

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/20/2019 9:57:07 PM

First name: MERRILL

Last name: SALEEN

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Response to South Fork RAMP 5/20/2019

Access Management - Restore Recreation Access and Resources:

I was born in Cascade Idaho in 1951. I am currently 68 years old. I have been an Idaho and McCall resident nearly all my life. During that time, with especially fond memories of my childhood, I lived and recreated in the Yellowpine and McCall area. I hunted and fished the original Central Idaho Primitive area and later the Frank Church Wilderness Area every year for over 30 years. I have driven most of the roads and hiked most of the trails that existed in this area since the 1960's. I even drove the road down Big Creek to Snowshoe mine where my Mother worked as a child. That road was closed when the Frank Church was created.

I worked 34 years for the Payette National Forest from 1967 to 2001. Most of this time in Fire and Recreation Management. I worked 6 years on the Krassel Ranger District from 1979 until 1985. I managed the Recreation program on the Krassel and Weiser Ranger Districts for 12 years. I had first hand contact with the public, recreation users, and campers. I heard public compliments as well as their issues, concerns, and complaints. I represented their positions during the planning and analysis processes of the Forest Plan and many project environmental analysis. I have been a member of the Yellow Pine East Fork Collaborative for the previous 2 years. I retired in 2008.

Public land access was an important factor in the ability to enjoy and experience this area. Many of the roads in the analysis area are not necessary for providing access to trailheads and dispersing the public and should be managed to further the mission of the Forest Service. Yet some of the ML1 roads and possibly the unauthorized roads within Krassel Ranger District should be added to the minimum road system. The analysis does not properly identify secondary road access to provide for dispersing of the public or provide access to trailheads, unroaded areas, and popular destinations. Especially for weekend recreation. Almost all motorized access is confined to the primary road system, and creates an unsafe, congested road system.

I have hiked into and fished most of the spectacularly beautiful high mountain lakes in the area. Some of the fondest memories of my life, my children's lives, extended family, and close friends lives have occurred here. In the past roads provided access to unroaded destinations such as trails, high mountain lakes, crest line ridges, and panoramic views compatible with a motorized semi-primitive experience and designation. They were accessible in a weekend, or much more reasonable time frame, than trips into wilderness areas. Road closures have eliminated most of these key access routes and created an incompatible closed road wilderness like setting that discourage the return to these destinations. Walking 8 miles in on a closed road through logging units, clearcuts, and heavily modified forest to reach an unroaded trailhead 4 miles from our destination, with a 60-pound pack is not enjoyable, compatible, acceptable, or practical.

I have seen a lot of changes occur throughout my life in access management, recreation opportunity, and resource protection and restoration- both as a recreation user and as a manager. My support, trust, and opinions have changed over the years. Many actions have been implemented to try and bring the fish back. I have watched for over 60 year's habitat improvement, research, and restrictions being implemented to try and restore fish return without success. This is a perfect example of Einstein's definition of insanity: "Doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results."

As a child, we were able to fish for salmon and steelhead on a limited basis. There were thousands of salmon and steelhead in the South Fork, East Fork, and Johnson Creek drainages. Trout fishing was fantastic with a limit of 15 per person. Now trout fishing is "catch and release" only and salmon fishing has only been

occasionally open to general public in the upper South Fork for hatchery fish. The opportunity to fish for steelhead in this area has never been restored. Driving from Yellow Pine to Cascade in the winter and spring, we often counted nearly 2,000 head of deer. Fishing and hunting was not just a recreation activity but also a big part of our subsistence. My interest was to see this return. I was an early on advocate of whatever it took to bring the fish and wildlife back. We would all like to see these conditions restored, but at what price? I now believe we are being asked to sacrifice too much.

All the sacrifices, all the money spent, all the restrictions, all the work, all the lost investment, and all the analysis have not been successful in restoring fish return. Eliminating public access and use is too much to ask of the public or me. I want to fish, hunt, pick huckleberries, drive for pleasure, explore, and cut firewood etc. etc. etc. I want this not only for myself but also for future generations to enjoy and experience what this remote backcountry has to offer. Not just, fish habitat restoration. Public restrictions and limits are at an all-time extreme and radical level. I do not support, trust, or believe that restoration actions are necessary or effective today without mitigating impacts to provide for key public access. Nor do I believe that a majority of the Public supports this as well.

You need to restore key "Level 2 High Clearance roads" and "Unauthorized" road funding and access leading to trailheads and popular destinations. Forest Plan recreation objectives, direction, and restoration need to be better applied to balance with fisheries resource restoration. In addition, you need to restore dispersed camping to more than one car length from existing roads, especially those at trailheads. You must place a higher priority on the public's ability to use high clearance vehicles to recreate and disperse in the National Forest. Resource protection mitigation that is compatible with recreation restoration should be accomplished, as funding is available, without closing the key roads, trails, or campsites. Your analysis has no alternative that provides balanced, Level 2 high clearance vehicle roads open to public use. Please develop one.

The Key secondary roads that need to be restored are:

- *Reopen the Buckhorn Road to level 2 high clearance vehicles for approximately 4 miles to the 3-way trailhead Junction near Buckhorn Hot springs. Construct a trailhead facility.
- *Reopen the 3-mile Hamilton Bar area road to all vehicles. Construct trailhead facilities.
- *Keep the Zena Creek-Blue Lake Road open to its historic end and construct a parking, horse trailer turnaround, and campsite at that trailhead location.
- *Reopen the Jakie Creek/Little Buckhorn loop level 2 high clearance vehicle road to full sized vehicles and develop trailheads and main buckhorn Road until the slide can be reopened.
- *Reopen the Buckhorn Bar Road and Flat for a Trailhead and dispersed Camping compatible with Horse use.
- *Extend the Cow Creek Road to a location compatible to construct a trailhead facility.
- *Open the Camp Creek/Phoebe Creek Road to near Phoebe Meadows and establish a trailhead at the trail junction.
- *Reopen the Dollar Creek Road to Dollar Creek Meadows. Construct a trailhead.
- *Keep Roaring Creek road and the dispersed campsite road open.
- *Re-open the Cougar Creek and Buckhorn Creek trail loop to motorcycle use.

I assure you that I am passionate and committed to this cause. Unless a compromise is reached, I will be following up on obtaining a supporting advisory vote from the Village of Yellow Pine and Valley County. I will use social media to further this cause. I will contact Federal, State and local political representatives. I will further explore the possibility of legal action.

Thank you for your consideration,
/s/ Merrill L. Saleen
Merrill Saleen
Retired, General Public Representative