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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Management Plan for the Nez Perce/Clearwater Forests following your open house workshop at the Coeur d'Alene Office describing alternative approaches to management. I appreciated all of the advice and explanations that the staff provided during that open house/workshop.

Wilderness AReas

Great Burn

I would encourage the recommendation of wilderness status for the Great Burn not only for the wildlife that require wilderness for their survival but for the backpackers and hikers that need more, rather than less wilderness, in their ever increasingly busy lives. As has been proven, the economic benefits to attracting recreation pursuits to rural communities that are often struggling, can be a welcome benefit to a rural town. Also, I sympathize with the Forest Service in their attempt to enforce regulations with an inadequate budget to do so. There are already snow machines using land that they are barred from entering but they are there anyway and the forest Service simply does not have the personnel to enforce the rules. To reward many snowmobilers flaunting of the regulations by allowing them officially into the Black Lead Mountain and the Hoodoo Pass area is a step in the wrong direction. Once officially allowed into those areas, what is to prevent them from operating as they have in the past; simply to move into more restricted areas with unfortunately, little resistance from the Forest Service? I have hiked on trails near Bonners Ferry where mountain bike use is banned with horse and foot traffic only permitted. More times that I care to list, I encounter mountain bikes speeding down the trail with riders yelling at me to get out of their way. As is so often the case, there is no one available to enforce Forest Service regulations. To carve out of the Great Burn areas for snow machines will only increase the conflict between users and unfortunately, between the wildlife that need less rather than more motorized recreation. I understand from staff that snowmobilers want the high alpine meadows and geography, which they claim is available nowhere else, for their use. May I submit, wildlife and non-motorized users want it as well for their use and enjoyment. I would hazard that the wildlife's claim alone trumps a snowmobiler's desire to roar through a pristine alpine meadow. Of the nearly 4 million acres, we were told at the meeting that 45% or close to half, is already available to the snow mobile users.

Mallard-Larkin

I would recommend wilderness status for the Mallard-larkin as well. You only need to listen to backpackers, hikers, fishermen, hunters and birders to hear their enthusiasm for this outstanding wilderness area. These users bring revenue to rural towns and the wildlife thrive in this primitive setting.

Meadow Creek

Just ask an Orvis store or any outfitter, how important the East and West Meadow Creek watershed means to their bottom line? The diversity of wild fish-both steelhead and trout-is exceptional. I urge recommendation of wilderness status for this important habitat for the fish, the rural communities that depend upon the fisheries and for all the plants and wildlife that depend upon this watershed.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

I am not familiar with all of the rivers and streams under consideration but I would urge the Wild and Scenic River designation for the following:

Clearwater, both the North and South Forks

Kelly Creek

North Fork Clearwater River

Once again, ask any fishing guide what the Clearwater means to their livelihood but more importantly, what the North Fork of the Clearwater means to the survival of threatened bull trout and the popular cutthroat fishery. I urge the Forest Service to consider the North Fork suitable for Wild and Scenic status. The thought of the impact of more dams in the west on fisheries is sobering. Please urge the federal agencies that have identified 26 potential dam sites on the river above Dworshak Reservoir to look elsewhere for their projects.

South Fork Clearwater River

It always amazes me when I consider the feat of steelhead making it over so many obstacles from the Pacific Ocean to the Clearwater. It is simply incredible. I urge the South Fork to be identified as suitable for wild and scenic status based on the B-Run steelhead that the river provides critical habitat for their spawning. These B-Run fish are larger and attract fishermen from around the area if not the country to come wet a line in search of these magnificent fish. Please ask the federal agencies that have identified potential dam sites and diversions on the South Fork to look elsewhere and leave this critical fish habitat and scenic river alone.

The Alternative Action Plan that I favor that includes most, though not all of my proposals, is Alternative Y. This alternative recommends my desired level of Wilderness designation and removes snowmobilers from the Great Burn wilderness and would not include a boundary change that would allow their unwelcome presence in a wilderness setting. I urge also the inclusion of the North and south Fork into the Wild and Scenic category.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Nes Perce-Clearwater National Forest Plan Revision

Regards,
Barbara McFarland