

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/22/2019 11:00:00 AM

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Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the South Fork Salmon River RAMP.

I am concerned about the Phoebe Creek trail #291 that is designated as a two wheeled motorized use trail. This trail goes directly through the Phoebe Creek Research Natural Area. "Research Natural Areas (RNAs) are areas that the Forest Service has designated to be permanently protected and maintained in natural condition. These protected natural areas include unique ecosystems or ecological features; rare or sensitive species of plants and animals and their habitat; and/or high-quality examples of widespread ecosystems."

There are wet meadows and numerous small drainages at the headwaters of Phoebe Creek. The Forest Service website shows photos of motorcycle ruts through the wetlands and describes numerous different routes the motorcycles take trying to find a way to cross the wetlands. Quoting from the Forest Service website,

"The Phoebe Meadows Trail (Trail #291), would continue to impact the Phoebe Meadows Research Natural Area within the Caton Lake IRA, as user-created trails continue to braid and cause rutting within the wet meadow thus triggering trail users to attempt to find easier, drier paths across."

There is no Alternative suggested that protects and upholds the status of the headwaters of Phoebe Creek RNA. Alternative A, the No Action Alternative, states that degradation of the Research Natural Area would continue, which is in direct conflict with the designation of RNA. All the other alternatives describe rerouting and rebuilding extensive portions of the trail, which again, conflict with the protected status of the RNA, as the main purpose of trail work is to encourage and promote two wheeled motor use in this drainage. The Forest Service document describes monitoring the area for Columbia spotted frogs and Great Grey owls saying they would take measures to change access if these species experience disturbance from motorized trail use. I doubt the Forest Service can allot the resources for much, if any, monitoring of this trail. Noise, disturbance of wildlife habitat, off trail riding, introduction of invasive species, disturbance of erosive soils are all problems that will be increased with more motorized use.

I would ask that the Forest Service consider closing this trail to motorized use to uphold its obligation to protect the Phoebe Creek Natural area.

I would also like to comment that I would like to see the Cougar Creek trail remain non-motorized. Granting access to motorized vehicles is actively taking away a resource to those forest users who prefer a quiet appreciation of the remoteness of the area. There are fewer and fewer undisturbed and relatively undisturbed areas along the South Fork of the Salmon River drainage and we need to realize the value of these areas. Please respect the Recommended Wilderness Area classification and do not let this trail be open to motorized vehicles.