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First name: Steve
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Organization: Lake Pend Oreille Waterkeeper
Title: Executive Director
Comments: From: Lake Pend Oreille Waterkeeper
To: Norton, Michelle - FS
Subject: Buckskin Saddle Integrated Restoration Project Comments
Date: Friday, February 7th 2020

Dear Ms. Norton:

Thank you for considering our comments regarding the proposed Buckskin Saddle Integrated Restoration Project on Idaho Panhandle National Forest-administered public lands.

Founded in January of 2009, Lake Pend Oreille Waterkeeper is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works in the public interest to minimize water pollution in Lake Pend Oreille and related water bodies. Our area of focus includes the lake, the Pend Oreille River down to Albeni Falls Dam, the Clark Fork up to Cabinet Gorge Dam, and all the tributaries that flow into the lake. Our primary mission is to protect the water quality of the Clark Fork/Pend Oreille Watershed so that our local waterways remain drinkable, fishable and swimmable for future generations through education, community engagement and advocacy.

As you are aware the Buckskin Saddle Restoration Project encompasses approximately 50,000 acres on the Sandpoint Ranger District in Bonner County, Idaho and 500 acres on the Coeur d'Alene Ranger District in Shoshone County. With a project of this size we do not believe an Environmental Assessment (EA) provides adequate review or assessment for a project of this scale and its complexities. In our opinion the only way a project of this magnitude can be properly analyzed is through an Environmental Impact Statement. An EIS would not only disclose in a more comprehensive manner potential impacts not previously anticipated but offer mitigation measures on a number of issues not identified in the current EA.

In addition, we are extremely concerned with regard to the quantity of new road construction proposed, in particular roads near Twin Creek and Johnson Creek which both have TMDL's for sediment. Road construction increases the potential for sediment delivery to streams as well as threaten Bull Trout habitat. We would advocate for the elimination of all new road systems in both the Twin and Johnson Creek areas.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Holt
Executive Director - Lake Pend Oreille Waterkeeper