments:

- Both the Lost Creek and Upper West Fork River Subwatersheds are listed as impaired in the Lost Creek Boulder Creek Restoration Project FEIS (2014). Removal of AOP barriers throughout the drainage will move both streams towards desired future conditions in the Forest Plan.
- While the Boulder Creek Subwatershed will see a nominal improvement in functioning condition class from concurrent recreation and trail improvements in the Lost Ant Recreation Management Project, we recommend the Payette National Forest prioritize future restoration and watershed improvements in the Boulder Creek Subwatershed. Data shows the presence of native Bull trout and westslope cutthroat present as well as imperiled anadromous species (chinook and steelhead) in this subwatershed.

As always, the PFC looks forward to working with the Payette National Forest to increase forest resiliency, improve watershed health and provide better access and recreation opportunities on the forest.

Thank you once again,

Payette Forest Coalition Steering Team