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Comments: Mr. Lannom,

For the past 30 years I have spent a considerable amount of time on the South Fork of the Salmon River. I recently sold an outfitting business that I owned and operated in the area for 18 years. I have seen a massive deterioration of the trail system and public access over the course of those years. The job of an outfitter is to give clients a memorable and safe experience in the back country. But the lack of trail maintenance and safe access makes it a very dangerous job lately.

In 2007, massive fires devastated much of the trail system in the area. I saw first-hand the destruction caused by the vegetation being burned off and the soil subsequently becoming very unstable. The result was huge amounts of debris and sediment run-off being dumped into the creeks and rivers.

The Hamilton Bar 3 mile road should not be de-commissioned. The road has very little gradient and is wide along much of it. The road has been established for many years and has prevented sediment from the devastating fires from reaching the river. It provides several different access points to the SFSR for camping and recreational activities for the public. It also provides precious and much needed access to the privately-owned ranches located down river. With the Davis Ranch Road being washed out for many years now, the Hamilton Bar Road is the ONLY access for the private property and public lands in this region. The process of reducing the Hamilton Bar Road to a narrow trail with heavy machinery would cause much greater harm to the river than just maintaining the road as it is.

The Davis Ranch Road should be opened up for public ATV use. Historically, the road has been used for private property access to the Davis Ranch and Fritser Ranch, as well as used for access to public lands. There are several wash outs on this road that are getting worse every year because it is not being properly maintained. Putting structures at the stream crossings will help stabilize the road and help prevent further sediment from reaching the river. Leaving the road in its current state of disrepair is doing more damage to the river every spring. If the Davis Ranch Road was opened up, it would allow passage all the way from Hamilton Bar Road to the Elk Creek Road via trail #76/77 which is several miles down river from Hamilton Bar. This road/trail system is the only access to this area and it is critical that it be open and maintained.

I have used the current 5 miles trail at the end of Hamilton Bar Road that leads to the Davis Ranch and Fritser Ranch since I was a child. What was once a safe pack and saddle trail is now too dangerous to walk on foot. With the trail narrowing every year, pack and saddle animals are no longer able to travel this trail safely. The deterioration of this trail has negatively impacted the ability of property owners to access their private ranches. It negatively affected my business as an outfitter because I could not safely take clients to parts of my designated area. The public access to the region is also severely restricted because of the lack of a safe trail.

I believe access to the back country in this area of the South Fork of the Salmon River is very important. No roads or trails in this region should be decommissioned. How can we maintain our precious resources in this area if we have no access? Roads and trails in the SFSR-RAMP are not causing sediment to be put into the river. The out of control forest fires and resulting unstable soil are what is causing massive amounts of sediment to be deposited. I believe that proper and timely road maintenance along with proper fuel reduction and forest thinning will do more to preserve the area than anything else.

Respectfully,

Casey I Kuenzli